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## **Divorce and Remarriage**

*Statement of Belief*

*Approved by the Council of Elders*  
*November 1997*

All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

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One of the most troublesome and distressing aspects of our modern society is the ordeal of divorce. Spouses, children, parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, and friends-- all parties touched by a divorce must deal with painful emotional, mental and physical repercussions. In addition, Christians must address the spiritual implications of this issue. We know from the writings of Moses that under the Old Covenant divorce was permitted as long as certain conditions were met (*Deuteronomy 24:1-2*). In spite of this allowance, we do read the following in the book of Malachi:

And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering any more, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make *them* one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," says the LORD of Hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."<sup>1</sup> (*Malachi 2:13-16*)

The clear statement that God "hates divorce" should give all of us cause to ponder. While we live in an era quite removed from the time of the prophet Malachi, we must not assume that God feels any differently today ("For I am the LORD, I do not change," *Malachi 3:6*).

The reality of modern life, however, leaves us with a dilemma: How do we deal with something that is so thoroughly woven into our society? Sobering statistics reveal that an alarmingly high percentage of all marriages end in divorce. This trend has directly impacted many in the Church and we cannot ignore the resulting questions that arise.

For example, do the scriptures permit a Christian to divorce and then remarry? What is the role of the Church and the ministry in such matters? What is the basis for our understanding of this subject? As in all questions within the Church, we must turn to God's word to find the answers.

## **Biblical Overview**

The great value God places on the marriage relationship demands that it be entered into with a great deal of consideration, evaluation of all relevant factors and prayer for divine guidance. Christ makes it clear in the book of Matthew that marriage is a commitment:

Furthermore it has been said, "whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce." But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual

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<sup>1</sup>*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982. All scriptures are from the NKJV, unless otherwise noted.

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immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery (*Matthew 5:31-32*).

The Pharisee also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?” So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate (*Matthew 19:3-6*).

A man and woman’s commitment to their marriage is one of the most important and serious steps they will ever take. Entering into a marriage with the belief that divorce is a viable option if “things don’t work out” is an attitude God hates. Children are often the product of a marriage and the damage and pain divorce causes in their lives compounds God’s disdain.

Therefore, any couple planning to enter the marriage union should take great care to insure that they are entering it for the right reasons, that it has the blessing of the Almighty Creator and that they are committed to it lasting until death.

The gospel of Luke shows that remarriage is considered adultery in certain cases:

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery (*Luke 16:18*).

God’s intent was that divorce not occur, but sadly, humanity cut off from God—often in ignorance, does not practice a “thy-will-be-done” lifestyle. God’s intent is seldom man’s practice. It is certainly true that God allowed judgments to be made concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage under the Old Covenant. Provisions are made for divorce in the writings of Moses:

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house. (*Deuteronomy 24:1*)

Christ states in the New Testament that this was not God’s intent. Notice Matthew’s account:

They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery (*Matthew 19:7-9*).

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The “hardness of your hearts” applies to all humanity, who, from the time of Adam and Eve, rejected God’s way of life. While it was clearly God’s intent from the beginning that all marriages be for life, it is a simple fact that not all marriages will be that lasting. Although we would not deny that God may be involved in the courtship and marriage of people prior to their calling, we believe that those who have been called by God should diligently seek God’s involvement.

Humans will accordingly make wrong choices, often with significant and serious impact on their lives. God, in His mercy, has made provision for the acceptable and satisfactory resolution of man’s sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

While the Old Testament allowed for divorce, Christ explained that this was due to the “hardness of your hearts.” He went on to explain that this (divorce) was not the intent from the beginning. God’s intent has always been that marriage is for life. Yet the New Testament does define two cases where divorce, and subsequent remarriage were acceptable without the result being declared sin (*Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15*). These can be summarized as:

1. sexual immorality
2. an unbeliever not pleased to dwell with a believer

In order to understand the Church’s approach toward divorce and remarriage, we must examine these along with other pertinent biblical statements.

### **Sexual Immorality**

The first case deals with sexual immorality as stated in Matthew 19:9. The Greek word translated “sexual immorality” is *porneia*. The following quotes from two lexicons and two Bible dictionaries provide insight into the meaning of this word:

**88.271** πορνεύω; ἐκπορνεύω; πορνεία, ας *f*: to engage in sexual immorality of any kind, often with the implication of prostitution - ‘to engage in illicit sex, to commit fornication, sexual immorality, fornication, prostitution.’<sup>2</sup>

πορνεία, ας, ἡ (Demosth.+; LXX, Philo, Test. 12 Patr.) *prostitution, unchastity, fornication*, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.<sup>3</sup>

porneia [πορνεία , (4202)] is used (a) of illicit sexual intercourse, in John 8:41; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1

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<sup>2</sup>Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

<sup>3</sup>Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press ) 1979.

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Thess. 4:3; Rev. 2:21; 9:21; in the plural in 1 Cor. 7:2; in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 it stands for, or includes, adultery; it is distinguished from it in 15:19 and Mark 7:21.<sup>4</sup>

*Porneia* means “fornication” (sometimes involving adultery); figuratively it is a term for apostasy as unfaithfulness to God. . . Later Judaism shows how the use of *porneia* broadens out to include not only fornication or adultery but incest, sodomy, unlawful marriage, and sexual intercourse in general.<sup>5</sup>

The implication of the word “*porneia*” is broader than simply *fornication* (as translated in the AV). It can be a reference to any type of sexual immorality, including adultery. Some of the more modern translations have the following for *porneia* in Matthew 19:9 -- “*immorality*” in the NASV; “*marital unfaithfulness*” in the NIV; “*sexual immorality*” in the NKJV; and “*unchastity*” in the RSV.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary has an interesting section which provides insight into the background of Christ’s words in Matthew 19:1-12. Reference is made to this as the “exception” clause.

[Matthew] 19:1-12. Jesus . . . left Galilee for the last time and headed for Jerusalem through the region of Judea to the east side of the Jordan River. That area was known as Perea. There, as often before, He was followed by large crowds of needy people, and He healed them. But some Pharisees sought to test Jesus through a question: Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason? The nation was divided over this issue. Followers of Hillel felt a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason, but others, following Shammai, thought one could not divorce his wife unless she were guilty of sexual offense. Without getting involved in the Hillel-Shammai controversy Jesus reminded the religious leaders of God’s original purpose in establishing the marriage bond. God made people male and female (v. 4; Gen. 1:27). In marriage He joins them together in an inseparable bond. This bond is a higher calling than the parent-child relationship, for a man is to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife in a one-flesh relationship (Gen. 2:24). Therefore what God has joined together, men ought not separate (χωριζετωμ; in 1 Cor. 7:10 this word means “to divorce”). The Pharisees, realizing that Jesus was speaking of the permanence of the marital relationship, asked why Moses made a provision for divorce for people in his time (Matt. 19:7). The Lord’s answer was that Moses granted this permission because people’s hearts were hard (cf. Deut. 24:1-4). . . But that was not God’s intention for marriage. God intended husbands and wives to live together permanently. Divorce was wrong except for marital unfaithfulness (cf. Matt. 5:32). Bible scholars differ over the meaning of this “exception clause,” found only in Matthew’s Gospel. The word for “marital unfaithfulness” is *porneia*.

Some feel Jesus used this as a synonym for adultery (*moicheia*). Therefore adultery by either partner in a marriage is the only sufficient grounds for a marriage to end in

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<sup>4</sup> Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

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divorce. Among those holding this view, some believe remarriage is possible but others believe remarriage should never occur. Others define *porneia* as a sexual offense that could occur only in the betrothal period when a Jewish man and woman were considered married but had not yet consummated their coming marriage with sexual intercourse. If in this period the woman was found pregnant (as was Mary; 1:18-19), a divorce could occur in order to break the contract.

Another view is that *porneia* refers to a relentless, persistent, unrepentant lifestyle of sexual unfaithfulness (different from a one-time act of illicit relations). (In the NT *porneia* is broader than *moicheia*). Such a continued practice would thus be the basis for divorce, since such unfaithful and unrelenting conduct would have broken the marriage bond.<sup>6</sup>

As is shown in the sources quoted above, Christ's statement in Matthew 19 can include all forms of sexual misconduct. It is important to realize that we are discussing habitual behavior. The lexicons use the word "*prostitution*" and the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* refers to a "*relentless, persistent, unrepentant lifestyle of sexual unfaithfulness (different from a one-time act of illicit relations).*" This is consistent with other admonitions in scripture about sin versus habitual sin. In Romans 6 we read about having been a slave to sin prior to conversion. There is a clear difference between sinning and living in sin (*1 John 3:8*). There is also the principle of forgiveness. If an individual is truly repentant, the goal should be to save the marriage. Sadly, in some cases this simply won't be possible. While the word *porneia* can refer to any sort of sexual misconduct, we should be careful that we not abandon a marriage without knowing whether the offending party has truly repented of his/her conduct.

In Matthew 5:31-32, Christ makes this statement: "Furthermore it has been said that, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." The word translated "sexual immorality" is *porneia*. Clearly, this Greek word covers a wide range of sexual misconduct.

The Greek word translated "adultery" in both Matthew 5 and 19 is *moicheia*. It is rather interesting that both *porneia* and *moicheia* are used in the same verse. *Moicheia* has a more narrow focus than *porneia* and does not allow for the wide range of deviant sexual behavior. It means adultery.

**88.276** μοιχεύω μοιχάομαι μοιχεία, ας, f: sexual intercourse of a man with a married woman other than his own spouse - 'to commit adultery, adultery'. . . sexual intercourse of either an unmarried or a married man with someone else's wife was regarded as adultery, both on the part of the man as well as the woman. In view of the married status of the woman being the determining factor in

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<sup>6</sup> Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

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μοιχεύω, μοιχάομαι, μοιχεία, and related terms (88.277-278), there is a significant contrast with πορνεύω [porneia] and related expressions (88.271). Πορνεύω [porneia], however, may be regarded as more generic in meaning, and thus in certain contexts including adultery.<sup>7</sup>

**moicheúō** [to commit adultery], **moicháō** [to commit adultery], **moicheía** [adultery], **moichos** [adulterer], **moichalís** [adulteress, adulterous]<sup>8</sup>

In summary, sexual misconduct would be grounds for divorce, although in general, there should be an effort to save the marriage if the conduct is not habitual. Christ gave this as the “exception” clause. When you consider God’s intent for a marriage to last until death, only when there is no presence of repentance or chance for forgiveness and reconciliation, should a divorce occur. If a divorce does occur, remarriage is possible without it being considered adultery under these conditions.

## Believer and Unbeliever

The second case is found in 1 Corinthians 7 and deals with an unbelieving mate divorcing a believer. In this case, the believer is “not under bondage” according to the scripture.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace (*1 Corinthians 7:14-15*).

The term “not under bondage” is further expounded in some of the commentaries. Here are sample comments from two such references:

The Bible Knowledge Commentary—

[1 Corinthians] 7:15. However, there were exceptions to the rule of no divorce. If **the unbeliever** insisted on a divorce, he was not to be denied (the word trans. **leaves** is chōrizetai, the verb used in v. 10). Should this occur, the Christian was **not bound** to maintain the marriage but was free to marry again (cf. v. 39). Paul did not say, as he did in verse 11, that the Christian in this case should “remain unmarried.”<sup>9</sup>

Matthew Henry—

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<sup>7</sup> Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

<sup>9</sup> Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

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[1 Corinthians 7:10-16] The believer is not by faith in Christ loosed from matrimonial bonds to an unbeliever, but is at once bound and made apt to be a better relative. But, though a believing wife or husband should not separate from an unbelieving mate, yet if the unbelieving relative desert the believer, and no means can reconcile to a cohabitation, in such a case a brother or sister is not in bondage (v. 15), not tied up to the unreasonable humour, and bound servilely to follow or cleave to the malicious deserter, or not bound to live unmarried after all proper means for reconciliation have been tried. .

<sup>10</sup>

It is here in 1 Corinthians 7 that Paul gives additional, and the most specific, information on marriage in the New Testament. An analysis of this chapter gives us principles and answers to the questions facing the Church on the subject.

Similar to our time, Paul had to address a series of questions written to him by members of the Church at Corinth:

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband (*1 Corinthians 7:1-2*).

In the process of answering these questions, Paul referred to several categories of people. While devoting considerable instruction (verses 8-9 and 25-40) to the unmarried (single or widowed), he directed comments regarding divorce to two other groups. For the married believers, Paul stated categorically that they should remain married. However, if they must separate—presumably due to marital difficulties—they should realize that there is no option for remarriage, only for reconciliation.

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife (*1 Corinthians 7:10-11*).

The third category of people he spoke to were “the rest” – believers married to unbelievers.

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (*1 Corinthians 7:12-14*).

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<sup>10</sup>Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1991.

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Paul's directives to the Corinthians were inspired to be included as scripture. By combining these with what we read in the rest of God's Word, we can arrive at the proper position for the United Church of God, *an International Association*. In summary, we conclude from Paul's writings that it is permissible for a Christian who is married to an unbeliever to be eligible for remarriage if the unbeliever departs. A logical question that can arise from this understanding is what happens if the unbeliever doesn't depart, but simply makes life miserable for the believer? The application of the principle would require that there are cases where an unbeliever shows clearly by his *conduct* that he is not pleased to dwell. In such cases, the believer may be the one to actually initiate the divorce, but it was the unbeliever who "departed."

In summary, we see that there are two biblical reasons for the dissolution of a marriage: *porneia* (sexual immorality) and an unbeliever who is not pleased to dwell. In each case the marriage union has been broken and a remarriage can result without the fear of committing adultery.

### **Annulment**

In any discussion of divorce and remarriage, we should at least consider the concept of annulment. In the case of annulment, you have a fraudulent marriage which is put aside. This is different from a divorce, although a divorce may be required to break the contract. In general, annulment comes into play when there has been deception. In one sense this was the situation with Joseph and Mary. When Mary was found with child, Joseph could rightfully put her away. Even though they were betrothed to one another and not yet married, the potential marriage could be put aside because of Joseph's assumption of fraud (i.e., Mary's pregnancy).

It is true that *porneia* can include pre-marital sexual activity. And if this activity is concealed from the other partner, we would have deception and an annulment would be permissible. From Joseph's perspective this is the case with Mary.

[Matthew] 1:18-23. The fact that Jesus was born "of Mary" only, as indicated in the genealogical record (v. 16), demanded further explanation. Matthew's explanation can best be understood in the light of Hebrew marriage customs. Marriages were arranged for individuals by parents, and contracts were negotiated. After this was accomplished, the individuals were considered married and were called husband and wife. They did not, however, begin to live together. Instead, the woman continued to live with her parents and the man with his for one year. The waiting period was to demonstrate the faithfulness of the pledge of purity given concerning the bride. If she was found to be with child in this period, she obviously was not pure, but had been involved in an unfaithful sexual relationship. Therefore the marriage could be annulled.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

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When it is discovered that one member of the marriage deliberately kept back information that, which if known, would have caused the other partner not to marry, we have fraud. In general terms, fraud is something that should be acted upon when it is discovered and not many years later. Essentially, this would call for the annulling of the marriage. If important information is deliberately withheld by either party, a covenant relationship, such as marriage, is not binding, therefore can be annulled.

## Divorce Prior to Conversion

An additional concern that must be addressed deals with individuals who were married and divorced prior to their calling and conversion. Paul confirms that repentance, forgiveness, and baptism provide new converts with a fresh start, and they are not bound to past sins in marriage any more than they are to other sins (*Romans 6:1-7*). Paul states it very clearly when he says, “*For he who has died has been freed from sin.*” So, if the person who is single because of divorce chooses to remarry, then he has broken no law.

Since baptism marks a new beginning, past sins are forgiven. Therefore, a newly converted person is accepted in his current status—possibly a subsequent marriage, or possibly single as a result of divorce.

## Divorce in the Church

Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God, designed to be a loving, rewarding, continuously enriching, lifelong union. As such, Paul explained that it transcends the human plane, and is actually a reflection of the relationship Christ has with the Church (see *Ephesians 5:22-33*).

The Church firmly upholds the biblical instruction for husbands and wives to remain faithful to the ideals of that union. When advising separated couples in the Church, the goal of the ministry is to bring about reconciliation. (Extreme caution should be exercised in cases where abuse is involved.) The couple should be similarly motivated and endeavoring to save their marriage.

Divorce in the Church affects more than just the couple that is divorcing. Since Christ clearly shows that there are cases where divorce can lead to sin—in the case of an improper re-marriage, the Church does have a concern for the well-being of the people involved and the entire congregation. In 1 Corinthians 5 there is a clear example of the Apostle Paul becoming involved in a sinful relationship. While this is not a divorce and remarriage case, it is a case of immorality within the Church. If a person remarries without scriptural grounds, the result is adultery, therefore sin, or immorality within the Church. Paul instructs the Corinthians to take action against the individual who was involved in sexual immorality (*porneia*). The principle that a little leavening leavens the whole lump is important to keep in mind when dealing with a sinful lifestyle among God’s people.

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There are a number of scriptures which clearly establish the responsibility of the Church to become involved in cases involving sin. In James 5:19-20 we read: “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” The purpose in involvement is to save a person’s life. How can we be our “brother’s keeper” if we ignore sin? In Ezekiel 33:8 we read that if “you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.” Matthew 18 describes a process for dealing with a transgression that ultimately involves the Church. Hebrews 13:17 addresses the concept of responsibility: “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” There are also many scriptures that warn us not to fellowship with individuals involved in practicing sin. If we truly love our brother then we must be willing to point out sin and help that brother come to repentance. This is certainly true in the case of divorce and remarriage.

## The Church’s Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage

The following points summarize the teachings of the United Church of God, *an International Association* on divorce and remarriage. These principles are derived from the instructions which can be found in the pages of scripture.

1. Only the following two reasons can (but do not necessarily have to) dissolve a marriage in which a believer is involved.
  - “*porneia*,” or sexual immorality. This would include in the broader sense all cases of sexual deviancy, adultery being an example. The implication is habitual sexual misconduct, but is not limited to this.
  - Not pleased to dwell. Paul explains in the book of 1 Corinthians that if an unbeliever is not pleased to dwell and departs that a Christian is not “under bondage.” An individual may express his/her displeasure in a number of ways-- *habitual* misconduct such as immorality (refers back to implications of *porneia*), criminality, addictive behaviors, abuse, desertion or willful failure to provide physical support (*1 Timothy 5:8*). In such cases it may be appropriate for the “believer” to initiate the proceedings.
2. Believers who separate, for other than scripturally-given reasons, are admonished to either reconcile or remain unmarried (*Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11*).
3. Generally speaking, if an unbeliever is “willing to live” (*1 Corinthians 7:12*) with the believer, the believer should not seek to end the marriage through divorce. The AV uses “pleased to dwell” instead of “willing to live.” This is often a difficult area to define since it can be quite subjective. There should be some evidence of the unbeliever not being pleased to dwell with the believer.

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4. A marriage may be annulled or put aside if either party was deceived by the other partner prior to marrying. Fraud or deception should be acted upon at the time of discovery.
5. Individuals who are called into the Church having already experienced divorce, are accepted in their current marital state—divorced and now single, or divorced and now remarried, since all sin is removed upon repentance and baptism (*Romans 6:7*).

## Conclusion

When couples have marital problems, the ministry of the United Church of God, *an International Association* will always seek first to help them understand and pursue God's help to salvage their marriage. Sadly, though, there will always be cases where no amount of teaching or counseling will save the marriage. Though our desire is to see all marriages flourish, by all means our primary goal is to see the salvation of each Christian. Everyone in the Church should be sensitive, considerate and helpful of God's people who endure such a traumatic event in their lives. Without compromising the standards of God's Word, we must be understanding and compassionate in our approach toward those who have been involved in divorce and remarriage.