

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE: AN EXEGETICAL EXAMINATION OF THE
THEME WITH A FOCUS ON 1 CORINTHIANS 7:10–16

BY

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed at examining the theme: “Divorce and Remarriage”, with a focus to Paul’s teachings to Corinthian congregation in 1 Corinthians 7:10–16. To arrive at sound biblical teaching, a careful exegesis was done with consideration to Paul’s cultural context. A considerable consultation was done on modern scholarship on the subject. It was found that the passage primarily teaches against divorce for whatever reason. To the believers, Paul cites Christ’s command which is for all time ages and anti-divorce. But for some cases, he suggests that separation can be sought after, though not a rule, which he further notes that it should be followed by reconciliation. The text does not explicitly state the duration for separation, but the researcher argued that it should be short/long enough to bring healing and reconciliation to the ailing union. In the interpretation, it was suggested that it should be the church’s responsibility to see that healing takes place within a short period, as possible. Complete breaking of marriage is highly prohibited in this passage for believers. For Christians in mixed marriages, the passage teaches that, the believing spouse is also bound by Christ’s rule of no divorce. The believing spouse cannot instigate divorce against his or her unbelieving partner. Paul first viewed the believing spouse as a sanctifier of his or her non-believing partner. Secondly the believers in such marriages would confer holiness to their children born in such wedlock. However, Paul clearly stated that the believer could receive divorce thrust against his/her wish by the unbelieving party. In such cases Paul stated that the believer is “not bound”, a term which was taken to mean that the believer was free from keeping marriage obligations with the departed spouse. In other words, the believer was not under bondage/slavery to contest for remain of unbeliever who had relentlessly expressed desire to opt out. Accepting the unbeliever’s choice would not make them fall short of Christ’s command, “do not divorce”. It was also concluded that, remarriage after desertion was not explicitly depicted from the text. Furthermore, it was asserted that, since Paul’s desire for the unmarried and widows would be to remain chaste, then it would have been more likely that he desired the same for the divorced believer.