



Let's Talk About Divorce



What a troublesome, emotion-packed word is “divorce.” It is a source of misunderstanding, criticism, heartbreak, rejection, division, humiliation, and deep soul searching about God’s will in the abusive circumstances.

Christian women often say, “when I married him, it was for better or for worse. The abuse he has put me through is certainly for worse, but doesn’t the Bible say I can never divorce him?”



Being a victim is kind of like being rear-ended by another car when you’re out driving on the freeway. You’re the one who has to get all the information about the other driver – you’re the one who has to notify the insurance company – you’re the one who has to be without a car for 2 weeks while yours is being repaired – you’re the one who has to pay the difference if the other guy doesn’t have enough insurance to cover you – and you’re the one whose insurance rates go up because you were involved in an accident THAT WASN’T EVEN YOUR FAULT!!!!!!!

We’re not through yet! – We haven’t even mentioned if the kids get hurt – you’re the one who has to pay the ambulance fee – you’re the one who has to figure out all the HMO insurance mumbo-jumbo – you’re the one who has to be sure the doctor who treats your child is listed on your “participating doctors” list or else – you’re the one who has to pay the extra money for using a non-listed doctor – and if the doctor wants to see the child next week in his office, you’re the one who has to find a way to get him there because your car is still in the shop being repaired!

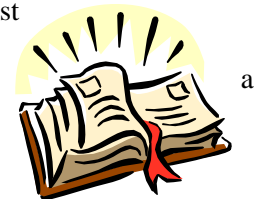
That’s the way a victim of mental, emotional, economic, physical, sexual and legal abuse feels when she struggles with the word “divorce.”

Webster’s dictionary is painfully clear in it’s definition of the word as follows:

- A legal separation of the bonds of marriage by the court
- To rid oneself of one’s husband (or wife) by divorce
- To disunite what was once closely united

Seeking counsel from a pastor when considering divorce may be disappointing because it is his calling and responsibility to both parties to try to keep marriages together. He will usually tell the victim what the Bible says in general because nothing in his seminary training helped him to understand how a battered woman feels and what she goes through.

However, because of the tremendous rise in the divorce rate in our society, and the ever increasing exposure of the amount of domestic violence being done against women, more attention is being paid to what the Bible really says about divorce - the letter of the law as compared to the spirit of the law. There is difference.



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For instance, the Bible says this about a man who abuses his wife: *“Husbands, love your wives (treat her with dignity, strengthen her and care for her) as Jesus loves the church and gave Himself up for her.”* (Ephesians 5:25AMP)



By this passage, and other similar ones, we know that the Bible teaches that if a man is physically or non-physically abusive – he is not in the will of God and is considered a non-believer if he will not receive correction. (Matthew 18:15-17)

Separation because of violence is wisdom, not a sin. Giving him a chance to change not just based on saying he will change. A phone call to him too soon after separation can be dangerous for the victim because she has begun facing the challenges of facing the future alone and if he begins to sweet talk her into coming back, she is very vulnerable to his sorrowful repentance and would walk right back into the same situation, only worse.

A woman should see that her batterer has attended a program of help, and is paying support for her and the children regularly and on time. There should be at least 6 months of excellent behavior before a woman should even consider going to counseling with him or reconciling with him.

There is a Scripture (1 Corinthians 7:15) that says: *“But if the unbelieving partner leaves, let him go. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.”* Love does not abuse: Women who are victims of violence have been abandoned through violence long before they leave the batterer. Even if he is a Christian, he has abandoned her by violating his promise to God to live in peace.



People often ask “why did she stay after he hit her?” That’s because they don’t understand the kinds of fear and breaking of the will that accompany violence that make the fear of leaving greater than the fear of staying. But, unfortunately, the violence only grows worse the longer it goes on – it never de-escalates by staying around. Be strong, step out in faith.

“Be strong and have courage, don’t be afraid of them; for the Lord your God goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6)

God, not your batterer, is your Lord. If you are thinking about getting a divorce, spend a lot of time in quality prayer and He will reveal His will to you. If you are already divorced, always remember that His will for you is peace.



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Because the question of divorce is a very personal question to answer, we will not have the usual questions and answers regarding this lesson.

Instead, there will be a general discussion around the table about this whole question:

Some suggested topics for discussion are:

- Do people who have not been divorced really understand the emotional trauma that divorced people go through?
- In this lesson we have barely touched on what the Bible says about divorce, but after hearing what has been said do you think it is all right for a woman to divorce a batterer who refuses to change?
- Even if a pastor does not approve of divorce because of violence, is it all right to go ahead and get one?
- Try to explain the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law.
- Discuss how a batterer has to prove he has overcome his violent behavior before he can ask for reconciliation.
- Discuss why battered Christian women do not have to be afraid to leave their batterer.

MEMORY VERSE (Deuteronomy 31:6) *“Be strong and have courage, don’t be afraid of them; for the Lord your God goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you.”*