

Prescriptions for the Heart

Struggling with the question of divorce

Today more than half of the marriages end in divorce. The term “irreconcilable differences” is the most common reason used to request a divorce. According to Webster’s dictionary, “irreconcilable differences” are differences that are impossible to resolve. Are your differences impossible to resolve? The Bible offers very sound advice on how to determine if divorce is a viable option.

In this prescription for the heart you will discover that in the Old Testament a divorce could be granted for almost any reason, but Jesus Christ challenged this law of Moses with a better teaching. These insights offered by Jesus Christ may help you gain a new perspective as you struggle with the question of divorce.

This information is provided as a free service of the Christian Medical & Dental Associations and your doctor. All of the following biblical quotations are taken from the Living Bible.

A prescription for healing a marriage

In the days of Moses, approximately 1200 BC, it was written in the Bible, “if a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he can write her a certificate of divorce, give it to her and send her from his house.”¹ In most ancient cultures at this time the wife was considered the property of her husband. As a result, divorce was viewed as a property right of the husband.

However, Jesus Christ challenged this tradition when a Jewish leader tested Jesus on this law. The Jewish leader asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”² Jesus replied, “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law. But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.”³

Jesus reveals that the true nature of our “irreconcilable differences” is the hardness of our hearts. It is our sinful and selfish human nature that typically prevent married couples from resolving their differences. While Jesus acknowledges that adultery may be considered grounds for divorce, the focal point of His response is our unwillingness to forgive and serve one another. Before any married couple decides to divorce every effort should be made to forgive and to reconcile their differences.

How many times should you forgive your spouse? Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”

¹ The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984. (Deuteronomy 24:1). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

² The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984. (Mark 10:2). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

³ The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984. (Mark 10:5-9). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

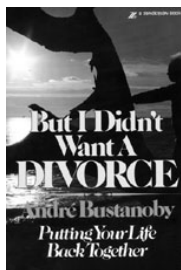
Jesus answered, ``I tell you, not seven times, but seven times seventy times.’’⁴ From God’s perspective we should always be ready and willing to forgive.

Most marriages get into trouble because of the hardness of our hearts. When a husband and/or a wife refuse to discuss and resolve a difference or conflict in their marriage they create a wall that separates them. If this behavior continues this wall will become larger and more difficult to remove. However, with the grace of God, this wall can be torn down when a couple is willing to acknowledge their own hard heartedness and seek forgiveness from their spouse.

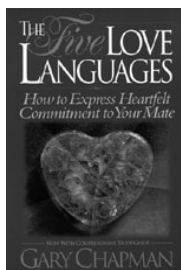
One of the greatest tools in breaking down these walls is prayer. By acknowledging our own hard heartedness and asking God to forgive us, we receive the strength to forgive others. The process of breaking down walls is hard work. Marriage partners must be willing to try to resolve their differences. Your doctor can help you. He can pray with you and for you. He can refer you and your spouse to a Christian counselor or a local pastor for counseling. Don’t give up hope; find hope in God’s word and the counsel of others.

Additional Resources that can help restore your marriage

The following resources have been reviewed by the Christian Medical Association and have been found to contain sound Biblically based advice that can help you to restore your marriage. These books can be found at your local Christian bookstore or you can order them directly from the Christian Medical Association at **888-231-2637**.



But I Didn’t Want A Divorce: by André Bustanoby. No matter how opposed to divorce you and your church may be, and no matter how much you may want to stay married, you may become a divorce statistic this year. This book is for people who are caught in a trap and seeking to put their lives back together. In the author's words, "You must be willing to be a healed single person rather than an ever-grieving divorcee." If you are facing a divorce or have already experienced it--even though you didn't want it--you cannot afford *not* to read this book! Paperback, 174 pages.



Five Love Languages: by Gary Chapman. People express and receive love in different ways. Dr. Gary Chapman identifies these as the five languages of love: Quality time; Words of affirmation; Gifts; Acts of service; Physical touch. If you express love in a way your spouse doesn't understand, he or she won't realize you've expressed your love at all. In this new edition of *The Five Love Languages*, you will find a couple's guide to help you work as a team. Before you know it, you'll learn to speak and understand the unique languages of love and effectively express your love as well as feel truly loved in return. Paperback, 204 pages.



⁴ The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984. (Matthew 18:21-22). Zondervan: Grand Rapids