

HPBC Pastoral Statement on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

updated 9.4.2018

1. From the beginning, God intended for marriage to be between one man and one woman for life (Gen 2:24-25). Jesus affirmed this teaching on marriage and added the following commentary: “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt 19:6).
2. The certificate of divorce that Moses permitted was not meant to encourage nor require divorce but to curb the number of divorces that were already happening (Deut 24:1-4). Jesus affirms that this was Moses’ intent and reaffirms that God’s original intent for marriage was for life (Matt. 5:31-32; Matt 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18).
3. God reaffirms his original design for marriage through Malachi by emphasizing the covenantal and spiritual nature of marriage (Mal 2:14-15) and by calling divorce a devastating and violent act (Mal 2:16).
4. Jesus taught that divorce causes spouses to commit adultery (Matt 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18), and the only exception he gave is in the case of sexual immorality (Matt 5:32; 19:9). In the case of sexual immorality, the non-offending spouse would have the right (but would not be required) to divorce the offending spouse.
5. Generally, death is the only event that enables one to remarry without sin (Rom 7:2-3; 1 Cor 7:39).
6. We believe that Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 teach that a permissible divorce gives the non-offending spouse the right to remarry.
7. A believer and unbeliever should not marry (1 Cor 7:39).
8. Paul teaches that believers should use their current life situations to the glory of God. Specifically, he instructs those who are married to remain in their marriages, and he instructs those who are unmarried (single or widowed) to remain unmarried unless their pursuit of sexual purity must include marriage. However, if a believing husband and wife divorce, they should remain unmarried, unless they are willing to be remarried to one another (1 Cor 7:11).¹ Believers who are married to unbelievers should remain and serve God in the marriage (1 Cor 7:12-14). However, if an unbelieving spouse no longer consents to live with a believing spouse, the believing spouse is not required to remain married to the unbelieving spouse nor try to prevent a divorce and would thus be free to remain single or remarry (1 Cor 7:12, 15-16).

¹ Because Paul is referencing Jesus’ teaching here (1 Cor 7:10), the exception clause referenced in point 4 could be an exception to this point as well.