

Does Marriage Have an Escape Clause?

Matthew 19:1-12

**God's plan for marriage from the beginning of Creation is
ONE MAN + ONE WOMAN FOR LIFE**

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus passes through Perea, the region beyond the Jordan River (1-2).

This is the place where John the Baptist was executed after he opposed Herod Antipas.

Jesus continued to teach the large crowds that were following him.

The Pharisees try to trap Jesus (3).

While the Pharisees question Jesus about divorce, they already knew his answer (Matthew 5:31-32).

Divorce was permitted in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), but there was great debate over the circumstances.

Rabbi Hillel	Rabbi Shammai	Qumran Community
Divorce allowed for any and every reason; remarriage is allowed	Divorce allowed only for immorality; remarriage in that case alone	Divorce and remarriage are not allowed

Jesus contrasted the prevailing view of marriage with God's plan from the beginning (4-6).

God's plan for marriage from the beginning of creation is one man and one woman for life.

Marriage is not a social contract of temporary convenience which can be readily broken. Marriage is a covenant of mutual fidelity to lifelong union before God.

Don't un-one what God has done.

Divorce was not "Plan B" (7-8).

The Pharisees believed that Moses commanded people to divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

Jesus explained that divorce was permitted, but not commanded.

Divorce was allowed because people refused to forgive.

To remarry after divorce would make the person guilty of committing adultery (9).

Divorce was permissible if one party was unfaithful.

The disciples were amazed at the high standard for marriage (10-12).

People need to be serious about commitment and not rush into marriage.

Summary of biblical teaching on marriage and divorce.

- Marriage is a permanent union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24-25).
- Divorce is allowed under two circumstances:
 - Unfaithfulness of one spouse (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).
 - Desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:8-16).
- While divorce is allowed, it is not required or commanded. There is still an opportunity for grace, forgiveness, and restoration.
- Remarriage is allowed under the above circumstances, as well as after the death of a spouse (Romans 7:1-3).
- A divorce that occurred before someone came to faith in Christ is covered by God’s grace, along with every other sin they committed (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Principles to Practice

1. Forsake all competing relationships
2. Develop areas of togetherness and oneness
3. Don’t allow anything to damage your relationship
 - When a habit *irritates*, choose **mercy**
 - When a hindrance *frustrates*, choose **grace**
 - When a hurt *grieves*, choose **forgiveness**
4. Plant your feet firmly in the “Never, Never!” box.

Never, Never, Box	“Hope Not”	“Probably Not”	Maybe Crisis	“Probably Will”	“Hope to”	Sever, Sever Box
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5. Commit yourself to honor your marriage covenant