

# **Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 20, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex, 1 Cor. 7 Excursus on Divorce Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 20, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex, 1 Cor 7, Excursus on Divorce, Biblicalelearning.org**

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture, part of a series on 1 Corinthians, specifically addresses Paul's guidance on sex and marriage, with a significant focus on biblical perspectives on divorce. The lecture embarks on an excursus, examining the development of the theology of marriage from Genesis through the Gospels. **Meadors explores various interpretations of key divorce passages, notably in Deuteronomy and Matthew, and contrasts historical views from the early church to the Reformation and modern Erasmian perspectives.** He also introduces specialized interpretations of Matthew's exception clauses, such as the rabbinic and betrothal views. **Ultimately, Meadors advocates for understanding the biblical teaching on marriage as an ideal of lifelong, monogamous union, suggesting that divorce represents a deviation from this ideal within a fallen world.** He emphasizes the need for rigorous study of these complex issues for effective Christian leadership and guidance.

**2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 20 – Double click icon to  
play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 20, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex, 1 Cor 7, Excursus on Divorce

#### 1 Corinthians 7: Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage - A Study Guide

##### Key Concepts and Themes:

- **The Ideal of Marriage:** Explore the biblical foundation of marriage as presented in Genesis and reaffirmed by Jesus, emphasizing its intended permanence and the concept of "one flesh."
- **Divorce as a Concession:** Understand the context of Deuteronomy 24 and the idea that the allowance for divorce in the Old Testament was a cultural concession, not a divine mandate.
- **Jesus' Teachings on Divorce:** Analyze the seemingly absolute statements in Mark and Luke and the exception clauses found in Matthew regarding grounds for divorce.
- **Interpretation of *Porneia*:** Examine the various interpretations of the Greek word *porneia* in Matthew's Gospel and its implications for understanding the exception clauses.
- **Historical Interpretations:** Trace the development of different views on divorce and remarriage throughout church history, including the early church view, the Erasmian view, and specialized interpretations.
- **The Issue of Remarriage:** Differentiate the discussion on grounds for divorce from the separate issue of whether remarriage is permissible after divorce.
- **The Bond of Marriage:** Understand the concept of the marital bond as a kinship relationship that is not easily dissolved.
- **Dealing with a Broken World:** Consider how to apply the biblical ideal of marriage in a fallen world where divorce is a reality, focusing on forgiveness and restoration.
- **Leadership and Divorce:** Explore the implications of divorce and remarriage for individuals in church leadership positions.

##### Quiz:

1. According to Dr. Meadors, what is the biblical ideal of marriage as presented in Genesis and reaffirmed by Jesus?

2. Explain Dr. Meadors' understanding of Deuteronomy 24 regarding divorce. Was it a divine mandate or something else?
3. What is the key difference between the accounts of Jesus' teaching on divorce in Mark and Luke compared to Matthew?
4. Describe the "early church view" on divorce and remarriage as presented by Heth and Wenham.
5. What was Erasmus' key contribution to the discussion on divorce and remarriage that differed from the early church view?
6. Explain the "rabbinic view" as an interpretation of the exception clause in Matthew regarding *porneia*.
7. What is the central argument of the "betrothal view" concerning the meaning of *porneia* in Matthew's context?
8. According to Dr. Meadors, what is the significance of Paul's discussion of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 in relation to Jesus' teachings on divorce?
9. What is the "legal fiction" that some reformers used to justify remarriage after divorce?
10. What does Dr. Meadors suggest is the most crucial step in addressing the issue of divorce and remarriage in ministry?

**Answer Key:**

1. The biblical ideal of marriage, according to Dr. Meadors, is one man and one woman for life, a union that is only dissolved by death. This ideal is rooted in the creation account in Genesis and reinforced by Jesus' teachings.
2. Dr. Meadors explains that Deuteronomy 24 was a cultural concession by Moses to regulate a society where divorce was already happening, not a divine mandate instituting divorce. It was more focused on the issue of remarriage and the concept of kinship.
3. Mark and Luke present Jesus as giving an absolute statement against divorce and remarriage, returning to the ideal of creation. Matthew, however, includes exception clauses for *porneia* (fornication or sexual sin), which has led to various interpretations.

4. The early church view, based on the interpretation of Matthew's exception clause as sexual sin, allowed for divorce in cases of unchastity but did not permit remarriage for either party. They believed the marriage bond remained despite the divorce.
5. Erasmus, unlike the early church, argued that sexual infidelity and desertion were grounds not only for divorce but also implied the right of the innocent party to remarry. He prioritized charity over strict adherence to canon law.
6. The rabbinic view interprets *porneia* in Matthew as equivalent to the Hebrew *zanot*, referring to illegitimate marriages within prohibited degrees of consanguinity (incestuous marriages) as outlined in Leviticus.
7. The betrothal view argues that *porneia* in Matthew is a specialized reference to sexual unfaithfulness during the betrothal period, which was considered legally binding and could lead to divorce.
8. Dr. Meadors notes that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, adheres strictly to the Dominical tradition from Mark and Luke regarding no divorce and no remarriage, and notably does not utilize Matthew's exception clauses in his response.
9. The "legal fiction" was a concept used by some reformers and rooted in Roman tradition, which considered the adulterous partner legally "dead." This fictional death was used to justify the dissolution of the marriage and the subsequent remarriage of the innocent party.
10. Dr. Meadors emphasizes that the most crucial step is to thoroughly study and understand the biblical texts on divorce, particularly in Genesis, Deuteronomy, the Gospels (especially Matthew), and 1 Corinthians 7, before addressing the question of remarriage.

### **Essay Format Questions:**

1. Analyze the tension between the ideal of marriage presented in Scripture and the reality of divorce in a fallen world. Discuss how different interpretations of key biblical texts attempt to navigate this tension.
2. Compare and contrast the early church view and the Erasmian view on divorce and remarriage. What were the key arguments and historical contexts that shaped these perspectives?

3. Evaluate the significance of the exception clauses in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 5 and 19) in the broader biblical teaching on divorce. How have these clauses been interpreted, and what are the implications of these different interpretations for understanding Jesus' stance?
4. Discuss the challenges of applying biblical teachings on divorce and remarriage in contemporary ministry contexts. What factors should ministry leaders consider when counseling individuals facing marital difficulties or considering remarriage?
5. Explore Dr. Meadors' argument for understanding the biblical teaching on marriage as an "ideal." What are the implications of this perspective for how Christians should approach the issues of divorce and remarriage, both personally and within the church community?

## Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Excursus:** A detailed discussion or digression on a particular point in a book or lecture.
- **Kinship:** A connection by blood, marriage, or adoption; family relationship. In the context of marriage, it refers to the idea that marriage creates a familial bond.
- **Cultural Mandate:** The instruction in Genesis for humanity to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the earth, and to have dominion over it.
- **Missionary Mandate:** The command given by Jesus to his followers to go into all the world and make disciples.
- **Sanctity of Sexual Relations:** The idea that sexual intimacy within the context of marriage is holy and ordained by God.
- **Fall (The Fall):** The biblical account of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, resulting in sin entering the world and distorting God's original design.
- **Bill of Divorcement:** A legal document used in ancient Israel to formalize a divorce, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 24.
- **Case Law:** Laws based on specific instances or precedents, often providing guidance for similar situations.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of Scripture.

- **Systematic Theology:** A discipline of Christian theology that formulates an orderly, rational, and coherent account of the doctrines of the Christian faith.
- **Biblical Theology:** A discipline that seeks to understand and articulate the overarching story and themes of the Bible as they unfold historically.
- **One Flesh:** A biblical metaphor for the intimate and unified relationship established through marriage, emphasizing the deep connection and interdependence between husband and wife.
- **Indissoluble:** Incapable of being dissolved, undone, or broken; permanent.
- **Intermarriage:** Marriage between people of different religions, races, or ethnic groups. In the context of Ezra, it specifically referred to marriage between Israelites and foreign peoples.
- **Rib (ריב):** A Hebrew word meaning lawsuit or contention, used metaphorically in the Old Testament to describe God's relationship with unfaithful Israel.
- **Dominical Tradition:** Teachings or commands directly attributed to Jesus Christ.
- **Porneia (πορνεία):** A Greek term often translated as fornication or sexual immorality, but with a range of potential meanings including various forms of sexual sin and potentially incestuous unions.
- **Exception Clauses:** Phrases in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 5:32 and 19:9) that seem to provide exceptions to the general prohibition of divorce.
- **Ipsa Facto:** By the fact itself; automatically or as a direct consequence.
- **Meta-Narrative:** An overarching story or framework that provides meaning and coherence to a set of events or beliefs.
- **Early Church View:** The dominant perspective on divorce and remarriage in the early centuries of Christianity, typically allowing divorce for sexual unchastity or desertion but prohibiting remarriage.
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Meadors notes complexities in applying later rabbinic traditions to the first century).

- **Zanot (זנות):** A Hebrew word used in the Old Testament for harlotry, prostitution, and sometimes idolatrous infidelity. It is linked to the Greek word *porneia* in the Septuagint.
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## **5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 20, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex, 1 Cor 7, Excursus on Divorce, Biblicalelearning.org**

### **Frequently Asked Questions on Marriage and Divorce in the Bible**

#### **1. How does the Old Testament view marriage?**

The Old Testament, particularly in Genesis, portrays marriage as the creation of kinship, where two individuals become relatives. This is further emphasized by the metaphor of "two becoming one," signifying a relational unity rather than a literal physical merging. Marriage is also presented as an answer to the innate human need for companionship and is linked to the cultural mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and care for the earth. Furthermore, the sanctity of sexual relations within marriage is consistently highlighted throughout Scripture.

#### **2. What was the significance of divorce in Deuteronomy 24?**

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 addresses a situation where a man finds his wife "displeasing." Moses provided a cultural concession by allowing a certificate of divorce to manage societal issues, but this was not a divine mandate or a right. The primary focus of this passage is not the bill of divorce itself, but rather the prohibition of the divorced woman returning to her first husband after marrying another man (and being divorced again or widowed). This prohibition was rooted in the concept of kinship and preventing what was considered a form of incest, thereby protecting the integrity of marriage regarding sexual relations and family ties.

#### **3. How do the Gospels of Mark and Luke present Jesus' teaching on divorce?**

Mark and Luke record Jesus as offering an "idealistic" and absolute stance against divorce and remarriage. They depict Jesus referring back to the creation account in Genesis, emphasizing God's original intention of one man and one woman for life. According to these Gospels, there are no grounds for divorce, and consequently, no remarriage is permissible. This strict interpretation shocked even the disciples.

#### **4. How does the Gospel of Matthew differ in its presentation of Jesus' teaching on divorce, and what are the major interpretations of this difference?**

Matthew's Gospel includes "exception clauses" regarding divorce ("except for *porneia*"), which has traditionally been understood as fornication or sexual immorality. This has led to the view that sexual sin provides grounds for divorce and, often by implication, remarriage for the innocent party. However, scholarly interpretations of Matthew's exception vary significantly. Some propose "specialized views" of *porneia*, such as referring to marriages within prohibited degrees of kinship (the "rabbinic view" or "forbidden kinship view"), or to sexual unfaithfulness during the betrothal period (the "betrothal view"). These specialized views aim to reconcile Matthew with the absolute statements in Mark and Luke by suggesting Matthew's exception addresses specific issues within his community rather than a general allowance for divorce based on sexual sin.

#### **5. What was the "early church view" on divorce and remarriage?**

The early church generally understood Matthew's exception clauses to refer to sexual sin, which they believed provided grounds for separation or divorce. However, the prevailing view in the early church was that even if a divorce occurred due to a spouse's unchastity or desertion, neither party had the right to remarry. Divorcees were often treated with social and sometimes ecclesiastical restrictions, reflecting a serious view of the marital bond.

#### **6. What is the "Erasmian view" on divorce and remarriage, and how did it influence the Protestant Reformation?**

The Erasmian view, attributed to the Roman Catholic scholar Erasmus, argued that sexual infidelity and desertion provide legitimate grounds for divorce. Crucially, this view also implied the right of the innocent party to remarry. Erasmus, influenced by humanist principles and a perceived harshness in the prevailing view, prioritized charity and a pragmatic approach. His ideas were largely adopted by the Protestant Reformers like Luther and Calvin, who incorporated these grounds for divorce and the allowance for remarriage into their theological frameworks, diverging from the strict stance of the early church and the Roman Catholic Church at the time.

**7. What is Dr. Meadors' personal view on divorce and remarriage based on the biblical texts?**

Dr. Meadors states that he believes the Bible teaches an "ideal" view of marriage: one man and one woman for life, with only death dissolving the union and no provision for remarriage after divorce. He interprets Jesus' words in Mark and Luke and Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 7 as upholding this ideal. He views divorce as a sin and a breakdown of God's created intention for marriage. While acknowledging the reality of sin and brokenness in the world, he suggests that dealing with divorce should involve recognition of sin, repentance, and a process of forgiveness and restoration, but not necessarily a restoration to positions of leadership within the church, particularly in cases of sexual sin.

**8. How should Christian leaders approach the complex issues of divorce and remarriage in ministry?**

Dr. Meadors emphasizes the need for thorough research and study of the biblical texts and the history of their interpretation. He recommends engaging with a wide range of scholarly perspectives and understanding the nuances of the different views (Early Church, Erasmian, and specialized interpretations of Matthew). Christian leaders should strive to understand God's ideal for marriage while also compassionately addressing the realities of a broken world. This involves recognizing sin, offering forgiveness, and guiding individuals through a process of restoration that acknowledges the serious ramifications of divorce, particularly concerning leadership roles. He cautions against simplistic solutions and the influence of cultural norms that may contradict biblical principles.