

## **DIVORCE RECOVERY**

1. **GOD IS GRACIOUS BUT MANY PEOPLE AREN'T.** No matter what the reason is for your divorce (with or without remarriage), God desires for you to confess any of your personal errors to Him and accept his forgiveness, and move on with your life, obeying the GREAT COMMANDMENT to love and be loved by God, others and yourself. God taught us in the Book of James that "we all fail in many ways." But some Christians erroneously shun divorced people as do some churches which eliminate the approximate 40% or more of adult believers who are divorced from participating in "God's army"—not allowing divorcees to help others through leadership roles in the church. I would encourage divorced people to seek out a church that is gracious and compassionate towards those going through a divorce, as they can then help you recover from the wounds of your divorce. Many churches are now adding Divorce Care Support Groups, which can be so helpful to those going through a divorce. The church should be a gracious hospital for hurting people, not one that doesn't acknowledge the wounds and sins that each person is working through. We are reminded in Proverbs 6 that the sin God most detests, which is listed first, is that of a "proud look."
2. **GOD SAYS "NO CONDEMNATION.** (God taught us, in Romans 8:1, "there is NO CONDEMNATION" to believers for our sins—He simply wants us to confess them and learn from them and move on.) Our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west; God chose Jonah to preach to Nineveh, Gideon to lead a mighty battle, and King David (after he committed adultery and murder but repented) to be "a man after his own heart" whom God chose, out of all the billions of people who have ever lived, to rule with Him during his future thousand year reign. Out of the hundred sheep Jesus tended, he left the 99 obedient ones to restore the one who wandered. God taught us in Proverbs that a person who fails seven times in a row, but keeps trying, is a "righteous person."
3. **ROMANS 8:29 SAYS GOD'S GOAL FOR YOUR LIFE IS TO BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS, AND GOD USES THE TRAGEDIES AND FAILURES IN OUR LIVES TO HELP US GROW.** I recommend that you read the book, *Finding Purpose Beyond Our Pain*, to help you recover from divorce, loneliness, rejection and other common sources of pain in our lives. I wrote the book in 2009 with David Henderson, MD (Thomas Nelson, Publisher, Nashville) and it is available in hard cover, paperback and audio book.
4. **DIVORCE IS DIFFICULT AND SOMETIMES DEVASTATING.** Don't ever think it will be easy. If someone loves his mate very much, has a great relationship, and one of them dies suddenly, that is very traumatic and a tremendous loss. But as a psychiatrist, I know from observation and research that when a mate you love runs off with someone else and divorces you, that is even more devastating than the death of a mate you are close to. In divorce, one mate is CHOOSING to permanently leave you. If you divide the number of years you were married by four, that is approximately how many years it will take you to totally recover from a divorce. Divorce recovery therapy and support groups can speed this up considerably. People going through traumatic divorces come to a Meier Clinics Day Program seven hours a day, five days a week for three weeks and make dramatic recoveries by packing a year of therapy into three weeks. But even with therapy, you may see a sad movie about divorce several years down the road and still tear up some, but no longer feel devastated.

5. IF YOUR OWN BELOVED DAUGHTER OR SON, OR YOUR BEST FRIEND, WERE IN A MARRIAGE WITH CONTINUED UNFAITHFULNESS OR ABUSE, WHAT WOULD YOU WANT HER OR HIM TO DO? Well, stop and think about it. You are God's beloved child, so He certainly wants you to protect yourself from abuse. Sometimes separation results in repentance and an eventually healthy marriage. Other times it results in the abuser looking for someone else to control and abuse if you are no longer available to fill that role. But you are better off either way. God invented marriage and a healthy marriage is awesome. But the same God who invented marriage also allowed divorce for those whose mates have so much hardness of heart that they abandon you or are unfaithful to you sexually.
6. GOD HATES ABANDONMENT. In Old Testament days, society was even more chauvinistic than it is today, and it still is. In those days, married men could abandon their mate emotionally and still use her as a maid or even send her out into the streets as a homeless person and marry as many women as he wanted. This has always made God *very angry*. God says in Psalm 68, "Woe to those who abuse one of my children." God goes on to say He will smash their heads against the rocks. Sometimes we wish God would do that right now, but God's timetable is usually slower than ours, but He promises here and in Romans 12 that He WILL get vengeance on abusers and we should never get vengeance ourselves. Turn it over to Him. To keep Christians out of secular courts as much as possible, including divorce courts, God added extra steps to take if harmed by a fellow Christian (Matthew 18), using repeated efforts to bring repentance. But if these efforts have failed, the rebellious believer is supposed to then be "treated as you would treat a nonbeliever." There is some disagreement of opinion about what this means, but many theologians think this means it is okay to take another Christian to secular court (or secular divorce court) if the steps of Matthew 18 are taken first and there are biblical reasons for the divorce.
7. DON'T EVER ATTEMPT TO GO THROUGH DIVORCE, WANTED OR UNWANTED, WITHOUT PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNSELING WITH A WELL-TRAINED, PROFESSIONAL, BIBLICAL THERAPIST. Also be sure you have a support group of understanding friends and, preferably, a prayer partner who is willing to help you through the roller coaster ride of emotions that accompanies nearly all divorces.
8. THE MIDDLE VERSE IN THE BIBLE IS "PUT NOT YOUR TRUST IN MAN"—meaning mankind, of course, not just the male gender. You can give love to someone, but trust is earned. If your unfaithful mate is repentant and wants to salvage the marriage, you have a choice to make, one way or the other. But do NOT automatically trust the "repentant" mate—make that mate EARN your trust back over a long period of time. We often recommend a three to six-month separation with weekly dating to see what happens before going back into a full marriage again. You can often tell if the mate is genuinely repentant because a genuinely repentant mate will greatly regret all the pain he or she has caused you, and will feel so horrible that he will seek Christian counseling to help him change, and will *want* to go to a Celebrate Recovery group or some other Christian self-help group, and will *want* to have a prayer partner to be accountable to. A genuinely repentant mate would not get angry at you for not believing him or trusting him. He would understand that you are not able to trust him until he proves himself faithful. Someone who does all these things from a genuinely repentant heart may be someone you may choose to take another risk on and seek to rebuild your marriage with.
9. AFTER YOU HAVE RECOVERED FROM A DIVORCE, STAY CLOSE TO THE LORD, MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE DAILY, AND LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES THE REST OF YOUR LIFE TO MINISTER TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS. If God calls you to a leadership role, pray about it and listen to the advice of your support group, then go ahead and serve the Lord in whatever role He calls you. As I said earlier, about 40% of adult Christians are divorced and Satan would love to eliminate these millions from Christian ministry opportunities. But there are some highly blessed and effective ministry leaders today whom God has chosen to bring millions to Him are divorced believers (like

Joyce Meyer, for example, who ministers to over eight million people a day all around the world and helps them know Christ, love his Word and grow spiritually).

10. Proverbs 6 lists the seven sins God hates the most, and the “proud look” of rejecting, self-righteous “Christians” is the number one sin. Adultery makes the top ten list (Ten Commandments) but is not in the top seven. A proud look, sewing discord among the brethren, and spreading gossip are all in the top few.
11. WE LIVE IN A CHAUVINISTIC SOCIETY AND CHURCHES AND THE COURTS USUALLY TREAT WOMEN WORSE. In most divorces today, men are generally treated much more favorably than women. If you are a woman who is forced into an unwanted divorce, I would encourage you to hire the best Christian divorce attorney you can find and get the financial support that your children and you will need now and in the future.
12. If a divorce is eminent, encourage your Christian attorney to move things along as quickly as possible because prolonging the proceedings over a very long period of time can be very draining spiritually, emotionally and financially.
13. WOMEN DO FINE WITH OR WITHOUT A FUTURE MATE, BUT MEN HAVE DIFFICULTY SURVIVING ALONE. But whether you are a newly divorced male or female, do not rush into remarriage. Give yourself time to heal, and build your relationship with God, with yourself, with your children, and with supportive friends. When you are so happy again that you really do not need a mate, that is when you are ready and able to find a quality mate, without any blinders on. Get therapy to fix your *broken people picker*. Divorced people without therapy tend to marry someone else just as bad, or sometimes worse, than the one they just divorced or got divorced by. Women who are single are only 2% less happy than married women in the same socioeconomic group. Men who are single have 300% more depression, anxiety, heart attacks, strokes and other problems than married men with all other socioeconomic factors being equal. This may be because women are more likely to share their painful emotions, which brings about healing. I am not sure what all the reasons are. So it is vitally important that newly divorced men get counseling and healing before choosing a new mate; take your time.
14. NO SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE = GOD’S PROTECTION OF YOU. Refusing sex makes those who want to “use you” drop by the wayside.
15. “CACHE’ CONNECTIONS” ([www.cacheconnections.com](http://www.cacheconnections.com)) AND OTHER ONLINE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN DATING SERVICES ARE A GOOD PLACE TO FIND POTENTIAL MATES. They have strict guidelines to insure you go slowly and to try to weed out unhealthy choices. But still go slow and remember that even some Christians today will try to get you to have sex before marriage. Anyone asking you to do that will not be a good choice.
16. LIFE AFTER DIVORCE CAN SOMETIMES INCLUDE REJECTION BY CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN, AND EVEN SOME OF YOUR PREVIOUS FRIENDS YOU THOUGHT WERE LOYAL TO YOU. Often this is because of their pain regarding the divorce and their own judgments of the divorce. The “Christian Army” may be the only army in the world that goes around shooting its own wounded.
17. THERE ARE SEVEN BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, SO I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU NOT TO LET ANY ONE PERSON’S ANGER TOWARD YOU STEAL YOUR JOY. Depression is usually caused by anger turned inward, by stuffing anger, by staying vengeful, or by lingering self-blaming for losing your marriage. Any of these forms of unresolved anger can deplete serotonin from the brain, resulting in headaches initially, followed by depression and eventually by less resistance to all sorts of diseases and possibly even death. We learned in medical school that ***stuffed anger is the leading cause of death***. There are a host of complex chemical reactions that take place in the brain and body of those who hang onto their anger, even if they do not know they are

doing so (unconscious grudges or toxic shame). Get therapy to get rid of grudges or self-critical messages. Ephesians 4:26-27 teaches us that it is fine to get angry, but to get rid of it by bedtime. If you hang onto your anger, you give Satan a foothold in your life, and that is definitely a biblical truth backed up by medical research.

18. MAY GOD MERCIFULLY SPEED YOUR RECOVERY, AND ENABLE YOU TO INCREASINGLY EXPERIENCE THE JOYS OF OBEYING THE GREAT COMMANDMENT—TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND TO LOVE OTHERS AND TO LOVE YOURSELF AS GOD'S PRECIOUS CHILD.