

Every Nation Rosebank Divorce and Remarriage

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Biblical View

Because of God's love for us, He has provided clear instructions on how married couples can experience oneness and fulfill His vision for the marriage union. God has made provision that through the work of the cross, we have built strong and lasting marriages. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, we can forgive one another when we have missed the mark. This means it was never God's intention for marriage to end in separation or divorce. We read in Matthew 19 and 1st Corinthians 7 two grounds for Biblical divorce.

In Matthew 19:9 ESV we read the words of Jesus, "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." According to this text, the first ground for divorce is adultery or infidelity. Jesus also reiterated God's original idea of one man and one woman in a personal, purposeful, and permanent relationship. The second Biblical ground of divorce is desertion or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. In 1st Corinthians 7:15 ESV Paul states, "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.”

If the unbelieving spouse wants to end the relationship, the believer is not required to preserve the marriage. It is important to note that desertion usually entails the physical separation of a spouse by moving out of the marital home, but it can also include other forms of desertion of marriage, including persistent and unrepentant abuse and addiction². It is important that the couple go for counseling in order to get the correct guidance before deciding to separate.

Jesus gave permission for remarriage when adultery has taken place. Paul upholds the idea of permanency in marriage, whether it be to a believer or unbeliever, yet he gives permission for a believing spouse to separate if deserted by an unbeliever. According to Paul, an abandoned believer is not commanded to stay in this marriage. An implication of the marriage bonds being severed is that remarriage is possible, but we must acknowledge that remarriage is not specifically addressed in this passage.

Based on the clear teachings of Jesus, remarriage is not permitted in the case of an unbiblical divorce due to the continuation of the bonds of marriage in the eyes of God. While remarriage following unbiblical divorce is a sin, it is not a special

category of sin that is beyond God's merciful grace³. If the individual is repentant and acknowledges their contribution to their marriage failure, that is a good foundation for considering remarriage.

Practicalities, Theological-Psychological Approach

Based on the Biblical view above, remarriage is certainly possible. Because of the fall, the reality of a broken world, and the complexities of life, it is crucial that couples go through a rigorous process of counseling before resorting to separation. Because scripture is unequivocal on the grounds of divorce and remarriage, it is important to teach this at pre-marriage interventions. It must also be communicated categorically that the pastors at our church may not officiate the remarriage of a person who divorced unbiblically if they do not show remorse or repentance for their contribution to the failure of their marriage. It is the responsibility of the local church pastors to prayerfully discern and determine the spiritual state of the two parties. We also acknowledge the importance of the local church to provide emotional support for both parties as they go through the process of separation.