

Biblical Grounds for Divorce

by Ess-Jee Rautenbach

This is a question I get almost every day and the sad thing about it is that most Christians who want a divorce ask this very thing. Instead of turning to Christ with this question, we turn to our Church and church leaders, and the answers that they give are for me, personally, sometimes shocking. To make my point, I will name the six reasons most churches, pastors, counselors and Christians use to advise or even justify how God approves of divorce and why divorce can be a Biblical solution for a dead marriage. What constitutes the legitimate ending of a marriage? The following are “Biblical grounds for divorce:”

1. Death (Rom. 7:2–4; 1 Cor. 7:39)
2. Adultery (Deut. 22:22; Matt. 5:32)
3. Non-Christian files for divorce and leaves (1 Cor. 7:10–24)
4. Sexual immorality/porneia (Matt. 5:32; 19:9)
5. Treachery or treasonous betrayal (Mal. 2:14–16)
6. Hardness of heart (Matt. 19:8; Mark 10:5)

The scripture in parentheses is what people use to justify the point they want to make. The only point I agree with is number one, death. The other points are rubbish and if you read the context of the scripture used, you will see that its intention is never to justify reasons why people may divorce. The big, big problem we have in our church systems is that we operate like we are still in the original covenant. Instead of pursuing Christ in the new covenant He died for, we are pursuing church leaders and church systems. We are not taking our own responsibility in our spiritual growth. So we call our marriages “covenants” but, in actual fact, we are treating them as Biblical contracts.

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“I believe that by exchanging the biblical value of covenant in marriage for the cultural value of contract, we as the church have ceased to be salt and light and are participating aggressively in the wholesale destruction of our society and, more importantly, of the image of God in the sight of others”

– Craig Hill.

I hear you asking me: “Okay, Ess-Jee, I hear what you are saying, but where did the, “Marriage ending clause” come from?

It first occurred back in the sixteenth century through a humanist philosopher named Desiderius Erasmus, who had great influence on Martin Luther and other early reformers. Erasmus’ view of re-marriage and divorce was the only historical view of marriage that said that there are more reasons for divorce than death. Because he was also known for his humanist views, his view of marriage was very appealing to our fallen human nature. The other four historical views of biblical teaching on divorce taught that remarriage was not permitted after divorce.

The five historically accepted views of divorce and remarriage are as follows:

1. The Patristic (or early Fathers) view
2. The Erasmian (or traditional Protestant) view
3. The Preterative (or Augustinian) view
4. The Betrothal (or engagement) view
5. The Consanguinity (or unlawful marriages) view

The modernization of the Erasmian view seems to assume that remarriage is automatically allowed if divorce occurs for the permitted reason(s).

All five views presented here agree on some basic points. Paul E. Steele and Charles C. Ryrie have written an excellent book entitled “Meant to Last” in which they discuss the five historical views of divorce and remarriage including that introduced by Erasmus. In summary, all five views presented here agree on some basic points.

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? God's best is monogamy and He hates divorce.

? Divorce under the law was a concession for hard hearts.

? Christ taught and upheld God's highest standard in His teaching. The Patristic view and the Erasmian view agree the Porneia may mean adultery. But the Erasmian view is the only one to allow remarriage after divorce. The other views, while recognizing that divorce may sometimes happen for various reasons, are unanimous in their conviction that remarriage is contrary to Scripture, and never permitted.

To be consistent with Paul's understanding of the meaning of Christ's words as given in 1 Corinthians 7:10-13, the believer who suffers the misfortune of a divorce has two clear options: remain unmarried or be reconciled to one's mate. To teach anything else is inconsistent with God's standard for marriage.

When Christian pastors and leaders authorize and condone the remarriage of divorced Christians, they are aiding Satan in misrepresenting the image and character of God.

Breaking Human Traditions, “

Mathew 15:1 Then Pharisees¹ and experts in the law² came from Jerusalem³ to Jesus and said,⁴ 15:2 “Why do your disciples disobey the tradition of the elders? For they don’t wash their⁵ hands when they eat.”⁶ 15:3 He answered them,⁷

“And why do you disobey the commandment of God because of your tradition? 15:4 For God said,⁸ ‘Honor your father and mother’⁹ and ‘Whoever insults his father or mother must be put to death.’¹⁰ 15:5 But you say, ‘If someone tells his father or mother, “Whatever help you would have received from me is given to God,”¹¹ 15:6 he does not need to honor his father.’¹² You have nullified the word of God on account of your tradition. 15:7 Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said, 15:8 ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart¹³ is far from me, 15:9 and they worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’

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“Truth is truth, no matter whose marriage it is. God's plan to be faithful "until death do us part" is His marriage covenant.”-

Marlyn Phillips

“In our desire to extend short-term mercy and grace to individuals, we are releasing long-term wholesale destruction of our children and grandchildren. We have almost no earthly picture of

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one who would keep a covenant even in the face of betrayal. Thus a Christian marriage which should portray the covenant-keeping relationship of Christ and His church instead often times portrays covenant breaking, selfishness, and impartation of a deep fear that incorrect behavior will result in rejection and abandonment.”

Craig Hill - Covenant or Contract

I hope that you can see that there are no Biblical grounds for divorce. Only death can end a marriage covenant. To sum it up, what choice do you have when you want to divorce or if your spouse has left you? You can remain single or choose to stand for the healing of your marriage and be reconciled with your spouse. This truth I speak with you in love. May there be a God fearing generation that starts to love their spouses like Christ loved us, and may our lives once again portray unconditional love so that the world may know Christ through the love we have for each other.