

- Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage - Bible Study Notes of David Rhoades

These study notes are a summation of the work of [David Instone-Brewer](#), a British scholar who focused his doctoral studies on Rabbinic Judaism, including the issues surrounding marriage and divorce in the 1st century. His books include: *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) and *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2003).

The format of these notes is from [Dynamist](#), an online outlining app.

 - Introduction to Bible Study
 - This is a topical Bible study, not a "how to" seminar or a divorce recovery group.
 - Two main goals:
 - To show you how to do a topical Bible study
 - To learn what the Bible says about marriage, divorce, and remarriage
 - Bible Study Principles:
 - Principle #1: We must let the Bible speak for itself.
 - We can make the Bible say anything we want if that is our goal.
 - However, when we read into the Bible preconceived ideas, we blind ourselves from the truth.
 - E.g. #1 - Ps. 14:1 says, "There is no God." But the actual verse in context says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"
 - E.g. #2 - John 8:32 says, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." But the context of this verse indicates that the "truth" is being a follower of Jesus.
 - Marriage, divorce, and remarriage are highly emotional and personal subjects, so we may have to fight the temptation to read into the Scriptures what we want them to say. It takes a measure of discipline and maturity to set aside your own thoughts and allow Scripture to speak on its own.
 - E.g. - My own parents were both divorced when they married each other and later had me. But I cannot allow the circumstances of my existence to color the way I read God's Word.
 - Principle #2: Observation, Interpretation, and Application.
 - The Observation, Interpretation, and Application method is sometimes called "inductive Bible study." Inductive reasoning is when you make an inference based on an observation (e.g., if you observe all your friends consuming a soup, you might induce that the soup is tasty).
 - Observation, Interpretation, and Application is biblical. 1 Tim. 4:13 says, "Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching."
 - We should observe first, interpret next, and apply last. Resist the temptation to apply a passage of Scripture before you understand what it means.
 - Observation answers the question: "What does the passage say?"
 - Interpretation answers the question: "What does God intend this passage to mean?"
 - Application answers the question: "How does this passage relate to me?"
- How we will study marriage, divorce, and remarriage:
 - We will study all of the major passages of Scripture that deal with marriage, divorce, and remarriage. By looking at these from the beginning, we can see how marriage, divorce, and remarriage was addressed as Scripture progressed to its final form. Also, we will discover how some of the more famous teachings in the NT are based on OT teachings.
 - The passages we will study include, but are not limited to:
 - Gen. 1-2
 - Ex. 21:10-11
 - Deut. 24:1-4
 - Mark 10:2
 - Matt. 5:31-32

- Matt. 19:3-9
 - 1 Cor. 7:10-12, 15
- Gen. 1:26-28
 - Observation: "Man" is plural (v. 26).
 - Observation: "Man" is male & female (v. 27).
 - Observation: Command - "Be fruitful and multiply" (v. 28).
- Gen. 2:20-25
 - Observation #1: God had not yet created woman.
 - Observation #2: There seems to be a problem.
 - Observation #3: The "helper" is supposed to correspond to the man.
 - Observation #4: God caused a deep sleep to come over the man.
 - Observation #5: God took out some rib from the man and built it into a woman.
 - Observation #6: God brought the woman to the man.
 - Observation #7: For the first time (that we know of), the man spoke.
 - Observation #8: The narrator tells us where the idea of a man leaving his father and mother came from.
 - Observation #9: The narrator tells us where the idea of a man cleaving to his wife came from.
 - Observation #10: The man and his wife become one flesh.
 - Observation #11: The man and his wife were naked and not ashamed.
 - Observation #12: The word "marriage" is not used. However, the word "wife" is used twice in vv. 24 & 25.
- Background - Universal understanding of marriage: Marriage is a legal contract.
 - Covenant vs Contract
 - To many people today, marriage has become an ethereal idea: "Oh, it's just something that is in the sight of God." We have come to think of marriage as a spiritual covenant, not a binding legal obligation.
 - In America, a covenant is an agreement which doesn't have many penalties attached. You keep it just as a matter of honor. If marriage is just a covenant (as understood this way), it's not a legal thing, but rather something you stay committed to because you're a decent person.
 - In Old English, the words "covenant" and "contract" were exactly the same thing. It was an agreement between two parties with stipulations and penalties for breaking it. And in England today, a covenant is a legal inheritance that you receive.
 - If you buy a house in England, you inherit a covenant, which puts various limitations on how you use that land along with the house.
 - If you get a job in England, you inherit a covenant which is part of that job. You don't have to sign a paper in order to fulfill your covenant, but it is understood as legally binding.
 - The biblical terminology of marriage shows that it is a contract.
 - In the Old Testament, the word for contract/covenant was the Hebrew word "berit." A berit is a legal understanding with clauses and penalties.
 - Laban made a berit with Jacob (cf. Gen. 29:14-30)
 - Solomon made a berit with Hiram to deliver wood (cf. 1 Kings 5)
 - In ancient (and modern) Jewish marriages, there is a long, written berit called a ketubah which delineates exactly how much money comes in from both the groom's & bride's families.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIM1SEJfixo>
 - In ancient Jewish marriages, the ketubah would typically say that the woman is going to be doing things like cooking and sewing, while the man will provide the food and house.
 - Each side has obligations and each side will receive things.
 - The idea of a "bride's price" shows that marriage is a contract.
 - In the Old Testament, you see this best in Jacob's interaction with Laban, the father of Leah and Rachel (cf. Gen. 29:14-30).

- Even today we have payments in our marriages: the exchange of rings.
 - Lawyers call the exchange of rings a "consideration." Without consideration, there's no contract. The consideration that we give is a ring.
 - Historically, only the bride would receive a ring (this is the price paid for the bride), since the money would come from the groom. More recently, both the groom and the bride have tended to exchange rings.
 - In some cultures today, such as in India and some African cultures, the bride price is huge. Sometimes people cannot afford to get married.
 - The involvement of the community in a wedding shows that marriage is a contract.
 - Adam and Eve were an exception to the rule of community involvement in a wedding. They WERE the community.
 - Many people today say, "I don't want the state involved in my marriage. To the state, marriage is just a piece of paper, so I'm just going to live with my loved one. In the sight of God, that's good enough."
 - A situation like this is not a biblical marriage. In the Bible, when the community was excluded from recognizing the relationship between the man and the woman, the woman was said to be a concubine.
 - In the Bible, a wife exchanges vows with her husband before witnesses. If that hasn't happened, the woman is a concubine, not a wife.
 - In the Bible, a concubine does not have the rights that a wife has:
 - The children do not belong to her, but to the man. If she is sent away, she loses the children.
 - Property does not belong to her, but to the man. She has no legal rights of shared property. If she is sent away, she has nothing.
 - The closest biblical equivalent to a common-law wife is a concubine, although modern common-law wives have more rights than concubines in ancient days.
 - A wife, however, shares with her husband the property and the children.
 - Ex. 21:10-11 shows that marriage is a contract.
- Ex. 21:10-11
 - Food, clothing, and marital rights/affection are the rights of a wife. By implication, related rights are given to the husband (the wife must prepare food, sew clothes, and give her husband marital rights/affection).
 - The wife may leave freely if she is not provided her basic rights by the husband.
 - The immediate context of this passage: It describes the rights of a slave wife.
 - Legally, this is extreme. EVEN a slave wife has these rights, so obviously free women who became wives would have the same rights.
 - Her rights are: food, clothing, and sexual love (and by implication, sexual fidelity).
 - If her husband renegs, she may be released from the marriage.
- Jewish marriages protected the rights of the wife.
 - With the exception of Israel, in most of the ancient Near East, a wife would have no property rights. In fact, women themselves were viewed by Israel's neighbors as property.
 - So if a wife were divorced, the children would belong to the husband. Children are valuable assets because they can plow the land (which is owned by the husband) or they can work the family business (which is owned by the husband).
 - If a husband went away for a long time and the wife, unsure whether he would return, married someone else, the original husband could reclaim the wife and any children she may have had in the meantime.
 - But in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the rights of wives in Israel were protected.
- Deut. 24:1-4
 - Observation: "He finds something indecent about her."
 - Observation: The man must write a certificate of divorce.
 - Observation: She is divorced a 2nd time or widowed. She is free again.
 - Observation: The 1st husband may not marry her again.
 - Observation: She has been defiled.

- Observation: BECAUSE that would be detestable to the Lord.
- Observation: Remarrying the 1st husband would bring guilt on the land of Israel.
- Here are some ways that this passage is very different than other ancient Near East laws:
 - In Israel, when the wife is dismissed (divorced), she HAS to be given a certificate of divorce. The minimum wording that has to be on a divorce certificate is, "You are now free to marry any man you wish." ("Any man" is understood to be any Jewish man.)
 - Without a certificate of divorce, no one would ever marry her again.
 - Why? Because if the first husband returns, he could just take her back, along with any children she has had in the meantime and with any assets she had been given by her 2nd "husband."
 - So having a certificate of divorce was a very beneficial thing for the woman to have.
- Deut. 24:1-4 is an example of case law. In case law, you always define the very minimum needed to be able to exercise the rights. And in case law, you always describe the worst-case scenario when describing obligations (such as Ex. 21:10-11 describing the rights of a slave wife: If even a slave wife has the rights described in these verses, then ALL wives have the same rights.)
 - In Deut. 24:1-4, the woman described is a worst-case scenario. She is an absolutely terrible wife.
 - Her first husband has found some indecency (lit. "a matter of nakedness") in her. So he sends her away.
 - She goes off and marries someone else, who likewise hates her and sends her away.
 - In both cases, EVEN THIS WOMAN gets a divorce certificate.
 - Neither husband can restrict the woman by putting in the divorce certificate, "You can marry any man except so-and-so."
- Deut. 24:1-4 does NOT allow the 1st husband to remarry her after she is divorced by the 2nd husband.
 - Theologians have come up with some theories as to why this is, but no one is absolutely sure.
 - One theory says that it is meant to prevent the 1st husband from gaining wealth by divorcing her and encouraging her to marry and divorce a wealthy husband. If the 1st husband marries her again, he can claim some of the wealth the 2nd husband had to give the woman.
 - The biggest problem with this theory is that if that were the case, the passage could have easily said something about money.
 - Also, the wording against allowing this to happen is very strong: "abomination," the whole country will be defiled.
 - Another theory has to do with what is called "pleasure marriages" (mut'ah marriage) in ancient Arab cultures.
 - A pleasure marriage is a marriage for a short period of time. A man can enter into a marriage agreement with a woman for a night or a few nights and then end it.
 - Shiite Islam inherited this practice from the Arabs, and it is still practiced occasionally today.
 - Why would someone practice pleasure marriage? The most common reason is that it became part of the culture of hospitality.
 - Hospitality is SO important in Arabic culture, including before Islam (c. AD 600) was learned by the Arab tribes. You give your guests every comfort you can imagine: food, the best place in the house (or tent), and maybe even a woman for the night.
 - If objections are raised about the impropriety of the arrangement, that can be avoided by making the woman the wife of the guest.

- So you have a very quick marriage. Then in the morning, the guest says, "I divorce you. I divorce you. I divorce you," and it's over.
 - Then the woman can go back to her original husband who divorced her for the night. And the whole thing is legal.
 - The original husband might wait for a number of months to make sure that the woman isn't pregnant.
 - If the practice of pleasure marriages was happening in Moses' time (which we are not sure about), Deut. 24:1-4 would be the exact way to stop it.
 - It also makes sense of why a man remarrying his divorced wife after she married someone else would be considered an abomination and why it would defile the land: the first husband is pimping his wife!
 - Deut. 24 was not originally understood as referring to adultery. After all, the Law of Moses had a death penalty for adultery.
 - Deut. 22:13-18 implies that in Old Testament times, groundless divorce was not permitted, or it resulted in severe financial penalties.
 - Deuteronomy 22:28-29 - If a man rapes an unbetrothed woman, he cannot divorce her. She does not have to live up to her end of the marriage contract, but he does. She can be an absolutely horrible wife. She could refuse to listen to him, and he has to take it.
 - "When the Pentateuch is compared with the laws of the surrounding cultures, its distinctiveness does not lie in the monogamist ideal or restrictions on remarriage. The Pentateuch assumes that both polygamy and divorce occur, and neither is criticized. Its distinctiveness lies in the relatively greater rights of women within marriage and remarriage, and the greater rights to divorce and remarry. The only absolute distinctiveness was the right of a woman to a divorce certificate, which affirmed that she was free to remarry. This certificate, which was the right of a few privileged women in some ancient Near Eastern legal systems, was extended by the Pentateuch to all divorced women. This certificate freed women from the fear that their ex-husbands could reclaim them after abandoning them."
- Ezekiel 16:8-19 - God gave Israel food, clothing, and love (see Ex. 21:10-11), and she gave it to idols.
- Jeremiah 3-4
 - In Jer. 3:1, God is essentially summarizing Deut. 24:1-4.
 - In Jeremiah 3:8, God gives Israel a certificate of divorce.
 - God agonizes over this decision because it means he cannot remarry Israel (see Deut. 24:1-4).
 - God has divorced Israel (the northern tribes), and God is about to divorce Judah (the southern tribes). His divorce of Israel serves as a warning to Judah that he is about to divorce them.
 - Question: Is God a polygamist, since he is married to both Israel and Judah? Answer: No, Israel and Judah were one people when God married her.
 - Jeremiah's solution: God never divorced Judah, and Israel and Judah will come back together again and be bound "as one stick" (i.e., be one people again). Therefore, Israel can be married to God again because Judah was never actually divorced.
- Isaiah 50:1 - "Where is your mother's (Israel's) divorce certificate?"
 - Same issue as Jeremiah: God cannot remarry Israel since he divorced her.
 - Isaiah's solution: Israel will be reborn as a new bride. Whether one views it from Jeremiah's viewpoint or Isaiah's viewpoint, the end is the same: God is so in love with Israel that he will find a way to get around these laws and get back together again with his beloved. Somehow, he will win her over. (We see how God will do that in the New Testament; namely, Romans 9-11).
- Hosea
 - Hosea has to marry a prostitute, and he has to love her.
 - This illustrates how fanatically in love God was with Israel, even though she was unfaithful with all of these "men" (idols). And yet, God still loved her and was determined to bring her back.
 - Big lesson: God is committed to the relationship.

- However, it comes to a point where just continuing is just multiplying sin. Israel wasn't going to turn around and change anything. There's nothing that a decent man can do except end it.
 - But even in Hosea, somehow all of the sin and betrayal will be reversed.
 - Malachi 2:10-16 - God hates divorce.
 - If God hates divorce, then why did he divorce Israel?
 - God doesn't like it, but that is where all of the circumstances (Israel's idolatry) are driving the decision.
 - Two schools during Jesus' day: The Hillelites vs the Shammaites
 - Both schools accepted Ex. 21:10-11, since both made regulations about exactly how much food, clothing, and marital rights had to be given.
 - But the Hillelites managed to find a ground for divorce in Deut. 24 for any cause. The passage says, "indecenty of a thing" (lit. "nakedness thing"). They interpreted this as two separate things: "nakedness" obviously means adultery, and 'a thing' means anything." They had two grounds for divorce: adultery, and anything else.
 - The Shammaites took the phrase as one thing: adultery, although failure in the other areas (lack of food and clothing) also qualified as legitimate grounds for divorce.
 - According to the Old Testament, what are the legitimate grounds for divorce?
 - If a man withholds food, clothing, and love from his wife, these are legitimate grounds for divorce. And if a woman is not cooking the food, sewing the clothes, and reciprocating the love that her husband provides, these are likewise legitimate grounds for divorce.
 - In the first century marriage contracts that have been found along with other documents from the Dead Sea Scrolls, every marriage certificate has these words: "You must not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights." It was written down on a piece of paper, and the Jewish bride kept it safe. That was her ticket to life (literally), freedom, and remarriage if the marriage went wrong. The certificates of divorce carried the same language.
 - God is a divorcee.
 - His divorce of Israel was not his fault.
 - He understands the pain of a broken marriage, as he was married to and divorced from Israel when Israel left him to follow other gods.
 - There is no reason for divorcees in the church to be summarily rejected or looked down upon. They might be completely innocent and faithful to God.
 - In Jesus' day:
 - In Judaism, no-fault divorce ("any cause" view of the Hillelite school) was the predominant view and practice. However, divorce restricted to broken marriage vows (the view of the Shammaite school) was still practiced up until AD 70. Typically, the breaking of the vows had to be proven in court.
 - In Matt. 1:19 Joseph would have been able to divorce Mary by means of the "any cause" clause.
 - The reason the "any cause" divorce idea was more popular probably stems from the fact that it brought less publicity to and shame on the family than the "neglect or unfaithfulness cause" divorce idea, which would have to be proved publicly in court.
 - Thus, when Jesus is quizzed about where he stands in the debate, he sides with the Shammaite position (divorce must have grounds). However, he not only repudiates easy divorce, but first pleads with his followers to return to the spirit of God's original plan for man and woman.
 - The idea that one could not remarry after a divorce did not exist in the 1st-century among Jews or Romans. All 1st-century Jewish groups allowed remarriage after divorce. In the Roman world, remarriage was mandatory after 18 months; not to remarry was to break the law.
 - This law came about around 40 B.C. It was intended to try to get Roman citizens to have more Roman babies.
 - If you disobeyed it and your neighbor turned you in, your neighbor would be rewarded with half of your possessions.
 - Knowing that this law existed for Roman citizens, it would be strange if Jesus and especially Paul taught against remarriage when a divorce was justified.

- In Judaism at the time, there was likewise a lot of pressure for people to be married.
 - The very first command given to man was to go forth and multiply (Gen. 1). If you got divorced, you were encouraged to remarry and have children.
 - The rabbis asked, "How many children do we need before we're released from this?" One rabbi would say, "Two children." Another rabbi would say, "Two boys because Moses had two boys." The first rabbi would say, "No, a boy and a girl would do because that's what God had."
- After AD 70, when the Romans put down a Jewish rebellion, the Shammaites, Herodians (Greek-speaking Jews that were closely associated with the Pharisees), and Essenes of Qumran (a mystic Jewish sect) all disappeared. The only sort of divorce that remained among the Jews was the Hillelite ("any cause") divorce.
- Mark 10:2
 - This passage is greatly abbreviated because Mark is not interested in teaching his audience the particulars of Jewish law. He focuses on God's design of the permanence of marriage.
 - We know this passage is abbreviated because it wouldn't make sense for experts in the Mosaic Law to ask Jesus if all divorce was against the law. Of course it wasn't.
 - Matthew expands this same conversation slightly in Matt. 19:3-9, but if we (modern readers) were reading this without any other knowledge, we would not be able to fully grasp the underlying debate. So even in Matt. 19, it is insufficient for us to simply turn to this passage and "proof-text" a position.
- Matt. 5:31-32
 - The person who remarries is not a literal, physical adulterer any more than the one who hates is a literal, physical murderer (cf. Matt. 5:22).
 - One of the characteristics of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 5-7 is the high number of hyperboles (intentional, figurative exaggerations to make a point). Could Jesus' strong language about remarriage ("commits adultery") for the purpose of emphasizing the permanence of marriage (i.e., "It's better to stay married than to divorce with a plan to remarry someone else") be another example of hyperbole? Or are his words to be taken literally? We must remember that a literal interpretation of Scripture includes recognizing grammatical features and tools in use by the writer or speaker.
 - If the "remarriage=adultery" idea is to be taken literally, we might expect Jesus to try to rectify the situation by teaching someone to separate from the 2nd spouse if the divorce from the 1st spouse was invalid. However, no such record exists, which lends more weight to the argument that "remarriage=adultery" is a rhetorical hyperbole.
- Matt. 19:3-9
 - Background:
 - The traditional Jewish teaching on polygamy is that it was allowed.
 - The Essenes, a group that separated themselves from other Jews and moved to Qumran by the Dead Sea, believed that polygamy was wrong. You should only have one wife. They also taught that it was MANDATORY to have a wife, even if it was only for a short period of time (i.e., "everyone should be married at some point in their lives"). There were three "proof texts" that they used to defend their views:
 - Gen. 1:27 - "male and female"
 - Gen. 2:24 - Adam and Eve get married
 - Gen. 7:16 - Two of every creature entered the ark; "male and female."
 - When Jesus is asked about his view of divorce in Matt. 19, he responds in vv. 4-5 by not answering the question. Instead, Jesus addresses a marriage-related issue his questioners didn't ask about but were nevertheless wrong about: polygamy.
 - Jesus subtly uses two of the Essenes' favorite verses against polygamy—Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:24—to suggest that ONE husband and ONE wife is God's design.
 - To make his case against polygamy even more obvious, Jesus inserts a word into his quotation of Gen. 2:24 that does not appear in that Scripture: "two." This was a common rhetorical tactic done by Jews who opposed polygamy. His addition of the word "two" would not have been missed.

- In v. 6, Jesus answers the divorce question by essentially saying, "No. It is not 'lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause' (v. 3)." He does this in v. 6 by referring to the "one flesh" teaching of Gen. 2:24. Then he explicitly brings God into the marriage-creating dynamic and leaves God out of the marriage-destroying dynamic ("Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate").
- Now, the Jews believed that if there was adultery, the innocent party HAD to divorce their spouse. That's why in v. 7 they asked the question, "Why then did Moses COMMAND us to give divorce papers and to send her away?" Jesus' questioners are misrepresenting Moses' teaching on divorce. Their misrepresentation may be intentional; or it may have been a sincerely-held belief due to them reading their tradition into the divorce passages, since they had been taught all of their lives that a cheated-upon spouse was obligated to divorce their wives.
- In v. 8, Jesus essentially says, "No. Hang on. He ALLOWED you, not COMMANDED you, to divorce your wives."
- Also, divorce was incredibly easy. It was regarded as a decent thing or even a positive thing. But Jesus didn't like the idea of divorce at all. So he essentially says in v. 8, "There's only divorce because of the hardness of your hearts." The only place in the Old Testament that uses the term "hardness of heart" is Jer. 4:4, where God is divorcing Israel for her hardness of heart.
 - God put up with a huge amount of sin in his marriage to Israel before he got divorced. Israel was a terrible wife, committing adultery with so many other lovers. And yet God repeatedly delayed getting a divorce until there was no chance anything would ever change.
 - Jesus was saying that on occasion, when a spouse's hard-heartedness makes the marriage so bad and terrible that there is no other way forward, Moses allowed it to end in divorce. This is a far cry from the "divorce for any reason at all" idea.
 - The hard-heartedness that Jesus mentions in v. 8 (as a comment on Deut. 24) refers to the guilty partner. It is not a reference to a hard-hearted innocent spouse.
 - If by repeated adultery or neglect, it is clear that the guilty partner has no intention of changing, then divorce is a permissible, yet lamentable, option. It may even be, like with God's divorce of Israel, the only option.
- In v. 9, Jesus says, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery."
 - Jesus was reacting against "any cause" divorce. He was saying, "If you get divorced over a little thing, that divorce isn't valid. You're still married according to God's standards. And then if you go out and marry another person, you're committing adultery against your first husband or wife."
 - Jesus was not saying, "Remarriage is never allowed." He was saying, "Remarriage after a divorce for 'any cause' is wrong because you're not properly divorced. You haven't gotten divorced on biblical grounds."
- So, supposed we had a case where a person was in a marriage and then got divorced for "any cause" that didn't rise to the level of being divorced on biblical grounds. Then that person married another spouse. What is the person to do now? This is dealt with by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7.
 - o 1 Cor. 7:10-12, 15
 - Throughout 1 Cor. 7, Paul deals with men and women equally, saying things like, "A man does this, and a woman does that...."
 - For example, in vv. 3-4, Paul talks about the obligations to have marital love.
 - Also, later in vv. 33-34, Paul talks about marriage causing worldly concerns for your spouse (such as food and clothing).
 - But in vv. 10-16, the "man does this/woman does that" dynamic is not there. Instead, Paul talks about a man and a woman in non-corresponding ways. Why would the way in which Paul addresses his audience be different here? It is probably because vv. 10-16 is an actual case where a woman left (separated/abandoned/deserted) her husband.

- vv. 10-11 - The case of a woman who has deserted her husband.
 - According to Roman law, separation WAS divorce. A divorce was enacted as soon as you left your spouse with the intention of divorcing.
 - So, legally (but not biblically), the woman has divorced her husband by walking out. And Paul says to her that she must not do that (cf. v. 10). But since she has done it, she must either remain unmarried or try to be reconciled to her husband (cf. v. 11).
 - Paul tells her not to remarry in v. 11 because as soon as she does, reconciling with her first husband is no longer possible. The "remain unmarried" rule is for the purpose of reconciliation.
 - The innocent husband, of course, can justly say to her, "You've abandoned me. You are not providing food, clothing, or love. The marriage is over." If he decides to do that, because he is the victim, his divorce of her would be based on biblical grounds.
 - Paul and Jesus agree on divorce among God's covenant people. Assuming there are no biblical grounds for divorce, anyone who deserts her Christian husband is still married to him according to God. Ideally, reconciliation will be reached. Otherwise, she must live as a single person. Of course, if the innocent husband decides to break his marriage vows, then the wife who left has grounds for pursuing a biblical divorce.
- In vv. 12-15 - The case of mixed marriage; i.e., a Christian has a pagan spouse.
 - Again, in the Roman world, separation WAS divorce. So Paul commands Christian wives not to separate from their husbands (cf. v. 13). Not only should Christians try to remain married, but separating from a spouse under Roman law would have complicated reconciliation.
 - If an unbeliever left, however, the Christian spouse was free to remarry (i.e., "not bound" or "not under bondage"; v. 15).
 - If, on the other hand, Christians could NOT remarry after an unbelieving spouse left, they would still be in bondage to that absent spouse, perhaps indefinitely.
- Paul accepted neglect (abandonment) as grounds for divorce and remarriage. The widely-accepted promises of the marriage vow (Ex. 21:10-11) is in the background of everything he writes.
- Conclusions:
 - Both Jesus and Paul reject "any cause" divorce.
 - Both the Old Testament and New Testament allow several grounds for divorce.
 - Without grounds, a second marriage is adultery. (Presumably if one's spouse remarried without due grounds, that act of adultery might justify the innocent person's decision to also remarry.)
 - The language of 1 Cor. 7:39 ("free to marry whoever she may please") is part of all standard ancient divorce documents. Thus it appears that widows and divorcees had equal rights: the permission to remarry.
 - Marriage is not a sacrament, in which an irreversible state of matrimony is created. The sacramental view of marriage (developed in the 2nd century AD)—whereby one person is permanently married to one's spouse no matter what happens—is not supported by the New Testament. The New Testament allows for those whose marital rights (cf. Ex. 21:10-11) have been violated by an unrepentant spouse to divorce that spouse and remarry another.
 - Traditionally, the Church throughout history has interpreted Scripture as disallowing remarriage except after death or adultery. This viewpoint does not concur with the understanding of 1st-century rabbis, Jesus, and Paul. They would say that any provable failure to provide marital rights (cf. Ex. 21:10-11) justifies divorce so that the innocent party does not continue to suffer.
 - Marital rights include those relating to food, clothing, and affection.
 - Inferred are other rights related to those explicitly stated in Ex. 21:10-11, such as:
 - Fidelity in marriage.
 - An abuse-free marriage. Physical abuse and even emotional abuse is evidence of not meeting the essential needs of one's spouse.

- Divorce should be the last resort. If problems—even marriage-destroying problems—arise, the couple should seek to fix the problems and remain married, if willing and possible. Jesus and Paul have the same message for two different cultures:
 - Believers should never cause a divorce—that is, they should not break their marriage vows.
 - Believers should not divorce without biblical grounds. Jewish believers should not use a Hillelite "any cause" divorce, and no one should use the Roman "divorce-by-separation" concept.
- What about those followers of Jesus who experienced an invalid divorce?
 - Presumably, those who become followers of Jesus after an invalid divorce (without remarrying) should recognize that their marriage is technically still legal. They could either return to their spouse or remain single.
 - If the person who became a Christian had already remarried, they would presumably have to set free the first spouse and return her dowry or other agreed-upon terms, just as a Jew would have to do after committing adultery.
 - Similarly, if followers of Jesus become invalidly divorced against their will by a partner who is not a follower of Jesus, they too had to try to return to their previous partners or remain single. However, once their unbelieving spouse acted in such a way as to break the biblical marriage vows, they could seek a divorce on biblical grounds.