The Biblical Perspective of Marriage

- **Marriage** is a covenant agreement in which a man and a woman are legally and spiritually joined together as husband and wife. (Malachi 2:14–15)
- **Marriage** includes the uniting of two, one male and one female, into one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)
- **Marriage** is to be a reflection of God’s covenant commitment to His people. (Hosea 2:19–20)
- **Marriage** is a picture of Christ’s sacrificial love for His bride, the church. (Ephesians 5:25)
- **Marriage** is designed to be permanent until the death of one of the partners. (Romans 7:2)
- **Marriage** is a covenant commitment that should never be broken. (Malachi 2:15)

God’s Heart on Marriage

- God presents marriage as good and worthy of His favor. (Proverbs 18:22)
- God sees the person you married as being the right life partner for you. (Matthew 19:6)
- God portrays marriage as a picture of the sacrificial love of Christ. (Ephesians 5:25)
- God is not as concerned with your circumstances as He is with building your character. (Romans 8:29)
- God promises to meet all the needs that your mate cannot provide. (Hebrews 4:16)

The Biblical Perspective of Divorce

- **Legal Divorce**: a judicial declaration that terminates the marriage contract. (Matthew 5:31)
- **Emotional Divorce**: the result of a hardened heart toward one’s mate, creating an inability to give and receive love. (Matthew 19:8)

God’s Heart on Divorce

- God hates divorce. (Malachi 2:16)
- God does not see legal divorce as dissolving the “one flesh” spiritual bond in marriage. (Matthew 5:32)
- God may close His ears to the prayers of one who breaks a marriage covenant. (Malachi 2:13–14)
- God does not permit divorce just because a mate is not saved—the unbeliever becomes sanctified through the believing spouse and could become a Christian. (1 Corinthians 7:14, 16)
- God’s heart is for reconciliation even if there has been a divorce. (1 Corinthians 7:10–11)

God’s Heart on Divorce and Remarriage

- God guards and protects the faithful spouse in a divorce. (Proverbs 2:8)
- God allows divorce and will accomplish His ultimate purpose for you. (Romans 8:28)
- God promises to meet all your needs. (Philippians 4:19)
- God requires self-examination when you have experienced divorce. (Matthew 7:1–5)
- God’s heart is to bring “new life” out of the devastation of divorce. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Key Verses to Memorize

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

(Philippians 4:12–13)
Key Passage to Read
Psalm 119:25–32

Forgive

Follow God's correction course.

“Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise” (Proverbs 15:31).

Own your personal sins and seek God’s forgiveness.

“I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD. And you forgave the guilt of my sin’” (Psalm 32:5).

Recognize your need to confess and seek forgiveness.

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

Give only a good report.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

Identify the unmet needs of your ex-spouse.

“The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction” (Proverbs 16:21).

Vow to pray for your ex-spouse.

“I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

Expect God to be working on your behalf.

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).

Dos and Don’ts for Helping Others

• Don’t reinforce feelings of self-pity, bitterness, and injustice.
  Do ... Encourage keeping a journal of feelings, then releasing the pain to the Lord. (Psalm 51:6)

• Don’t allow those you counsel to become too dependent on you.
  Do ... Help those who are hurting to rely on God’s unconditional love and acceptance. (Jeremiah 31:3)

• Don’t be the only source of counsel.
  Do ... Share how to meditate on God’s Word and listen to God’s voice. (Isaiah 30:21)

• Don’t assume that the pain of divorce is over.
  Do ... Reach out during the most difficult times—evenings, anniversaries, and at times when the children are with the former spouse. (Proverbs 27:10)

   “The God of all comfort ... comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”
   (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

New Life in Christ

Beginning again may mean an opportunity to rebuild a marriage based on new understanding and new goals, or it may mean rebuilding hope into a life that has been broken by sorrow. In either situation, God has a wonderful new beginning for those whose hearts are given to Him. From the soil of failure sprouts “new life in Christ.” ...

   “In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and set me free.”
   (Psalm 118:5 NLT)

• Your new identity (married or single) is in the Lord, not in a position or in another person. (Galatians 2:20)

• You are complete in Christ, not an incomplete single if you don’t remarry. (Colossians 2:9–10)

• Your happiness comes from inner attitudes, not outer circumstances. (Matthew 5:3–12)

• Your purpose in life, married or single, is to glorify God. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

• You have the resources to forgive your ex-spouse and others who have hurt you. (Colossians 3:13)

• You have the strength to overcome temptations when you are living in the power of Christ. (Romans 13:14)

• You are free (if you are single) to be concerned with things of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:32–34)

• You have shared in the sufferings of Christ and can be an effective witness in the lives of others. (1 Peter 4:19)
"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."
(Deuteronomy 1:23)

Questions and Answers

"When I married, my husband and I weren't Christians. Now that I am a Christian, is it acceptable in God's eyes to divorce and marry a Christian?"

No. From the beginning, marriage has been an institution initiated by God. Any divorce results in breaking a covenant bond that God has established.

"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."
(Matthew 5:32)

"Is there any provision in the Bible for divorce and remarriage?"

Yes. Most theologians believe that the Bible makes allowance for divorce in two situations.

- Sexual infidelity
  "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery"  (Matthew 19:9).

- Physical abandonment
  "If the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace"  (1 Corinthians 7:15).

"Why is the divorce rate so much higher now than it was fifty years ago?"

Situational ethics has rejected moral absolutes (clear-cut right and wrong) by rationalizing sin. The influence of the world on our values makes divorce appear to be not only an acceptable solution but also the best solution to marital difficulties.

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."
(James 4:4)