

Divorce & Remarriage (1 Cor. 7:12-16)

The most intimate relationship we can have is marriage, so when this union can be broken and reestablished is hotly debated. Even though it is difficult to set aside our personal experiences and those we care about such experiences do not determine truth. As the divorce rate continues to rise, it is increasingly important for us to know God's view on divorce and remarriage. Therefore, though psychological, sociological, and other factors matter greatly, this study only addresses the *biblical teaching* on divorce and remarriage.

I. **Quiz: What is your view on divorce and remarriage right now?**

Choose EVERY answer below that describes your view at present.¹

No Divorce, No Remarriage

A. God's hatred for divorce **forbids anyone to seek divorce**. Marriage to another, while the previous partner is alive, is **adultery** with no exceptions. Even though civil law allows for divorce, in God's sight, *only death breaks the marriage bond* between a husband and wife.

B. God's hatred of divorce forbids a believer to seek divorce but **allows the unbeliever** to divorce; marrying another when the previous partner is alive is **adultery** with no exceptions.

Divorce, But No Remarriage

C. **A believer may seek divorce** if the partner is unfaithful by the sin of **adultery or desertion**, but marriage to another while the previous partner is alive is **adultery** (Matt. 5:32; 19:9).

D. **A believer may seek divorce** if the partners are **incompatible**, but marriage to another while the previous partner is alive is **adultery**.

Divorce & Remarriage in Limited Cases

E. God's hatred of divorce forbids a believer to seek divorce but **permits an unbeliever to divorce**. In the unbeliever's case, remarriage to another while the previous partner is alive is **permitted**. If God allows divorce for a person, then He also allows remarriage.

F. **A believer may seek divorce** if the partner is unfaithful by the sin of **adultery or desertion**; marriage to another while the previous partner is alive is **permitted**.

Divorce & Remarriage in Many Cases

G. **A believer may seek divorce** if the partners are **incompatible**; marriage to another, while the previous partner is alive, is **permitted**.

II. **Definitions: Let's first agree on the meaning of some terms...**

- A. **Marriage** is the divinely ordained, legal, public joining of a husband and wife according to the statutes of the country where they wed, consummated in sexual intercourse. Thus, even if a country legally allows same sex "marriage," it does not constitute *genuine* marriage, as the only type of marriage that exists is heterosexual marriage that is consummated in legitimate sex.
- B. **Divorce** is the legal breaking of a marriage bond so that the couple is not considered husband and wife by the civil authorities of the land.
- C. **Remarriage** denotes a second, legal marriage of a previously married person.
- D. **Desertion** is defined as the withdrawal of physical presence for many months from one's spouse, even though financial assistance could be maintained. Desertion does not refer to the lack of physical or emotional intimacy of a marriage partner living in the same home.
- E. **Adultery** is when a married person has sex with one other than his or her spouse. It includes homosexuality and needs to happen only once to be considered adultery. There is no such thing as "spiritual adultery" where sexual fidelity is maintained but emotional needs are not being met.

¹ Statements adapted from Ron Sheveland, "Pastoral Candidate Questionnaire" (Yucaipa, CA: Baptist General Conference, 2010), 9.

III. Sticky Passages

- A. All Christians agree that *divorce is not God's original plan* since "God hates divorce" (Mal. 2:14). Also, Jesus sounded as if divorce is *never* allowed for any reason in both Mark and Luke:
1. "...Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her, ¹²and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery" (Mark 10:11-12 NAU).
 2. "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18 NAU).
- B. The clarity of the above verses probably would unify most Bible-believing Christians in a "no divorce, no remarriage" view if it weren't for three other "sticky" passages:
1. Jesus: "But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity (Greek *porneia*), makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matt. 5:32 NAU).
 2. Jesus: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality (Gk: *porneia*), and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9 NAU).
 3. Paul: "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace" (1 Cor. 7:15 NAU).

IV. Four Views on Divorce & Remarriage

The above passages raise many questions that are answered differently by various scholars who generally fall into one of four views on divorce and remarriage. I have held each of these interpretations at different times in my walk with Christ. Reputable, evangelical scholars support each one, as seen below by four scholars, each of whom earned their Doctorate in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary and contributed to the helpful book, *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*.² The book addresses them in a continuum where the views are listed from the most narrow (left side) to the least narrow (right side). Note that the first two views are very similar and could be almost seen as a single view in many respects since both views recognize that spouses are often in situations where they have no choice but to divorce whereas they do have a choice whether to remarry.³

	No Divorce, No Remarriage	Divorce, But No Remarriage	Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery & Desertion	Divorce & Remarriage for at Least 5 Situations
Advocates <i>The first scholar represents the view in the book edited by House below</i>	J. Carl Laney F. F. Bruce Joseph Fitzmeyer Ralph P. Martin Charles Ryrie	William Heth Gordon Fee John Piper Gordon Wenham	Thomas Edgar Jay Adams D. A. Carson James Dobson William F. Luck John MacArthur John Murray Chuck Swindoll	Larry Richards

² The seven-page chart in this study summarizes H. Wayne House, ed., *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990) where the first scholar under "Advocates" section presents his view, gives a case study and responds to the other three views. There exists, of course, variance even within those holding the same view, but this study hopefully will basically represent their views as well. Note also that Richards does not mention anyone else who shares his view. He has only two footnotes in contrast to Heth's 106 notes.

³ Other views not surveyed above include the betrothal view (unfaithfulness discovered before the marriage consummation) and the invalid mixed marriage view (*porneia* as the marriage between a believer and unbeliever); see rebuttals by Edgar, 171-177.

	No Divorce, No Remarriage	Divorce, But No Remarriage	Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery & Desertion	Divorce & Remarriage for at Least 5 Situations
<u>Nature of Marriage:</u>				
<i>Is marriage an unconditional covenant? (i.e., is every marriage permanent in God's eyes?)</i>	Yes, seen in "cleave" and "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) and by calling remarriage "adultery" ⁴	Yes—the terms in Gen. 2:24 indicate that the spouse becomes a permanent, close relative that can't be changed ⁵	No—Gen. 2:24 does not speak of divorce; "cleave" elsewhere denotes a military alliance that can be broken; "one flesh" doesn't imply permanence ⁶	No—it can be broken due to the hardness of man's heart
<i>What breaks the marriage bond in God's sight?</i>	Death alone (Rom. 7:3; 1 Cor. 7:39)	Death alone (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39)	Death, plus "sexual sin breaks the marriage bond, but the marriage is not actually dissolved until a certain legal procedure (divorce) is carried out" (Edgar, 142) ⁷	Death, plus when a divorced spouse remarries, is homosexual, takes a live-in lover [i.e., adultery?], leaves the community and cuts off contact, remains hostile and abusive, or emotionally and spiritually abandons the relationship while still living together (Richards, 242) ⁸
<u>Divorce:</u>				
<i>Does Deut. 24:1-3 institute or approve divorce? Did the bill of divorce dissolve the marriage?</i>	No, it simply regulated a practice already occurring; "There God describes what he does not necessarily prescribe" (Laney, 252)	No, it prohibited the first husband from benefiting financially by remarrying his now wealthy first wife ⁹	A woman's "first" of two husbands shows that this marriage was dissolved; ¹⁰ it also says nothing about a dowry and allows almost unlimited remarriage (Edgar, 155)	Yes, although in some cases the marriage was against God's will, it still was forgiven

⁴ Marriage is "God's act of joining a man and a woman in a permanent, covenanted, one-flesh relationship" according to Renald E. Showers, *Lawfully Wedded* (Langhorne, PA: Philadelphia College of Bible, 1983), 36: cited by J. Carl Laney in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, 20. Other views surveyed would probably agree with this definition except for the word "permanent."

⁵ The terms "forsake" and "cleave" in Gen. 2:24 are covenant terms used of God's unconditional commitment to Israel despite her unfaithfulness (Lev. 26:44-45; Jud. 2:1-3; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8, 12; Heth, 75). Heth also says the "one flesh" refers not to sex or children but to becoming permanent kin. Thus, a married person cannot "undo" being a spouse any more than this person can "undo" being a brother, sister, father, mother, son, daughter, etc. Marriage is just as permanent a relationship, supported by the prohibition of marrying one's in-laws (Lev. 18) since legal divorce does not dissolve marriage (though the levirate marriage of Deut. 25:5-10 is allowed; Heth, 82). Edgar responds that such a view would logically make the couple in an incestuous relationship—plus it would not restrict them from marrying others (Edgar, 154).

⁶ "Christ's statement, referring to Genesis 2:24, 'What God has joined together let no man separate' (Mt 19:6) implies just the opposite of permanence, that it can be broken" (Edgar, 137). Edgar also notes that since sex with a prostitute is "one flesh" (1 Cor. 6:16), it rules out "permanence" as the meaning for one flesh (ibid.). Further, marital kinship is not the same as blood relations since a widower could marry his wife's sister (Lev. 18:18; Edgar, 139).

⁷ Heth and Laney would presumably say that, if this is true, the couple would need to be married again following each act of adultery.

⁸ Edgar rightfully points out that the first three situations Richards presents depends on *porneia* as an exception, the fourth depends on desertion, and the last (abandoning the relationship while still living together) has no exegetical support (Edgar, 266).

⁹ "The biblical kinship view of marriage nevertheless suggests that just as parents cannot 'cut off' their children from being their own flesh and blood, no matter how disreputable or immoral they may be, so a man cannot 'divorce' or sever the kinship relationship with his wife, who is his own flesh and blood (Gen. 2:23-24; Lev. 18:7-8) through the covenant and consummation of marriage" (Heth, 87).

¹⁰ Jesus also referred to the woman who "had five husbands" (John 4:16-18), indicating that her divorces broke former marriage bonds.

	No Divorce, No Remarriage	Divorce, But No Remarriage	Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery & Desertion	Divorce & Remarriage for at Least 5 Situations
<i>Do the divorces in Ezra 9–10 indicate that God allows divorce and remarriage?</i>	No, this story teaches the dangers of apostasy (9:10-14) and it is unclear if any remarriages took place; this was suggested by Shecaniah, not commanded by God (Laney, 252)	These annulled <i>illegal</i> “marriages”: “took” (9:2), “gave dwelling to” (10:2) & “sent away” are used only for foreign women (cf. Ruth 1:4; Neh. 13:25) so these husbands likely remarried Israelites	Heth’s argument that Ezra’s action was kindness since the women were not killed neglects the fact that the men themselves also could have been executed	Yes—“God actually demanded in Ezra’s day that some Israelites divorce their wives” (Richards, 252).
<i>What is the porneia of Matt. 5:32; 19:9?</i>	An unlawful, incestuous marriage prohibited in Lev. 18:6-18	Adultery is the most common type of marital infidelity, but others are included as well	Adultery, since an adulterous woman was normally described with the term <i>porneia</i>	Not adultery but any other sexual sin, including incestuous marriage ¹¹
<i>Why is the exception clause only in Matthew’s gospel when Mark 10:2-12 describes the same statement by Jesus as Matthew 19:9?</i>	It related only to Jewish readers familiar with the OT laws and the incestuous marriages of Herod Archelaus, Antipas, and Agrippa II ¹²	Remarriage was not allowed for <i>any</i> divorce—even that of Matt. 19:9—so Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 are consistent with this view (Heth, 108)	“Mark, as often happens in other passages, merely omitted a detail which Matthew included...an exception is not a contradiction” (Edgar, 166, 168) ¹³	It shows “God’s compassion and willingness to accommodate his standards to humanity’s weakness” (Richards, 145)
<i>Did Paul allow divorce among believers in 1 Cor. 7:10-11? Can a divorcee remarry once the former spouse remarries since reconciliation is impossible?</i>	No: “The wife should not leave her husband” (7:10) and “the husband should not send his wife away” (7:11b) with no exception clause present ¹⁴	No: “In cases of separation or divorce, those involved must remain single or be reconciled (1 Cor. 7:11)” ¹⁵	Yes, if adultery or desertion by an unbeliever exists; ¹⁶ remarriage is allowed in these two cases even if the former spouse is still alive	Yes: “A divorced person as well as widows and those ... not previously married is included among the unmarried Paul speaks to, advising marriage if this is their gift... (v. 7)” ¹⁷

¹¹ “Adultery may be grounds for forgiveness, but it is not grounds for divorce!” (Richards, 229). Richards is unclear as to his own view on *porneia*, for he claims “attempts to define *porneia* do not seem to help us clarify Jesus’ meaning” (Richards, 231). He even thinks that Jesus may be “speaking of some previous sexual sin of the divorced partner that in effect invalidates the marriage so no stigma of adultery remains” (ibid.).

¹² “Mark and Luke omit any mention of the exception to the permanence of marriage in the case of *porneia*. They clearly understood that the exception would relate only to the Jews living under the Mosaic regulations of Leviticus 18:6-18” (Laney, 38-39).

¹³ “The additional details in Matthew 19:3-12 must be understood in Mark 10:2-12. Mark’s account does not *deny* any exception which is stated in Matthew” (Edgar, 253, emphasis mine; see especially his pages 179-180).

¹⁴ “Apparently Paul knew nothing of an ‘exception clause’ spoken by Jesus” (Robert Stein, “Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22 [June 1979]: 118; cited by Laney, 41). Laney also notes that Paul may not have seen the “exception clause” as applicable to believing Gentiles, yet Paul does refer the view of Jesus in 1 Cor. 7:10-11 (Edgar, 172).

¹⁵ Heth, 92.

¹⁶ “Paul is not giving the information in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 to provide a complete discussion on divorce and remarriage. He is answering the question whether or not it is acceptable for a believer to stay married to an unbeliever” (Edgar, 188).

¹⁷ This is because Paul used the same word for “unmarried” to apply to both a divorcee (7:11) and to the broader category of unmarried people (7:7), including widows and those never married (Richard, 240). Laney responds by pointing out that the context changes at 1 Cor. 7:12 where Paul begins discussing mixed marriages, so divorcees are not addressed in verses 10-11 (Laney, 251).

	No Divorce, No Remarriage	Divorce, But No Remarriage	Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery & Desertion	Divorce & Remarriage for at Least 5 Situations
<i>What should a person do after a divorce?</i>	Two options by Paul (1 Cor. 7:11): 1. Remain single 2. Be reconciled	"Remarriage after divorce constitutes adultery (Mt 5:32; Mk 10:11-12; Lk 16:18)." See Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39.	"It is wrong to divorce... and marry another unless it [due to] adultery" (Edgar, 190)	"The abandoned spouse is 'not bound' by the marriage vow... and thus free to remarry" ¹⁸
<i>Is desertion by an unbelieving spouse grounds for divorce (1 Cor. 7:15)?</i>	No—"The prohibition against divorce is given four times in verses 10-13!"	Yes, "Paul exempts the Christian from the responsibility for the divorce" (Heth, 112)	Yes, since the believer has no say in the matter	Yes—An exception following what appears to be a situation without an exception (7:10-11; cf. Richards, 241)
Remarriage:				
<i>Does Matt. 19:9 permit remarriage?</i>	No, since the exception clause applies only to divorce and not to remarriage in the Greek text ¹⁹	No, since the exception clause applies only to divorce and not to remarriage in the Greek text	Yes, unless the divorce was not due to adultery; prohibiting remarriage is a grammatical impossibility ²⁰	Yes—"Persons who divorce for any reason do have the right to remarry... [and] be fully involved in the life of the local church, without prejudice" (Richards, 243)
<i>How does the "eunuch passage" relate to Christ's strict view of divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:10-12)?</i>	The context relates not to celibacy but to divorcees who chose to remain single for the sake of the kingdom	"God will give faithful disciples the grace they need if they should face a divorce they cannot prevent (v. 11)" (Heth, 106)	Celibacy is difficult but required of some servants of God, but divorce and remarriage <i>only after adultery</i> may appear strict	Richards does not address this issue, but he feels the general context relates to <i>legalism</i> by the Pharisees, not divorce (p. 221) ²¹
<i>To what is the believing spouse not "bound" in 1 Cor. 7:15?</i>	Not bound to Christ's prohibition of divorce but Paul says nothing about remarriage for the deserted spouse as marriage lasts until death (7:39)	Not obligated to prevent divorce with an unbeliever with all the means at his disposal to prevent the kind of separation in 7:15	Not bound to the marriage with the deserting spouse, so this believer is free to divorce the unbeliever who left	Not bound to the marriage bond (Richards, 240)

¹⁸ Richard continues, "Past failure to achieve the ideal does not disqualify the divorced person from another try!" (Richards, 239). However, divorce was not God's will as a single, permanent marriage is God's will, intended to be a lifetime commitment (ibid.).

¹⁹ "This interpretation of the divorce texts remained the standard view of the church in the West until the sixteenth century when Erasmus suggested that the 'innocent' spouse had the right not only to divorce, but also to contract a new marriage. It is significant that those who had the closest contact with the language and culture of the New Testament did not regard the exception to apply to remarriage" (Laney, 38). Heth also gives an extensive argument against remarriage based on the Greek construction.

²⁰ Heth's view that divorce *alone* (without remarriage) equals adultery is illogical since the person remains celibate (Edgar, 157).

²¹ Richards, 224-227, says Matt. 19 does not allow Jewish ecclesiastical courts to rule on a personal matter like marriage, but the passage actually says nothing about such courts (Edgar, 163).

	No Divorce, No Remarriage	Divorce, But No Remarriage	Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery & Desertion	Divorce & Remarriage for at Least 5 Situations
<i>Does 1 Cor. 7:15 permit remarriage?</i>	No, as this would contradict 7:10-11 where remarriage is prohibited for believers; marriage of a believer and unbeliever are no different	No—This violates an indissoluble marriage; the same word for “divorce” is in 7:11 and Paul argues each to remain in his state (7:17-24)	Yes. “A biblically valid divorce allows for remarriage” (Edgar, 190)	Yes—“The abandoned believer can consider himself or herself unmarried and thus is free to remarry” (Richards, 240)
<i>What does it mean that one “released from a wife” is allowed to marry (1 Cor. 7:27-28)?</i>	The context is female virgins but also includes unmarried men (but not divorcees)	Being released from a promise to marry one’s betrothed (not divorce)	Edgar does not address this issue	Richards does not address this issue
Grace:				
<i>How is God’s grace shown?</i>	Prohibiting remarriage is God’s protection from an unlawful union; also, grace means a divorced and remarried couple need not break up	God does not give grace to sin via remarriage (Heth, 115); he gives grace by giving all “the divine resources [needed] to obey the ethical standards required of Christian disciples” ²²	“Four of the seven [passages on divorce and remarriage] seem to allow for some kind of divorce and remarriage” (Edgar, 153); it is <i>not</i> always sin, as Richards indicates (Edgar, 262)	Divorce and remarriage must be confessed as sin but it does enact a new union in a new marriage with sexual relations taking on a holy and undefiled character (Richards, 236)
<i>Would “all things become new” (2 Cor. 5:17) support remarriage for a believer?</i>				
<i>Can a person marry again following divorce as an unbeliever?</i>	No—Marriage is an indissoluble union by nature for believers or for unbelievers	No—Marriage is an indissoluble union by nature for believers or for unbelievers	Yes, if the former spouse was guilty of adultery	“God permits divorce where hardness of heart in one or both parties has destroyed the covenant character of the relationship” (Richards, 243)
<i>How should we counsel a woman married to a repeatedly violent, incestuous, adulterous husband?</i>	Since divorce is allowed only in cases of unlawful marriage, such a marriage should be maintained	A separation or legal divorce is allowable (but not a remarriage)	Divorce and remarriage is allowed for such a woman after she has unsuccessfully sought to be reconciled	“Spiritual leaders have no right to stand in judgment over particular cases” (Richards, 243)
<i>How old is this view of divorce and remarriage? How popular is it now?</i>	Not held by many in any period of church history, including today	Taught by <i>all</i> Greek and Latin scholars until AD 500 except one!	First taught by Erasmus in early 1600s but is now the prevailing view	The second most popular view among American evangelicals today

²² Heth, 113. Also, against Richards, “I do not see how obedience to what I think is God’s revealed will can be called legalism” (p. 260).

	No Divorce, No Remarriage	Divorce, But No Remarriage	Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery & Desertion	Divorce & Remarriage for at Least 5 Situations
<u>Strengths:</u>	Considers the Bible first, even if it results in the most unpopular view	Is the earliest view held by those who best understood Greek	Early Fathers often erred, even on justification, so carry little weight	Shows compassion for both the “innocent” and the “guilty” spouses
	Incorporates the Jewish context of Matthew’s gospel	Is careful not to allow remarriage in Matt. 19:9 when that text does not clearly approve it	Appears to be the natural reading of Matt. 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15	Shows that the ultimate decision for a marriage lies with the couple themselves
	Sensitive to the fact that “neither Mark nor Luke saw the exception as applicable to their Roman or Greek readers” (Laney, 199)	Takes Paul’s “no remarriage” counsel at face value: to remain unmarried or to reconcile (1 Cor. 7:10-11)	Sees statements as absolute unless exceptions are noted elsewhere	Emphasizes God’s forgiveness and grace as he cares for us and understands our situations (Richards, 236)
		Correctly notes that Paul’s only <i>clear</i> teaching about remarriage is after a spouse dies		Supports the decisions of those remarriage by standing with them (Richards, 245)
<u>Weaknesses:</u>	Gives a narrow meaning to <i>porneia</i> even though the NT uses it broadly	Can be seen as heartless to prevent remarriage for the “innocent” partner who sought to save a marriage to an adulterer or deserter	First taught in the 16 th century, so is a very new view (but not necessarily wrong though)	Sees when an unbelieving partner wants a divorce in 1 Cor. 7:15 as representing <i>any</i> marriage, while the text speaks only of mixed marriages
	Does not address how to handle one who beats his wife	Prohibits remarriage even when Matt. 19:9 allows it in the case of the exception	Little explanation of the lack of an exception clause in Luke and Mark	Why is <i>porneia</i> not adultery only because a more common word for adultery could have been used?
	Seeing all marriage as permanent is an implication without strong biblical support	Seeing all marriage as permanent is an implication without strong biblical support (cf. below)	Divorcing an adulterous spouse leaves little place for biblical forgiveness ²³	Equates our setting parameters for divorce and remarriage as being Pharisees
	Does not adequately answer the exception texts	“One flesh” doesn’t show permanence since it is applied to prostitution in 1 Cor. 6:16	Dogmatically permits remarriage in Matt. 19:9 when the Greek syntax is debatable ²⁴	Is it genuine pastoral concern to encourage people to marry contrary to Scripture? ²⁵

²³ “Is divorce the way to deal with an unfaithful spouse?” (Laney, 199). Edgar has little place for biblical promise keeping (p. 200).

²⁴ Heth, 208. The first scholar to appeal to the syntax of Matt. 19:9 to justify divorce and remarriage was J. Murray in the 20th century.

²⁵ Do we help people’s hardness of heart by feeding their ungodly preferences? Is enabling them really in their best interest?

No Divorce, No Remarriage	Divorce, But No Remarriage	Divorce & Remarriage for Adultery & Desertion	Divorce & Remarriage for at Least 5 Situations
Leviticus 18 refers not to “incestuous marriage” but to incest (Edgar, 65)	View of Deut. 24:1-4 assumes the second divorce was for a significantly different reason	Treatment of OT texts is scant, as is his view that Luke 16:18 and Rom. 7:1-6 are merely illustrations	Sees the OT law as “flawed” (p. 227) but Paul saw it as “holy, righteous, and good” (Rom. 7:12)
Arguing that 1 Cor. 7:10-11 doesn’t allow for the exception assumes that Paul <i>must</i> have repeated it	Deut. 24:1-4 says nothing of the wife’s dowry	Only one page of support for <i>porneia</i> meaning “adultery” (Edgar, 186-187) is a sketchy defense (Laney, 202); we need a full word study of all texts	“Doomed to a single life” (p. 239) violates Paul’s view of the single life as “better” (1 Cor. 7:38) and “happier” (v. 40)
	Being the oldest view does not mean it is the best	Matt. 19:9 is the only text given much detail	Absolves accountability to pastors or church elders ²⁶
		Edgar’s claim (p. 151) that the no-divorce, no-remarriage view is sacramental is unfair to Laney (Laney, 205)	Richards says that divorce and remarriage is sin but can be done since God will forgive; this could be applied to theft, murder, and any other sin then!

V. Applications Today

- A. I have attempted to state each position above objectively so the reader can make his or her own decision on this important matter after studying the relevant data. Which do *you* believe has the best biblical support?
- B. I have held to each of these positions at various points in my Christian life, but at I present lean to the third one as the one best fitting the biblical data. There *do* appear to be two exceptions (adultery and desertion by an unbeliever) to the general prohibition of divorce and remarriage. The supposed indissolubility of marriage also does not seem to be supported by Scripture, and it makes sense that the exception clause of Matthew 19:9 could harmonize with Mark and Luke’s treatment of divorce and remarriage by their assuming it need not be stated to their readers.

VI. Conclusion

We should make every reasonable effort to keep marriages together, but divorce will continue to be a reality in our fallen world. Whichever view you as a church pastor or lay leader or concerned Christian hold, you *must be consistent* in applying it. It is unfair to arbitrarily treat fellow believers going through the breakdown of the most important relationship in their life. May God grant you the wisdom that you need to represent both his grace and his high standards in the marriage relationship, which is a picture of Christ’s love for the church (Eph. 5:21-33).

²⁶ Couples thinking they have no accountability to church leaders is contrary to Matt. 18:15-18; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5 (Laney, 253).