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# WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

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Dear Reader,

You asked about the subject of Divorce and Re-marriage.

As we have no booklet on this subject at the present time we trust the following brief information will be helpful to you.

A fundamental teaching of The Worldwide Church of God is that marriage is a divine institution ordained by God. Marriage symbolizes both the God-plane relationship of the Family of God, and the relationship between Christ and the Church. The sanctity and seriousness of marriage must continuously be stressed.

The following points succinctly summarize the present Church teaching on divorce and re-marriage.

The Church accepts new converts in whatever marital state they enter the Church. Acts of adultery and other sins which may have dissolved a prior marriage are forgiven (along with all other past sins) at baptism--Acts 2:38; 3:19; Romans 3:25. A previously divorced person who has repented, been baptized, and has entered the fellowship of the Church is free to remarry within the Church.

So far as the Church is concerned there are only two categories under which Church members may divorce, with subsequent rights of re-marriage.

1) Jesus gave fornication (prior to marriage) as grounds for nullifying a marriage (Matt 19:8-9; 5:31-32; Deut 24:1-2). This is clearly a form of fraud. When discovered (in nearly all cases) immediately after marriage, it simply means God, knowing of this "fraud," has actually not bound the marriage --though divorce by the proper legal channels is usually required to terminate the marriage.

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In such cases of "fraud" the marriage covenant was made under false pretense, one party later finding that he or she has been defrauded and decides to take action.

2) The second category is desertion. If one member of the marriage is--or becomes--an "unbeliever," and deserts

his or her mate--not being "pleased to dwell with her/him"--the offended party is freed from obligation. He or she may formalise the separation and obtain a divorce (I Cor 7:15).

In I Corinthians chapter 7 the Apostle Paul speaks (verse 8-9) to the unmarried and widows. In verses 10-11 he speaks to the married. Beginning verse 12 he speaks to "the rest." If a converted man has a wife who is an unbeliever, if she is pleased to live with him, he must not divorce her--he has no grounds for divorce and re-marriage.

Likewise a converted woman in the Church, if she has an unbelieving husband, and he is willing to live with her despite her religion, she likewise must not leave him, and has no grounds for divorce and re-marriage.

But if the unbelieving one leaves--cuts off the marriage because of the Church member's religion--the unconverted partner severs the marriage relationship--then, and only then, is the believer (the Church member) no longer bound, and is free to obtain a divorce, with subsequent rights of re-marriage, but only in the Church.

While the Church allows its members to divorce and remarry under the above biblical conditions, it does not recommend it. God says He hates divorce (Mal 2:14-16). Rather than encouraging divorce the Church insists that every possible effort be made to reconcile the offended parties. Forgiveness is an intrinsic part of the Christian character (Matt 6:14-15). The Church lends its counselling services to aid in achieving such reconciliations.

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