

Abuse, Separation, Divorce, Remarriage

Key Point: *We cannot control what people think say or do. We are responsible for how we respond to people and situations. We do not have control over a disobedient spouse. We can only control our response to a disobedient spouse. If we at anytime are doing wrong to make our spouse do right we are sinning. The end does not justify the means. Therefore, in the situation of physical abuse, the abused spouse must do what is right in the sight of God even though the abuser is not. The abused spouse is free to find safety away from the abuser without violating the marital covenant made with the abuser. Physical abuse is not a grounds for divorce, this is why the abuser has the freedom to find safety away from the abuser without violating the marital covenant with the abuser. Separation is only permissible for a short time, to deal with safety matters for the one who is being abused and to regroup in order to face the issues within the marriage, not a way to get out of the marriage. When people are separated they are still married. Separation is not divorce therefore, you are still obligated to each other as a husband and wife. You cannot be separated for a long time and fulfill the commands of God in relation to the marital covenant.*

When a person is being abused there are several ways they can work through the situation such as:

1. Lovingly confronting the abuser about the situation. They must do so making sure they have addressed their own unloving thoughts, words, or actions that may be involved in the situation before confronting the person. The abuser does not have the right to abuse the person regardless to how the one being abused may have contributed or reacted to the abuse. But the person being abused still has to address their response or contribution to the situation before confronting the abuser. If the abuser is unwilling to repent the person being abused must call in others to assist in the matter. If the abuser does not respond to this they must call in Church leadership as well (Matthew 7:1-5, 18:15-17).
2. Calling the police to handle the situation accordingly (Romans 13:1-7).
3. Finding safety away from the abuser without violating the marital covenant with the abuser. Abuse is not a justification for divorce therefore, one cannot use divorce as a way of escape from abuse (Proverbs 22:3, Proverbs 27:12).
4. Entrusting themselves to God by doing what is right in the marriage. This means the abused is responsible for still doing what they are called to do within a marriage while finding safety away from the abuser (Proverbs 15:1, 1Peter 3:1, 1Peter 3:13-17, Proverbs 22:3, 27:12).
5. Separation is only permissible for a short time, to deal with safety matters for the one who is being abused and to regroup in order to face the issues within the marriage; not to get out of the marriage. The husband and wife must continue to do what God called

them to do within the marital covenant. When people are separated they are still married. Therefore, they must follow the commands of Scripture by doing what God has designed for a husband and wife. Therefore, you cannot stay away from each other for a long period time and fulfill your responsibilities as a husband and wife. As long as one is married they are called to function according to what is below. Too much time apart means that one cannot fulfill these responsibilities. This calls for repentance and return to their God-given responsibilities with each other knowing that suffering may come in doing so. Yet, the one who has been abused is to do what is right while still pursuing safety accordingly. This is a difficult and delicate balance (Proverbs 22:3, Proverbs 27:12, Proverbs 15:1, 1Peter 2:13-25, 1Thessalonians 5:18, 1 Peter 3:1-7,13-17, Ephesians 5:18-33, 1Corinthians 7:1-5, Titus 2:4-5,).

Husbands are to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25-30).

- Meaning—to self sacrifice for the benefit, provision, welfare of his wife in all aspects of her life(Ephesians 5:25-31).
- Manner—as Christ loved the Church(Ephesians 5:25-31).
- Motive—to help her to become Holy/Blameless; that she may function according to God’s design(Ephesians 5:25-31).
- Magnitude—to death(1John 3:16-18).
- Manifestation—considering her interest concerns, needs, desires, and making sure they are taken care of in the way that Christ would do it for the Church; relating with her socially, spiritually, emotionally, and sexually in a manner that benefits her and reflects the character of Christ; compensating for her weaknesses in ways that Christ would do it for the Church; leading and guiding her into spiritual maturity, helping her to be all of what God designed her to be in the way that Christ would do it for the Church; leading your wife as Christ would lead the Church in all aspects of the marriage (1 Peter 3:7, 1 Corinthians 7:33).

Wives are to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24).

- Meaning—to willingly follow the leadership of your husband; to willingly follow the instructions of your husband (Ephesians 5:22-24).
- Manner—as the Church submits to Christ the Lord; as if she were responding to Jesus Christ Himself(Ephesians 5:22-24).
- Motive—out of respect for God’s design (Ephesians 5:22-24).
- Magnitude—in everything that is not sin including Preferences (Ephesians 5:22-24).
- Manifestation—following her husband’s leadership and directives in all that she does in the home and outside the home as unto the Lord; following her husband’s leadership and directives in the raising of the children as unto the Lord; showing respect to her husband in all aspects of the marriage as unto the Lord; managing their home in ways that is in line with her husband’s leadership and directives as unto the Lord; listening to and following through on the things that concern your husband that has been

requested of you as unto the Lord (Titus 2:3-5, Proverbs 31:10-31, 1 Corinthians 7:34, 1 Peter 3:1-6).

Key Point: *As we look at divorce and remarriage we must evaluate a few key items and evaluate what is the best course of action. Reconciliation is the optimal choice. However, people do not always do what is optimal. If a person has divorced and is looking to remarry we must evaluate the nature of the divorce to determine if remarriage would be proper within the context of the situation.*

Considerations for Divorce and Remarriage

1. God's desire for husband and wife is to stay married. Sexual sin was the grounds mentioned in the New Testament for a permissible divorce for God's people. Even then if reconciliation is possible it should be done. (Matthew 19:1-9, Luke 17:1-3).
2. If a believer refuses to stay married to another believer and gets a divorce from that spouse for reasons other than adultery by their spouse, they are to stay single or be reconciled to that spouse in marriage. If they repent, seek to return to the marriage and that spouse has moved on the leadership must decide if remarriage to another Christian is possible (1Corinthians 7:10-11, Hebrews 13:17).
3. If a believer is married to an unbeliever and that unbeliever decides to leave the marriage the believer is free to file for divorce or accept the divorce from the unbeliever. However if a believer has a spouse that is an unbeliever that wants to stay in the marriage accordingly (not stay married yet live in sexual sin with other people) they must remain in the marriage (1Corinthians 7:12-16).
4. A believer is free to divorce their spouse and remarry another Christian if their spouse has committed adultery (Matthew 19:1-9, 2Corinthians 6:14-18).
5. A believer who has been married and divorced before he became a Christian is free to remarry since that happened before he/she was a Christian. He is considered a new creature in Christ with new privileges to stay single or to be married to a believer. They cannot return to their former unbelieving spouse because they are now Christians (Christians are not to marry unbelievers.) (2Corinthians 5:16-17, 1Corinthians 7:20-40, 2Corinthians 6:14-18).
6. If a believer is in an unbiblical marriage they must repent of the sin while remaining faithful to the person they are married to (Proverbs 28:13-14, 1Corinthians 7:10-11).

(Material adapted from Rich Thomson in His Book The Heat of Man and The Mental Disorders Bill Shannon Till Death Do Us Part: A Biblical Look at Divorce & Remarriage Pastor of Children's Ministry at Grace Community Church Sun Valley, California.