

# **‘WHEN’ AND ‘HOW’ DIVORCE CAN BE APPROPRIATE**

**While believers should not normatively initiate separation or divorce proceedings, it isn't appropriate to say they should never do so. Denying some believers of the relief divorce or separation can bring would be tantamount to the grossest or coarsest forms of legalism. This is particularly relevant when we take the statement that a believer should not initiate a divorce and make it apply to a situation in which a spouse has given up on the marriage commitment and is forcing their partner to live in a hellish, selfish, immoral or abusive situation.**

**When those situations are broached, and a believer comes to an occasion where they believe they ought to initiate the divorce, it should only be done under the cover and the counsel of eldership in the Body of Christ, and never simply on the basis of their own conclusions.**

**A believer needs to be willing to risk leadership in the Body of Christ telling them they should not get divorced and to be obedient if reconciliation and correction happens. It is important to not pursue a divorce on the basis of their own judgment. To do that would mean moving outside the wisdom of the Lord.**

**I Corinthians 6 is the appropriate Scriptural model when the church is called upon to offer guidance in marriage, particularly when a marriage has soured. If divorce proceedings are going to be initiated, the procedure has to be done in a court of law. The Bible says clearly that a believer who is going to instigate legal proceedings should not do it without consultation with leadership in the Body of Christ first, even if they are using a believing attorney.**

**It is important that the offended party (parties) seek appropriate counsel from the church leadership, especially the pastor if lay counselors or others begin the counseling process. Counselors and advisors need to be people who are in submission to the senior leadership and the procedural conditions of the church, and even more importantly: people who are submitted to the wise counsel of the Word of God, Not everyone who claims to be a believer, is committed to steadfast adherence to the Word of God in all of its implications. When properly consulted, the Word of God will always be very demanding and force us to grow.**

**If you are a believer who initiated divorce proceedings without observing these basic guidelines, you have not been removed from the boundaries of grace and forgiveness. You do need to repent however, whether or not the act of sin was done intentionally or unintentionally. When people fail in coming to terms with moving out of a marriage the wrong way, a believer can be enmeshed with problems. Although these problems may be internalized, they will still exist and create shadows, because actions were taken out of Kingdom order. When this happens, a spirit of confusion can be released which can affect all members of the**

**family, including the children. We are guilty of sin even when we have sinned without realizing it, and we suffer from the consequences of violating basic laws of God's order.**