

MARRIAGE!,  
The Essential Law.  
DIVORCE!,  
The only exception

BY  
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Marriage, The essential Law! Divorce, The only exception  
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## *Five important facts or truths to consider about* **MARRIAGE:**

1. Marriage is a union between a man and a woman who agree to live together as husband and wife (Gen. 2:24-25).
2. Marriage is often referred to as "holy matrimony" because marriage is holy [sacred, set apart or consecrated to God], and therefore is NOT to be thought of as a common or secular thing, but rather this holy union formed by a sacred ceremony or assembly before God (Mal. 2:14) represents three cords [a husband, wife and God], a close relationship not easily broken (Eccl. 4:12).
3. Marriage is honourable (Heb. 13:4), and NOT to be entered into lightly nor entered out of lightly because it is a covenant relationship and

companionship that enables the man and woman to become one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5; Mal. 2:14), both physically (1 Cor. 7:3-5;), and spiritually (1 Pet. 3:7), until death (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2).

4. There are certain customs and traditions attached to marriage, such as in some cultures a bride price is paid by the bridegroom to the family of the bride in order to ratify the marriage (Gen. 29:20-30; Exo. 22:16-17; 1 Sam. 18:23-28; 2 Sam. 3:14).
5. Finally, above all in importance is the legal commitment in regards to the marriage law at the beginning. Marriage is God's institution [the Original and Essential Marriage Law was universal in application to all people], so whether the sacred ceremony or assembly to form the marriage was a church wedding or performed at a registry office, or a traditional marriage, God established the LAW of marriage at the beginning (Matt. 19:4-6) for primarily the following 3 reasons: [1] lifelong commitment and companionship (Gen. 2:18); [2] to acquire godly offsprings (Mal. 2:15), and [3]

particularly to prevent fornication (1 Cor. 7:1-5). In regards to marriages in the Jewish community [Israel, God's ancient people], separation from foreigners or Gentiles was emphasised (Neh. 9:2; 10:28-30; Ezra 9:1-2; 10:2-3), particularly nations that were a threat to Israel who would turn Israel from worshipping God (Deut. 7:1-3), this was the Law, but there were also notable exceptions, particularly two women mentioned in [Jesus] the Lord Yahushua's ancestry who were foreigners [Ruth and Rahab]. By respecting God's institution, Gentile marriages would also be blessed by God, particularly evident by the blessing of the fruit of the womb and the increase in the human race (Gen. 1:27-28; Ps. 127:3-5).



# ***THE VALIDITY OF DIVORCE***

**D**ivorce was a controversial topic in Yahushua's day, with two main schools of thought, centred around two of its most famous proponents. The first was the school of Rabbi Shammai [a more strict and unpopular view] and second was the school of Rabbi Hillel [a more lax and popular view]. The school of Rabbi Shammai understood that uncleanness meant sexual immorality, and said this was the only valid reason for divorce. The school of Rabbi Hillel understood uncleanness to mean any sort of indiscretion; even to the point where for some rabbis, burning a husband's breakfast was considered valid grounds for divorce. This is why God revealed in Malachi 2:16 that He hates divorce because many were divorcing without a valid reason to the extent that Israel had become an adulterous nation (Matt. 12:39; 16:4), as divorce leads onto "sin" particularly if one divorces and

remarries in an unlawful manner, it multiplies the "sin" of adultery (Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 19:9). God hates all forms of "sin" (Pro. 6:16-19; Ps. 5:4) because "sin" separates us from Him (Is. 59:2; Rom. 3:23; 6:23), but particularly sexual "sin" (1 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 21:8; 22:15).

In Matthew 19:1-9, the Lord Yahushua was asked a question in regards to what "reason" permits the ground for divorce. Bear in mind that the subject is DIVORCE, but the Lord gave a discourse about marriage, and so based His teaching on the subject of divorce on God's essential marriage LAW at the beginning which was universal in application to ALL people (Matt. 19:4-6). The Lord's response to the question raised about the validity of divorce also implies that He was not referring to a sexual encounter before a marriage was consummated exclusively. There are bible commentators that argue that the Lord Yahushua's teaching on marriage that ends in divorce due to "fornication" was only in accordance to Jewish customs and traditions referring to "the betrothal" or before the marriage was consummated (Matt. 1:18-20). However, when a man was betrothed to a woman, although the marriage was not consummated (Deut.

20:7), yet the Scriptures and Jewish law treats the betrothal in the same way as a marriage that was consummated by sexual intercourse - the betrothal was "valid marriage" (Ex. 21:7-10; Deut. 20:7; Judg. 14:1-20; 15:1-6), as the betrothal covenant agreement of marriage binds the couple together, and therefore only a valid reason to divorce could dissolve the contract the couple have entered into (Matt. 1:18-19). Furthermore, when Mary [the mother of Yahushua Ha-Mashiach, who is commonly known as Jesus Christ] was betrothed to Joseph, he was referred to as Mary's husband (Matt. 1:19), and also the consequences of fornication when betrothed to a man or woman was the death sentence (Deut. 22:23-24), just like when a marriage was consummated by sexual intercourse (Deut. 22:22). Therefore, the Lord's response to the question raised about the validity of divorce seems more likely to refer to an unlawful sexual encounter both before or after the consummation of a marriage union in accordance with the [1646] Westminster Confession of Faith, which states, "adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract.[11] In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the

innocent party to sue out a divorce and, after the divorce,[12] to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.[13]."

It is also important to understand the meaning of the word "fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18) from the languages in which the Bible was originally written. The Bible was mainly written in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, and in Greek, the original language of the New Testament writings. Firstly, it is necessary to analyse the word "fornication" from the Hebrew and Greek word, and finally in English. The Septuagint [LXX, a Greek translation from Hebrew] uses it predominately for the Hebrew word "zanah"— commit fornication, be a harlot, or commit adultery, and this is primarily sexual involvement with humans, but the Bible also figuratively depicts it to spiritual prostitution or idolatry (Col. 3:5-6; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 23:1-49). The Bible presents Israel as the bride of God, and "fornication" [harlotry] depicted in relation to "idolatry" with other gods affects the relationship (Jer. 3:8-14; Ezek. 16:15-34; 23:1-49). Moreover, the King James Version [KJV, an English translation from Greek] translated the word "fornication" from the Greek word "porneia." According to Strong's

Concordance of the Bible [an index of every word in the KJV], the Greek word "porneia," also includes adultery and prostitution. "Porneia" comes from another Greek word that also includes indulging in any kind of unlawful lust, which would include homosexuality (Gen. 19:1-11) or incest (1 Cor. 5:1; 6:18). The use of the word in the gospels and the epistles is always in reference to sexual sin. It is also where the English word "pornography" comes from. The Greek word "porneia" translated into English does NOT refer to "fornication" ONLY, but it is a broad word, a generic term for sexual sin of ANY kind, or promiscuity of any or every kind, and therefore can be translated primarily as "sexual immorality" or "fornication" or "adultery" or "whoredom" or "harlotry" in which all these defilement originate from a person whose heart is hardened (Matt. 15:11, 18-20; 19:7-9). It is clear that fornication is the sexual sin generally associated to the unmarried, and adultery is the sexual sin exclusively associated to the married. But the Bible reveals that it is possible for a married person to be involved in harlotry [to commit fornication] (Hos. 1:2; 2:2-7; Ezek. 23:2-5; Mark 6:18), and therefore, when a married person commits adultery, they also commit fornication in the process. A married person

commits "adultery" against their spouse, and in so doing he or she sins against God and their own body, as "fornication" is also committed (1 Cor. 6:15-20) with a person that they are not lawfully married to (Mark 6:18), which also accords with the meaning of "fornication" in the dictionary and thesaurus of American and English words such as Webster and Oxford. According to Webster's definition of "fornication" it is referred to as consensual sexual intercourse between two persons not married to each other. But above all, God shows that "adultery" as well as "fornication" can be committed by a married person when He accused Israel of "harlotry" and also "adultery" (Ezek. 16:15-34; Jer. 3:6-8; Num. 25:1-18).

After teaching about the marriage law at the beginning [which was universal in application to all people], the Lord then proceeded to answer the question put before Him in regards to DIVORCE. Just like in Yahushua's day, some people want to divorce for ANY reason, but the Lord has permitted divorce for only "ONE reason" - that is fornication [sexual immorality] as a result of a hardened heart (Matt. 5:32; 19:9), which the Lord further explained that the root cause refers to defilement from the heart meaning true uncleanness originates from one's

inner thoughts and intentions before the external action of sexual intercourse (Matt. 5:27-28; 15:17-20; Mark 7:15; Pro. 4:23). Moreover, what consummates a marriage is when the man and woman have sexual intercourse, and the two become one flesh in union together (Matt. 19:4-6); and in like manner, what can dissolve a marriage besides physical death (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2); is the ONE exception to the rule [sexual immorality], as the unfaithful spouse becomes one flesh with another (1 Cor. 6:16). The main emphasis is that some kind of "uncleanliness" due to a hardened heart [which unless the Lord overrules often leads to "sexual sin"] has occurred which the Lord deems as the ONLY valid reason for divorce. The Lord does not command it take place, but He allows it. Mark and Luke failed to include this clause in their gospel account, but it does not mean that the Lord Yahushua's words are irrelevant in Matthew, for all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). Also, one gospel often gives us additional information and expands our knowledge on a topic that another gospel only briefly mentions or omits entirely [such as Yahushua's final words on the cross, his inscription message, information about Joseph of Arimathea, etc]. In regards to the topics of marriage, divorce and remarriage, the Scriptures give good

guidance and also reveal certain exceptions [to the law]. Here are biblical marriage, divorce and remarriage guidelines and scriptural exceptions, with the emphasis on the GUIDELINES, to teach the guidelines, but to note scriptural exceptions.



# ***MARRIAGE GUIDELINES***

1. A Christian should marry another Christian (1 Cor. 9:5; 7:39), and should NOT separate what God has joined (Mark 10:6-9).
2. A Christian should NOT marry an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 7:39). The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul reiterated the Lord's teaching on marriage (1 Cor. 7:10-11), and also taught about unholy unions that can lead to "idolatry" (2 Cor. 6:14-16), which is another element of the Lord's teaching on "fornication" [harlotry] in relation to the worship of other gods or false gods, particularly evident in a mixed marriage when an unbeliever's intention is to turn a believer from worshipping the true God (Deut. 7:3-4; 1 King. 11:1-4; Rom. 1:25) to friendship with the world (Jam. 4:4).

3. One wife for Christian man or one husband for Christian woman (1 Cor. 7:2; 1 Tim. 3:2).
4. Non-Christian marriages [between male and female] are recognised by God, who blesses them with children, and the human race is increased (Gen. 1:27-28; Ps. 127:3-5).
5. Marriage is binding until death (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2), so it is important for husband and wife to strive to forgive one another (Col. 3:12-19; John 8:1-11); and to be understanding (1 Pet. 3:7).



# ***SCRIPTURAL [MARRIAGE] EXCEPTIONS***

1. If a believer is married to an unbelieving spouse before conversion, and the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer, then continue marriage (1 Cor. 7:12), as the Scriptures seem to imply that God has set apart such a situation to work in the unbeliever's heart [and if they have children, to also work in the children] to ultimately save them by the instrumentality of the believing spouse (1 Cor. 7:13-14).
2. Hosea was commanded to marry a harlot in order to portray the unfaithfulness of Israel (Hos. 1:2).
3. The first marriage is not the only marriage recognised by the Lord, as the Lord acknowledged the woman at the well of Jacob had five husbands (John 4:17-18).



# ***DIVORCE GUIDELINES***

1. A Christian should NOT divorce another Christian (1 Cor. 7:10-11; Mal. 2:14-15).
2. A divorced person should NOT remarry another person if divorced companion still alive, otherwise they will be committing adultery (Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18).
3. Whoever marries a divorced person also commits adultery (Matt. 19:9).



# ***SCRIPTURAL [DIVORCE] EXCEPTIONS***

1. SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS THE ONLY VALID REASON FOR DIVORCE (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). In a "mixed marriage," in a situation where the unbelieving spouse deserts the believing spouse, the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 7:40) also allowed divorce (1 Cor. 7:12-16). This appears to conflict with the Lord's teaching, but it actually accords with the Lord's teaching (Ezek. 6:9), for Lord Yahushua allows divorce as a result of a hardened heart particularly when sexual immorality occurs at any point in a marriage, especially if there is no option of reconciliation due to [1] "desertion" or [2] no repentance or [3] unlawful remarriage to another (Matt. 19:8-9; 1 Cor. 7:15; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 2:21;

Deut. 24:1-4) .

2. In the days of Ezra, the Jews who had married heathen wives were advised to divorce them (Ezra 9:1-15; 10:18-44).



# ***REMARRIAGE GUIDELINES***

1. Death of companion (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39).
2. Christian remarries divorced Christian companion again (1 Cor. 7:11).
3. If divorced woman remarries and the second husband divorces her or dies, the first husband cannot remarry her (Deut. 24:3-4; Jer. 3:1).



# ***SCRIPTURAL [REMARRIAGE] EXCEPTIONS***

1. SEXUAL IMMORALITY IS THE ONLY VALID REASON FOR REMARRIAGE TO ANOTHER AFTER DIVORCE (Matt. 19:9). When due to a hardened heart, one is completely given over to sensuality, sexual immorality is repeated and unrepentant, and so dissolves a marriage relationship as unfaithful spouse becomes one flesh with another (1 Cor. 6:16; Matt. 19:9). Moreover, after divorce as a result of a hardened heart particularly when sexual immorality occurs, an innocent brother or sister in a mixed marriage is freed from the marriage law to live a single life onto the Lord or to remarry onto the Lord and not sin (1 Cor. 7:27-28; Matt. 19:8-9).

2. The Scriptures also figuratively portray a picture depicting Israel's captivity by Assyria and Babylon in reference to Israel [the wife] being put away (Jer. 3:8; Ezek. 23:1-49; Is. 54:1-8); whom God [the husband] gave a certificate of divorce because of her unfaithfulness, but now in His mercy calls for Israel to return to Him (Jer. 3:1-8; 24-25; Hos. 2:2-5; Is. 54:1-8).



# ***THE LORD'S LESSON OF MERCY & FORGIVENESS IN MARRIAGE***

**F**urthermore, Christ did not come to abolish the Law of God [the 10 commandments, which included the Law forbidding adultery - Jam. 2:10-11], but to fulfil it (Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 10:4). In other words, He is the Law, evident by His action toward the woman caught in adultery [the 7th commandment]. Adultery at earliest times (Gen. 38:24); and later times through the law of Moses (Deut. 22:22), was punishable unto death (Lev. 20:10). The Lord Yahushua was the only One without sin and the only One who could have enforced the punishment of the Law [forbidding adultery] by stoning the woman to death, but He chose to show mercy and forgiveness, and not to

immediately condemn (John 8:7-11). Why? It appears that the Lord was teaching us a lesson about His character in regards to His mercy (Is. 30:18) even toward the offender [those who are apparently guilty], in allowing time for them to repent (Rom. 2:4; Rev. 2:20-22; Jon. 3:10; 4:11; Nah. 1:2-3; 3:1-7).



## *Psalm 103:8*

*"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."*

**T**his lesson of mercy and forgiveness is necessary in marriage, particularly if adultery and fornication has occurred, if it is possible, then forgiveness and reconciliation should be pursued first before divorce (Luke 17:3-4). But it is also important to remember the command that the Lord gave to the woman, "go and sin no more" (John 8:11). This is important because if the woman ignored this command by continuing in the sin of adultery and failure to repent [particularly in the time appointed], then she would be considered a sexual immoral person, and no longer receive His mercy, but the other side of His character, which is His judgment and justice (Heb. 13:4; Rev. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 6:9-13). Whatever "The Lord says is final." It is clear that in Matt. 5:32 & 19:9 due to fornication [sexual immorality], the Lord has allowed an

exception to the law of marriage, which can be considered a permit only after seeking reconciliation has been unsuccessful. In summary, THE ESSENTIAL LAW for "marriage" at the beginning was universal in application to all people in regards to the union of one man and one woman in holy matrimony until death, THE ONLY EXCEPTION to the law being "fornication" [sexual immorality], which allows the innocent spouse ONLY, to divorce and remarry another (Matt. 5:32; 19:1-9), but whoever marries the divorced offending spouse commits adultery (Matt. 19:9), which implies that God holds the offending spouse to the marriage law until the death of the innocent spouse (Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39), unless of course, they repent and become a new creation in Christ, their old life replaced by a new one that is focused on God's righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal.6:15; Eph. 4:24).

