

the Refuge

Divorce and
Domestic Abuse

Biblical Grounds for Divorce

1. Adultery

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” ⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Biblical Grounds for Divorce

1. Adultery

⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” ⁸ He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:3-9)

Biblical Grounds for Divorce

2. Desertion

¹² To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³ If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 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.

Biblical Grounds for Divorce

Χωρίζω:

- To cause a separation through the use of space between.
- To separate by departing from someone.

The Context of 1 Corinthians 7

“Now concerning the matters about which you wrote”:

- vv. 1-7: Is celibacy the biblical way of life?
- vv. 8-9: Should the unmarried and widows get married?
- vv. 10-11: Should married people remain married?
- vv. 12-16: Should you remain married if your partner is an unbeliever?

Case Law

- Case laws give rules that govern a particular situation. It is expected that we discern a universal principle from the law, and apply it to other situations.
- Exodus 21:33-34: ³³ When a man opens a pit, or when a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴ the owner of the pit shall make restoration. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his.

Case Law

- 1 Cor. 7:15 (ESV): But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so.
- 1 Cor. 7:15 (Greek): εἰ δὲ ὁ ἄπιστος χωρίζεται, χωριζέσθω
- General Principle: If the actions of one spouse effectively break the bond of marriage, the other spouse is not obligated to remain married.

Applying 1 Corinthians 7:15 to Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse creates an oppressive environment in the home that forces the wife to leave for her own wellbeing.

Applying 1 Corinthians 7:15 to Domestic Abuse

Effects of Domestic Abuse on the Survivor:

Life may be threatened

Physical injuries

Questioning her sanity

Severe anxiety

Panic attacks

Intense nightmares

Insomnia

Digestion issues

Depression

PTSD

Suicidal thoughts

Applying 1 Corinthians 7:15 to Domestic Abuse

Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children:

Failure to thrive

Fear

Anxiety

Insecurity

Self-blame

Defiance

Poor grades

Bed-Wetting

Intense nightmares

Eating disorders

Substance abuse

Teen pregnancy

Cutting

Suicidal thoughts

Boys: become abusive

Girls: marry abusers

Remarriage

Matthew 19:9: And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.

Remarriage

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.

Remarriage

1 Corinthians 7:10-11: ¹⁰ To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹ (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

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Statement of Faith

Marriage and Divorce: We believe that God created the covenant of marriage as a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the Church. It exists for the glory of God, and for the mutual benefit of husband and wife. Divorce should only occur when a spouse has biblical grounds. We further believe that domestic abuse creates an oppressive environment in the home that often forces the survivor to leave for her own wellbeing. Such sin on the part of the abuser constitutes biblical grounds for divorce.

The Refuge Core Values

Survivor Freedom: By definition, perpetrators of domestic abuse are incredibly controlling. Therefore, it is important that survivors have the freedom to think for themselves and make their own decisions. We present survivors with options and help them think through their situation. But they make all the decisions, free from pressure and coercion. To do otherwise would be counterproductive to their recovery.