

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage

- * We believe marriage consists of a marriage between a man and a woman. God created man and woman for each other. They were to have a personal relationship. Gen. 2:18, 21-24; Matt. 19:4-5
- * We define male and female as those who have true male and female identities known to be observed as such at birth. Male and female identities that are identifiable at birth cannot be denied, given alternate identities, or changed. Man and woman are created in God's image with His characteristics. They together are part of God's plan. Gen 1:27
- * Both man and women have some preordained responsibilities as man and wife. The Bible shows both men and women working depending on the need. This shows that the man and wife were able to work together for the betterment of their family. Proverbs 31:10-31 is an example of a hard working and industrious woman.
- * Shaul says that the head of the family should be the man (1 Corinthians 11:3). He should take on the spiritual responsibility to lead his house responsibly and lead his family spiritually. This does not mean he "rules" over his family, but is to be a leader and an example (1 Peter 5:3). The term "man and wife" suggests the sharing of responsibilities and working together to accomplish the work of the household. Shaul said the husband and wife were to be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21).
- * Often, men become spiritual leaders because they are created to be leaders. They should be good and kind leaders. Yeshua gave Himself for us and Yeshua is an example of leadership for men. Eph. 5:25
- * There were women spiritual leaders among the early believers in the Messiah. Therefore, women can serve in various ways. Shaul makes special mention of Phoebe, an important woman head rabbi and teacher in Cenchrea (Romans 16:1-2). Priscilla who was a woman and fellow worker of Shaul who along with Aquilla, risked their lives for Shaul. She is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament portion (Romans 16:3). Junia is a woman who is mentioned as being an important apostle among the early believers (Romans 16:7). So, Shaul (Paul) refers to women serving in leadership and even being messengers (apostles).
- * Shaul says there is responsibility on the part of both the man and woman to be affectionate and not deprive each other in their sexual relationship. They were not to be apart from each other for an extended period of time. 1 Cor. 7:3-5.
- * The Bible says that homosexual and lesbian sexual relationships are disgusting and sinful. Their relationship is no real marriage. There is nothing biblical to indicate their relationships may be said to be a marriage. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:9-11
- * Marriage relationships are to be permanent relationships. The man and woman leave their homes and become a permanent relationship. Yeshua said that a marriage relationship is permanent. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6
- * Marriage in the Bible was originally intended to be monogamous. There were polygamous relationships in the Bible, but that is not the ideal relationship as originally given in Genesis. Polygamy caused problems. For example, there was tension between Sarah and Hagar. Joseph was sold into slavery by his half-brothers. There was tension over who would follow David as king. Gen. 21:9-10; Gen. 37; 1 Kings 1:1-53
- * The Bible talks about normal marriages being between one husband and one wife. Yeshua talks about marriage being between one husband and one wife. Shaul mentions that men were to have one wife several times. Ps. 128:3; Prov. 5:18; Eccl. 9:9; Matt. 19:5-6; 1 Timothy 3:2,12; Titus 1:6
- * Believing in polygamy is an excuse to commit adultery. Often, these people will say they believe in polygamy and then have multiple sex partners without any commitment. Adultery is wrong.
- * Marriage is a covenant relationship that was designed by God. God sees that as a covenant relationship. In Ezekiel, God describes his relationship with Israel as like a marriage covenant. Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14; Ezek. 16:8-14

- * Husbands are to love their wives and wives are to respect their husbands. This scripture shows the different needs the husband and wife have. This section in Ephesians should start with being subject to one another in Eph. 5:21. The husband and wife are to work out things together. Eph. 5:21, 33
- * In the first century, the families of the wives could divorce the husband. Shaul is saying to stay married and be subject to your own husband and not to your family (Eph. 5:22-24). Ephesians 5:21 just said that they were to be subject to one another. Shaul is addressing this first century problem; the Bible needs to be understood in its proper context. Again, Shaul says that the head of the family should be the man (1 Corinthians 11:3).
- * We are told to stay married to the unbelieving spouse unless they want to leave. The reason they would want to leave is they are not agreeable to live in a believing home and follow the rules. If they do stay, they may try to dissuade your children from believing in God. 1 Cor. 7:12-16
- * Also, there may be troubling circumstances being married to someone who is enveloped in sin. We don't know if they will change. Sinful behaviors could be a problem for the believing spouse in some cases (see the section on divorce). 1 Cor. 7:16
- * Marriage between a man and woman is the footing for the family with children. They work together to raise their family and spiritually encourage one another and their children. Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- * Although the Bible encourages us to be good parents, we see examples in the Bible of some children going astray (Cain, Esau, Jacob's family and Joseph). Therefore, the Bible does not guarantee that children will all turn out okay spiritually. The Bible says the parents are not responsible for the sins of their children and visa versa. We will all be judged on our own merits. Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:30.

Perhaps, the most important thing to consider when marrying is how it impacts us spiritually. We want to do what is right and live right. The first thing to consider is Shaul's message of permission and need.

1) Shaul tells us we have permission to marry or not marry. (1 Cor. 7:28)

So, we don't have to stay single. From the context of 1 Corinthians 7, we see that Shaul is encouraging us to do what's best for us. In the Roman culture, the parents of the woman could divorce the husband. In this case, Shaul tells them to stay married (Ephesians 5:22). Perhaps marrying could be a burden to our spiritual walk, in that case perhaps it is better to stay single (1 Corinthians 7:28). Whatever is best. Also, in the Roman empire, the men could divorce their wife if they were not pleased with them. This seems frivolous and was probably done for the wrong reasons – they probably wanted a legal way to commit adultery. Shaul tells us to have one wife probably for that reason. In Jewish circles, the idea that it is permissible to have more than one wife is probably done to allow for lust and adultery – which is wrong. Malachi 2:16 says that God hates divorce.

2) There are a number of reasons to marry, but especially to stay pure. For example, some of us enjoy companionship; that's probably true for most people. God created man and woman for the purpose of relationship, so that is a legitimate reason for marriage. Children are a blessing the Bible says. The question of purity is an important one. Shaul says that a married couple should please each other in order to stay pure (1 Cor. 7:3).

Marriage involves a lot of things. Are we compatible spiritually; are the parties willing to grow spiritually? We should think about things that we have control over. Identify things that you need to take care of in your own life. You don't want to put on a face or front just to make your home look presentable or honorable. What's most important is a genuine loving and caring relationship between you and your spouse, strong spiritual lives and a loving and caring family environment.

Here are some things that both parties in a relationship should address before marriage.

Is the other person genuine?

Are they serious about maintaining a relationship?

Do they truly want to follow God?

Did God tell you it was okay to marry them?

What were the circumstances surrounding their previous marriage or relationships if any?

To what degree are they committed to growing?

Do they have major character flaws? Have they been dealt with? Is there a strong commitment never to return to those behaviors?

Do you get along well and enjoy one another or is there a lot of tension?

Can you find ways to communicate well, respect each other, and be endeared to one another?

Shaul said that men require respect and women require love. Are they willing to do this regardless of how they feel or how things are going? Are they willing to overlook the small things? Are they willing to stay positive? Are they overly fearful or do they expect too much? Are they willing to be patient and give each other personal and spiritual latitude for personal growth? We all need others to be patient with us. We all grow at different rates.

Regarding divorce.

We are allowed to re-marry based on the scripture we need to have peace in our lives. 1 Cor. 7:15

Shaul says that we should make every effort to keep our marriages together and to have a good marriage (1 Cor. 7:10-11). We can't do anything about past mistakes, God will forgive us. We need to take ownership of our behavior if we divorce.

A divorced person should own up for their failures in the failed relationship.

Often, a failed relationship has to do with both people.

If there was some kind of failure, has that been dealt with?

They should be willing to change for the sake of a happier relationship.

Although Yeshua says there is one clear cut reason for divorce, He was speaking to the culture where men could divorce woman over something frivolous.¹ Abuse (verbal, emotional, or physical), wantonly sinful activity, negative or neglectful attitudes, inordinately high expectations, control issues, not coming together regularly to please one another (sex), abandonment, and lust (for example, Yeshua says we are not to dwell on having relations with others, pornography involves fantasizing about others) are some of things that need to be repented of.

If the divorced person was part of a believing relationship, there are a number of issues that probably led to their divorce. God is a God of peace (1 Cor. 7:15) and forgiveness, but it doesn't give us license to keep messing up in our relationships. Has there been an attempt to work out the marriage? If not, are there circumstances for why that can't happen (for example, one party refuses to work things out, adultery)? Is there a genuine commitment not to make the same mistakes again? Is there a meekness present to work on making a good marriage? Has God forgiven them?

¹ They could have been trying to get Yeshua in trouble with Herod. Herod had John the Immerser (Baptist) executed because John had criticized Herod over his divorce.

Final Thoughts

There are a number of great books on marriage. Understand too that we all have different personalities and that guys often need to work on understanding feelings and woman often need to be understanding the way men often logically approach things. It seems to often be the way God designed men and women differently. We should try to understand our own personality and the other persons.

Make sure you are both believers before you are married. We shouldn't team up with unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 CJB:

“Do not yoke yourselves together in a team with unbelievers. For how can righteousness and lawlessness be partners? What fellowship does light have with darkness? What harmony can there be between the Messiah and B'liya'al?”

Yoke refers to keeping the Torah. Roshi (an important Jewish Rabbi) said about Deut. 13:13 ‘that the people who follow B’liya’al (Belial) are those that break the yoke of Torah.’ Shaul is saying not to team up or marry anyone who does not believe in keeping the Torah and does not keep the Torah.

Also, be careful you and your future spouse are on the same page spiritually. We believe the Messiah Yeshua is God and not just a prophet because that is what the Bible says. We believe in doing what is right not just thinking we are right (righteous) as some do. We believe the Holy Spirit is our helper to help us do what is right and keep God's commandments. We believe in what the Bible says no matter what society believes in.

Of course, it is okay to marry or get remarried. There are some things that need to be worked out in any relationship, but a person who has experienced failure needs to examine their part in the failure. Believing couples are commanded to stay married, but sometimes there are sinful circumstances that prevent them from working things out. Marriage is a God instituted plan for a relationship between a man and a wife to produce a stable home life and a stable society; it is a safe place for the growth of our children and for rest and renewal; it is instituted by God to bring us not only into relationship with each other, but into relationship with God and is to be an environment for spiritual growth.