



## *The Other Side of Divorce*



Divorce hurts – but there is a way for a Christian to recover.

The hardest part of divorce is learning to live with yourself and to like yourself after you are alone. In the recovery from a broken heart and a wounded ego, there are stages of rebuilding your life and discovering your own personality – and you do have a personality because you are a person, although for while you feel terribly incomplete and helpless.



The heartache of divorce will have one of two effects on a person's life. It will either draw a person closer to God, or drive them away. It will bring a sweeter fellowship with the Lord or produce bitterness. The choice is up to the divorced person. The first stage of recovery is facing the fact that we are unloved by our former spouse. That person that knew us better than anyone, doesn't love us. And it hurts!

The other person has cast us out of their life and no longer cares what happens to us. Rejection is one of the most difficult things to handle emotionally. It goes beyond being unloved, into the realm of their hatred. It is very demeaning and damaging to our self-esteem. If we're ever going to struggle with lack of self-worth, this is the place. And this is the place we have to choose – are we going to look at ourselves through the eyes of the one who rejected us, or through the eyes of God? Our heavenly Father does not reject us, we are chosen, accepted and adopted by Him.

The next question that arises is, "Where did I fail in this marriage?" Every divorced person would like to believe the problem was one sided, (the other person's), and loyal friends will assure us that that is true, but in our heart we have to admit that it takes two to succeed, and two to fail, even though it was not intentional.

There is no assurance in God's Word that tells us we didn't fail, but to the born-again believer there is a beautiful assurance of the grace of Jesus who understands our suffering. *"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

Commit your failure unto God. The feeling of incompleteness, of being cut loose, and not belonging anywhere is satisfied when we read that *"In Him dwells all the fullness of God bodily and you are complete in Him."* (Colossians 2:9,10) It is when we are suffering, and have a desperate need for God's Word, that it's power to heal is released in us.

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This is not an attempt to justify divorce, defend it, or recommend it. But, it is not the unpardonable sin. There is a legalistic view regarding the divorced person that can bring condemnation, and there are no circumstances that can change God's Word, but never before has our civilization faced the violence and depravity of our society today.

Never before have women by the thousands had to run and hide from their abusive husbands to save their very lives and those of the children. Never before has the crime of sexual abuse and physical abuse against children been a national disgrace as it is today. And, never before has the responsibility of protecting the children from their fathers fallen on the mother's shoulders as it is today. Never before has adultery been an affair. Never before has unfaithfulness in marriage been given so little importance. And never before has the divorce rate reached the level of 1 out of 2 marriages. Never before have so many men simply walked away from their wives, leaving them alone with no money, no home and full responsibility for the children.



No one understands the indescribable torment of physical abuse, unless they have experienced the horror of living with it. To tell a woman she has to remain in the home with her violent spouse, or else God won't forgive her, is a perversion of the love and mercy of God. Who is to defend the little, innocent children from the destruction of their innocence by sexual molestation? Shall they be the victims of a legalistic theology?

This is a tormenting question for all believers facing divorce: "God hates divorce, will He hate me if I get a divorce?" Each person must seek for their answer and examine their reasons for divorce. People who have never been married, have never been abused, or have never been divorced are the ones who are the most vocal about it, and the most judgmental. There are actually people who would condemn a battered or abused wife for thinking of a divorce, but praise her efforts to save her marriage when they attend her funeral.

Jesus is the one the divorced person must answer to, and His Word says, "*There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, but the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.*" (Romans 8:1-2) Condemnation comes from man, not God; love comes from God, not man. God hates divorce, but loves the divorced person. Can we do less. God's laws are perfect, but the people who live under them are not. God is a Father that treats us with compassion and love. It is a good thing for us that God is more merciful with His children, than His children are with each other.

There is not a divorced person who would not rather be in a loving home with a loving mate, instead of facing life alone, struggling with the crippling effects of total rejection by the person you were once the most intimate with in this life, knowing someone that knew you completely had discarded you. The trauma of having someone who once loved you now dislike you so intensely that they will fight to keep every penny no matter how difficult it makes your struggle for survival, leaves scars that only God's love can erase.

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And, divorce always comes down to money, there's where the greatest root of bitterness springs up. Most divorces get very ugly, the deepest emotions are tapped, and the intensity of dislike and hatred is an ugly thing to live with. The divorced person needs our love and acceptance even more than the widow bereaved by death, because the widow can mourn for the loss of someone who loved her, but the divorced widow has to live with the rejection of the person who no longer loves them and has discarded them.

Only God knows the suffering and torment that tortures the heart of a divorced Christian. Let's not, in the Name of Jesus, add our judgement and condemnation to their suffering. *"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."* (John 3:17)

Divorce is not the unforgivable sin, and adultery is no greater or lesser sin than any other – sin is sin. But people, often church people, will forgive a life of sin and crime, but not a divorce. Divorce (except for Bible reasons) and remarriage is sin, it has been since the beginning of human creation because it breaks the oneness of a man and woman in marriage and reverses God's original design. Nothing can change these facts. Any departure from God's Word is sin. But, somehow divorce and remarriage have been singled out as being worse than other sins, but the glory of the gospel is that by God's grace we are forgiven.

God does not hold our failure over our head. The murder of Uriah by King David in the Old Testament, and his marriage to Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, was honored by God after they repented of their sin. God did not hold David forever guilty for his sins of murder and adultery. If God was this forgiving under the Old Covenant which was by law, wouldn't God still be as compassionate under the New Covenant of grace which was ushered in by Jesus Christ?

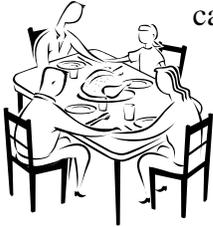
God understands our need for love and that often we look for it in the wrong places. We look to people to meet our need and enter in to wrong marriage relationships in our search for love. Women especially feel that they have to have a man to be happy and feel complete. Only God, through our Savior Jesus Christ, can meet that desperate need for love, because God is love (I John 4:8b) and He never changes. But it takes understanding of this before it can become real in a person's life. Often divorce becomes a stepping stone to the reality that Jesus is enough and *"you are complete in Him."* (Colossians 2:10) If we never have another relationship with anyone, Jesus is still enough. He will meet our every need.

These words sound very empty to the person who has never experienced the presence of the love of Jesus in their heart, and that person will keep looking for someone else for satisfaction, and completeness, often getting caught in adulterous relationships until they come to the knowledge of this truth. In the Bible Jesus personally dealt with adultery with the woman at the well in Samaria who had had five husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband. (John 4:17,18)

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Jesus didn't treat her as though she had committed a sin which would ruin the rest of her life, He taught her true worship of God, because salvation and forgiveness had come to her through Him. Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah, the long awaited Christ, who was the fulfillment of God's love for her.

Divorce is not limited to only a legal process. Divorce means "to separate." It can happen by abandonment, or by violence resulting in the victim being forced to leave, or it can happen by a simple agreement to separate. A re-marriage of either partner cannot take place, of course, without a legal action. It is plain to see why God has such strong feelings about divorce because it is the breaking up of the family unit which is the basis of His whole plan for mankind.



Divorce is a separation from a mate, but it is not a separation from God!



Because of the length of this study, there will not be written questions and answers, but a discussion time of personal feelings and questions about divorce or separation can be very helpful here.

MEMORY VERSE (John 3:17)

*“For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”*