

Married and Bound

Jack and Jill marry. Neither has been married before. They later divorce, and Jill marries John (John has never been married). Is all of this pleasing to God?

Since many people find themselves in a similar situation, we must consider the difference between “married” and “bound.”

Who is free to marry according to God’s law?

- The unmarried person is free to marry (Matthew 19:4-6).
- The person whose spouse has died is free to marry (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39).
- The person who puts their spouse away for sexual immorality has a right to remarry (Matthew 19:9).
- Those who are reconciling have a right to remarry one another (Malachi 2:16; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11). The prohibition of Matthew 19:9 is for the guilty person to marry another. If the innocent person decides not to enter into another lawful marriage, that does not prohibit reconciliation of the original couple.

What are the differences between being “married” and “bound?”

- In the case of Jack and Jill, their divorce was unlawful before God (Matthew 19:6). Since their divorce was unlawful, neither has a right to marry another (Romans 7:3; Mark 10:12). Jill may have married John, but she is still bound to Jack! John is not bound to anyone (since he had never been married before).
- A person could be both scripturally married and bound to the same person (Romans 7:2).
- A person could be bound to someone and unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). In this case, the two people can remain unmarried, but they have no authority to marry another. Since they are bound to one another, they can reconcile.
- A person can be bound and unmarried, while the former is free to remarry (Matthew 19:9). If the innocent decides to enter into another lawful marriage, the cheater is still bound and must remain unmarried.
- A person can be bound to the first mate while unlawfully married to another (Romans 7:2-3; Mark 6:17-18). Since Herodias was bound to Philip, she and Herod were both in adultery (Mark 10:12).

Take home points:

- God’s standards for marriage, divorce, and remarriage are clear and easy to understand. Sadly, people often find themselves in complicated situations.
- To help folks avoid complicated situations, we must continue teaching the truth about this issue in love (Acts 20:20; 2 Timothy 4:2-3; Ephesians 4:15). It is a mistake to assume that everyone has this topic mastered!
- We have to make sure that we apply this teaching to our marriages (James 1:22). If we are faithful and committed to our marriages, we will avoid getting into complicated situations later.
- To the unmarried, choose your spouse wisely! Choose someone you can scripturally marry and be committed to them till death parts you.

Conclusion:

We will be judged by the standard of the Lord (John 12:48).

