



BETHEL AG CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE



MARRIAGE

A BIBLE PERSPECTIVE

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What is GOD's idea of marriage?

1. What is God's idea of marriage?

Marriage is a sacred union between one man and one woman. God intended marriage to last for a lifetime.

Marriage is **God ordained**. God's design of marriage dates back to the beginning of mankind.

Matthew 19:4-5, "The Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'."

Marriage is a **Holy covenant**. Marriage is a solemn, binding agreement, made by two individuals, that is witnessed by God and man. In contrast, the religious ceremony of a wedding,, held before church and community, emphasizes that marriage is more than a mere legal agreement between the couple.

2. Arranged marriage vs. love marriage: What is God's preference?

The Holy Bible is silent on the issue of the type of marriage: arranged marriage or love marriage. However, the recommendation in the Bible is for all marriages to be 'Holy'.

Regardless of a love marriage or an arranged marriage, we, the Church, believe that all marriages should be God arranged. A God-Arranged marriage is a marriage where both the girl and the boy seek God in their decision. In their fear of God, (i.e. reverence and love for God) the two individuals seek God while they pray for the right partner. The couple also seek God for confirmation (of His will) and for counsel from others, that include their parents' and pastors' support in making their decision.

3. What's God idea of divorce?

God **HATES** divorce.

Malachi 2:16, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says, "I hate divorce, and I hate the cruel things that men do. So protect your spiritual unity. Don't cheat on your wife."

GOD
HATES
DIVORCE

4. Are there any situation(s) that justify a divorce?

Divorce is possible, but not a requirement, on the grounds of sexual immorality.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4, *“When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house,² and if she goes and becomes another man’s wife,³ and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife,⁴ then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.”*

The key phrase is in verse 1: some indecency (erwath dabar). This phrase was very ambiguous, and hence provided fodder for constant arguments among the ancient Jews. On one side of the debate was the more conservative ‘Shammai’ school, and on the other, the more liberal ‘Hillel’ school. Both schools were well known around the time of Jesus. The School of Shammai declared: ‘A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity (sexual impurity) in her’. And the School of Hillel retorted: ‘He may divorce her even if she spoiled a dish for him (indecency in anything)’.

The Pharisees came to test Lord Jesus on marriage and divorce with a background of these predetermined perspectives.

Matthew 5:31-32, *“It has been said, ‘anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”*

Matthew 19:3-9, *“Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?”⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”*

⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Jesus was very clear about divorce: it is permissible (but not required) only on the grounds of repeated sexual immorality. It is never mandated because of a better choice – to forgive marital infidelity as grace enables, to seek healing in the marriage.

Divorce is permitted, but not a requirement, on the grounds of desertion by an unbelieving spouse

1 Corinthians 7:15, "But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace."

Here's the second reason for a divorce: desertion by an unbelieving spouse. You should try to live at peace with an unbelieving spouse. After all, God may save your spouse through you. Reconciliation is still the ideal approach in marriage. However, if the unbeliever refuses to live with you and leaves, let him do so. You are not bound to be married when your unbelieving spouse deserts you.

One must be sympathetic, and yet extremely cautious, to find other grounds for divorce. God did not want to give us every possible reason for divorce in the New Testament. Jesus gave one situation for divorce and Paul (admittedly, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), mentioned another reason relevant to the Corinthian church situation. Biblically, it is safer to maintain that there are only two acceptable grounds for divorce because our bodies were not created to betray, to divorce or to be involved in sexually immoral acts.

5. What could lead to a divorce?

Every marriage is unique and the reason(s) that lead to divorce may be contextual or subjective. If we look at the general principles of marriage, the few following reasons could bring about a divorce:

- Lack of commitment
- Lack of love and honour
- Lack of reconciliation in conflicts
- Lack of sexual fidelity
- Lack of seeking Christian virtues
- Lack of realistic expectations
- Lack of constructive communication
- Lack of interdependence

**SAVE YOUR
MARRIAGE
THROUGH
RECONCILIATION**

6. When does God accept remarriage?

Remarriage is clearly allowed after a spouse dies.

Romans 7:3, "So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man."

Remarriage is allowed after a genuine divorce.

According to the Holy Bible, genuine divorce is one that occurs due to repeated sexual immorality in marriage or abandonment by the spouse. On light of this kind of divorce, remarriage is valid. (Refer verse Matthew 19:3-9 & I Corinthians 7:15)

It is not necessarily a good or wise idea to remarry just because one is divorced and free to do so. A lot of other considerations come into play. But the principle in general is that after a genuine divorce, there is freedom to remarry.

7. Why does God call certain remarriages 'adultery'?

When a divorce is not genuine, any subsequent remarriage (to anyone other than the original spouse) results in adultery. If a divorce is improper according to the conditions of the Holy Bible, then the remarriage is also not proper. This situation doesn't mean that the said person isn't really divorced and isn't really remarried. It means he or she shouldn't have been divorced in the first place. Since the covenant hadn't been broken, it shouldn't have been cut off.

In addition, one shouldn't be married to someone other than their original spouse, which means - if you are remarried, that new sexual relationship is sinful. 'So what do I do now? I am already in another marriage after an improper divorce?' See the next question for help.

Matthew 19:9, *"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."*

Mark 10:12, *"And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."*

8. I'm already in a sinful second marriage – how do I move forward?

Improperly divorced and remarried Christians should stay as they are. However, they must repent and be forgiven of their past sins. Also, they must make additional amends as necessary.

The principle in **1 Corinthians 7**, repeated in verse **17**, **20**, and **24**, is ***"remain as you are."***

God does not want you to add to the sin of a remarriage, the sin of another divorce. May the Holy Spirit change your heart and make you think "O Lord, I am so sorry. I was ignorant of the Scriptures. I was blind to my own sin. I have broken your law and tarnished the name of Christ. Please forgive me. Have mercy on us Lord." In addition to asking for God's forgiveness, you must ask for forgiveness from anyone else whom you have hurt by breaking your marriage vows, but remain in your present marriage.

9. I'm divorced and single – how do I move forward?

If you had legitimate grounds for divorce or you became a victim (the innocent party) to divorce, we want to assure you that you are not a sinner and the church will always offer grace and fellowship.

For those who are the guilty party to a divorce (whose sin caused the divorce), run to the cross. It is not a light thing to tear asunder what God joined together. Run to God; plead with God. Know His adopting love. Experience His justifying and free grace again. Reconcile with your spouse and don't pursue an adulterous second marriage.

If you have had improper grounds for divorce, we pray that you may find hope in the Lord and that God might be able to reconcile you and your spouse. If that doesn't happen, don't get remarried.

10. I'm married and contemplating divorce – how do I move forward?

Do talk to your pastors or marriage counsellors in church. Please do not give up. If you have biblical grounds for divorce, consider the glory you will give to God when you patiently work towards reconciliation. And if you don't have biblical grounds, consider the offence that you bring to God, to break the promises you made in His name. Also, do take into consideration many other factors, such as, the harm to your children – the emotional and psychological trauma. Do remain married.

11. I'm married – how do I move forward?

Stay married. Guard your marriage. Do not think you are above falling. Do not think you are above temptation. Pray together; serve God together. Take time out to be together, away from others and even your children. Do not take your marriage for granted.

12. What is God's take on sexual immorality?

Sexual immorality is condemned in about 25 passages in the New Testament. The Greek word is *porneia*, a word that includes all forms of illicit sex. The reason God asks us to avoid all types of sexual immorality is because our bodies are not designed for it.

You say -

1 Corinthians 6:13, *"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for **sexual immorality** but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."*

Jesus taught -

Mark 7:21-23, *"For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, **sexual immorality**, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'."*

Paul said -

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, *"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid **sexual immorality**; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God".*

13. I have sinned – how do I move forward?

You can not fight this battle alone. You must depend on Lord Jesus to change your immoral habits. You need to confess your sins to the Lord and break off any relationships that lead you, or tempt you, into further sin. Admit your need for God's strength.

1 Peter 2:24, *"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."*

Ephesians 5:5, *"For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."*

GOD ASKS US TO AVOID ALL TYPES OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS BECAUSE OUR BODIES ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR IT.

14. Did God sanction live-in relationships?

A live-in relationship, or co-habitation, is a developing culture which replaces marriage with living together without any commitment of marriage. The Holy Bible clearly doesn't recommend this type of live-in relationship.

It is very clearly written in **1 Thessalonians 5:22**, *"abstain from all appearances of evil"* and you, being a child of God, are supposed to glorify God with your lifestyle.

1 Corinthians 7:2, *"Because of the temptation to sexual immorality each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband."*

15. I have a live-in partner – how do I move forward?

When a couple lives together before marriage, their lifestyle fails to reflect the commitment that God intended, instituted and ordained for marriage. There is good news - it is never too late to make a change. God forgives sin. The first step is, to go to God in repentance for dishonouring Him with a wrong lifestyle. Repentance is not merely feeling sorry, but turning back to God from sin. In this instance, the couple who are co-habiting can do the following to show their repentance:

- Have one person move out
- Prepare for a prospective marriage together through Christ-focussed discipline and pre-marital counselling

16. How do I handle and evangelize an unsaved spouse?

An unsaved spouse in any marriage must be won with your character, which displays Christian virtues, more than your proclamation of faith. God has called you to live in peace; to continue to pray and hope for your unsaved spouse to receive true salvation in Christ Jesus.

The Bible says in **1 Peter 3:1-2**, *"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct."*

17. Is it okay to marry an unbeliever?

The deep unity and oneness of a marriage cannot flourish when one partner cannot fully participate in the other person's most important commitment - to follow Christ. It is wrong to enter into a marriage with the hope to later influence the spouse's commitment, to live for Christ.

2 Corinthians 6:14, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"*

The criteria for holy marriages (regardless of love or arranged marriage) are the following:

Have you both surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ?

Have you both decided to follow Him all the days of your lives?

Will you both make your life choices based on God's Holy Bible?

Will you both serve God's purposes together as a couple for His kingdom?

If marriage is meant more for our holiness than our happiness, then we should not marry someone who merely fulfils the longings of the flesh, but one who complements our spiritual thirst for Christ.

18. What are the Bible mandates on the duties/functions/roles of the husband and wife?

In marriage, the roles of husband and wife are distinct.

Consider the way Ephesians 5:22–25 unfurls the roles of 'husband' and 'wife' in the mystery of marriage as a replica of 'Christ' and 'The Church':

Ephesians 5:22-25, *"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."*

Headship is the divine calling of a husband - to take the primary responsibility for Christ-like, servant leadership, for protection, and for provision in the home.

Submission is the divine calling of a wife - to honour and affirm her husband's leadership and to help carry it through according to her gifts.

1 Peter 3:7, *"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."*

1 Timothy 5:8, *"But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."*

Titus 2:4-5, *"and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, keepers at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled."*

If you have any further questions, please email us at info@bethelag.in or walk into the church office for any counselling regarding this issue.