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Appendix 7d: Questions and Answers — Virgins, Widows, and Divorced Women

This page is part of the series on the unions God accepts and follows this sequence:

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2. Appendix 7b: The Certificate of Divorce — Truths and Myths.
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4. Appendix 7d: Questions and Answers — Virgins, Widows, and Divorced Women (Current page).

What is a marriage, by God's definition?

From the beginning, the Scriptures reveal that marriage is not defined by ceremonies, vows, or human institutions, but by the moment a woman—whether a virgin or a widow—has sexual relations with a man. This first act of intercourse is what God Himself considers the union of two souls into one flesh. The Bible consistently shows that it is only through this sexual bond that the woman becomes joined to the man, and she remains bound to him until his death. It is on this foundation—clear from the Scriptures—that we examine common questions about virgins, widows, and divorced women, and expose the distortions that have been introduced due to pressure from society.

Here we have gathered some of the most common questions about what the Bible really teaches regarding marriage, adultery, and divorce. Our goal is to clarify, based on

Scripture, mistaken interpretations that have been propagated over time, often in direct contradiction to God's commandments. All the answers follow the biblical perspective that preserves coherence between the Old and New Testaments.

Question: What about Rahab? She was a prostitute, yet she married and is part of Jesus' lineage!

"Everything in the city they utterly **destroyed** with the edge of the sword — both **men** and women, young and old, as well as oxen, sheep, and donkeys" (Joshua 6:21). **Rahab was a widow** when she joined the Israelites. Joshua would never have allowed an Israelite to marry a Gentile woman who was not a virgin unless she had converted and was a widow; only then would she be **free to unite with another man**, according to the Law of God.

Question: Didn't Jesus come to forgive our sins?

Yes, practically all sins are forgiven when the soul repents and seeks Jesus, including adultery. However, once forgiven, the individual **must leave the adulterous relationship they are in**. This applies to all sins: the thief must stop stealing, the liar must stop lying, the profane must stop profaning, etc. Likewise, the adulterer cannot continue in the adulterous relationship and expect that the sin of adultery no longer exists.

As long as the woman's first husband is alive, her soul is united to his. When he dies, his soul returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7), and only then is the woman's soul free to unite with another man's soul, if she wishes (Romans 7:3). **God does not forgive sins in advance — only those already committed**. If a person asks God for forgiveness in church, is forgiven, but that very night lies with someone who is not their spouse according to God, they have **committed adultery again**.

Question: Doesn’t the Bible say to the one who converts: “Behold, all things have become new”? Doesn’t that mean I can start from zero?

No. Passages referring to the new life of a converted person speak of how God expects them to live after having their sins forgiven, and **do not mean that the consequences of their past errors have been erased**.

Yes, the apostle Paul wrote in verse 17 of 2 Corinthians 5: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new,” as a conclusion to what he said two verses earlier (verse 15): “And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and rose again.” This has absolutely **nothing to do with God giving a woman permission to start her love life from zero**, as so many worldly leaders teach.

Question: Doesn’t the Bible say that God overlooks the times of ignorance?

The phrase “times of ignorance” (Acts 17:30) was used by Paul while passing through Greece, addressing an idolatrous people who **had never heard of the God of Israel, the Bible, or Jesus**. No one reading this text was ignorant of these things before their conversion.

Moreover, this passage has to do with repentance and the forgiveness of sins. The Word does not even hint that there is no forgiveness for the sin of adultery. The problem is that many do not want only forgiveness for adultery already committed; **they also want to continue in the adulterous relationship** — and God does not accept this, whether man or woman.

Question: Why is nothing said about men? Don't men commit adultery?

Yes, men also commit adultery, and **the punishment in biblical times was the same for both**. God, however, considers differently how adultery occurs for each. **There is no connection between male virginity and the union between couples**. It is the woman, not the man, who determines whether a relationship is adultery or not.

According to the Bible, a man, whether married or single, commits adultery whenever he has relations with a woman who is neither a virgin nor a widow. For example, if a 25-year-old virgin man lies with a 23-year-old woman who is not a virgin, the man commits adultery, for the woman, according to God, is another man's wife (Matthew 5:32; Romans 7:3; Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-24).

Virgins, Widows and Non-virgins in War

Reference	Instruction
Numbers 31:17-18	Destroy all men and non-virgin women. Virgins are kept alive.
Judges 21:11	Destroy all men and non-virgin women. Virgins are kept alive.
Deuteronomy 20:13-14	Destroy all adult men. The females left are widows and virgins.

Question: So a divorced/separated woman cannot marry while her ex-husband is alive, but a man does not have to wait for his ex-wife to die?

No, he does not. By God's law, a man who separates from his wife on biblical grounds (see Matthew 5:32) may marry a virgin or a widow. The reality, however, is that **in almost all cases today, the man separates from his wife and marries a divorced/separated woman**, and he is then in adultery, since, for God, his new wife belongs to another man.

Question: Since a man does not commit adultery when marrying virgins or widows, does that mean God accepts polygamy today?

No. **Polygamy is not permitted in our day due to the gospel of Jesus** and His stricter application of the Father's Law. The letter of the Law, given since creation (*τὸ γράμμα τοῦ νόμου - to grámma tou nómou*), establishes that the soul of a woman is bound to only one man, but does not state that the soul of a man is bound to only one woman. That is why, in Scripture, adultery is always characterized as a sin against a woman's husband. This is why **God never said that the patriarchs and kings were adulterers, since their wives were virgins or widows when they married**.

With the coming of the Messiah, however, we have received the full understanding of the Spirit of the Law (*τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ νόμου - to pneûma tou nómou*). Jesus, as the only spokesperson to come from heaven (John 3:13; John 12:48-50; Matthew 17:5), taught that **all of God's commandments are based on love and the good of His creatures**. The letter of the Law is the expression; the Spirit of the Law is its essence.

In the case of adultery, even though the letter of the Law does not forbid a man from being with more than one woman, provided they are virgins or widows, **the Spirit of the Law does not permit such practice**. Why? Because today it would cause suffering and confusion for all involved — and **loving your neighbor as yourself is the second greatest commandment** (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39). In biblical times, this was something culturally accepted and expected; in our days, it is unacceptable in every respect.

Question: And if a separated couple decides to reconcile and restore the marriage, is that okay?

Yes, the couple may reconcile provided that:

1. The husband was in fact the wife's first man, otherwise the marriage was not valid even before the separation.
2. The woman has not lain with another man during the period of separation (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Jeremiah 3:1).

These answers reinforce that the biblical teaching on marriage and adultery is coherent and consistent from the beginning to the end of Scripture. By faithfully following what God has determined, we avoid doctrinal distortions and preserve the sanctity of the union established by Him.