



Biblical Counseling for Remarried Couples

Additional Notes:

I. Stats on Remarriage in the US/Church

A. Rates of remarriage in the US as of 2012

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
• 30-34:	5.2%	7.8%
• 35-39:	10.1%	12.8%
• 40-49:	16%	18.2%
• 50-59:	21.6%	22.3%
• 60-69:	24.4%	22.4%

B. Statistically speaking, the older your congregation gets, you will have more and more persons who are on their second, or even third, marriage.

C. There could be some very strong emotional issues that you will need to deal with:

1. Anger
2. Pain/Hurt
3. Shame
4. Grief

D. Based on how those marriages ended and how the counselee has processed that marriage, you may need to adjust your strategy than how you would normally do marriage or pre-marriage counseling.

E. In order to determine if you need to adjust your strategy, you will need to ask a series of opening questions. Based on those answers, you may need to adjust. Adjustment, however, is based on the answers to the questions, not the general situations.

II. Marriages that End in Divorce

A. What was the reason for divorce?

1. Lack of commitment (75.0%)

**Additional
Notes:**

2. Infidelity (59.6%)
3. Too much conflict and arguing (57.7%)
4. Marrying too young (45.1%)
5. Financial problems (36.7%)
6. Substance abuse (34.6%)
7. Domestic violence (23.5%)
8. Health Problems (18.2%)
9. Lack of support from Family (17.3%)
10. Religious differences (13.3%)

B. The Final Straw: 68.6% report that there was a “final straw” event that led to a divorce. However, when surveyed what the “final straw” was, 0% of couples agreed on the reason.

C. Did you work hard enough?

1. Men
 - a. I should have worked harder (31.6%)
 - b. She should have worked harder (65.8%)
2. Women
 - a. I should have worked harder (33.3%)
 - b. He should have worked harder (73.8%)

D. Who filed for divorce?

1. Women (63.5%)
2. Men (25%)
3. Together (9.5%)

E. Questions to consider asking.

1. Did you get pre-marital counseling?

**Additional
Notes:**

- a. This may indicate to you that they were willing to ignore wise counsel and advice and just wanted to get married.
 - b. If you did get pre-marital counseling, what was that like? What did the counselor focus on? Did they agree you should get married?
 - c. What was your wedding day like? Was it a normal ceremony or did you just go to the courthouse?
 - d. How many people did you talk with about getting married?
2. Why do you think God was honored with your choice to divorce?
 - a. If they know He was not, you may need to spend time teaching on the value of living a life that is pleasing to Christ.
 - b. If they do, you may need to discern if God was truly pleased and what God's word says about divorce and remarriage.
 3. What did your children think about you getting remarried?
 - a. Did they express any opposition or concerns?
 - b. How involved were they in getting to know the new spouse?
 4. What do you think the Bible teaches on divorce and remarriage?
 - a. They may not have thought ten seconds about this, and you may need to make sure they understand the Bible's position.
 - b. They may know what it says, but were not willing to follow it, and therefore, you may need to explore if this is a regular pattern of disobedience.
 5. Why do you believe that this marriage will be significantly different than your previous one?

**Additional
Notes:**

- a. They may have set their expectations impossibly high for this or a current marriage.
- b. They may be finding their identity in marriage.
- c. They may not have even considered what needs to be done different to ensure that this marriage is on a different track.

III. Questions and Strategies around the Most Common Reasons for Divorce.**A. Lack of commitment**

1. What does commitment to marriage look like to you?
2. What specific areas do you see your spouse right now not committing, such as not planning dates, sending text messages or cards, pursuing you, etc.?
3. What areas do you see that you need to grow in your commitment and care for your spouse?
4. How your counseling direction may change:
 - a. You may need to help them see that marriage is about not just being pursued but pursuing even when the other person does not.
 - b. You may need to teach on the value of endurance and long suffering.
 - c. You may need to confront their view that they are entitled to something.
 - d. They may have unrealistic expectations.

B. Infidelity

1. How are you processing the sexual unfaithfulness of your previous spouse?
2. Do you see any areas that this currently is impacting your sexual life?
3. Do you see yourself as extra guarded when it comes to trying to make sure that you are not hurt like this again?

**Additional
Notes:**

4. How have you turned to God for healing in the midst of this hurt?
→ How your counseling may need to change:
 - a. There may be a time when you have to focus on the past sexual issues from a marriage
 - b. You may need to teach the partner that they need to be patient with sex as the other seeks to grow in their response
 - c. You may need to encourage patience as the spouse who was cheated on expresses heightened care and watchfulness in the current marriage.
 - d. You may need to spend time focusing on how God can take care of a person even if someone very close to them has hurt them.

C. Too much conflict and arguing

1. You may need to spend time learning what they were arguing about.
2. You may need to spend time asking what their views of biblical problem solving are.
3. You may need to explore what they believe are the right roles for male leadership and female submission and helpers.

D. Marrying too young

1. You may need to dig a bit deeper to see what really happened here.
2. You may need to teach on the permanence of marriage.
3. You may need to teach on the sovereignty of God in allowing a marriage that happened like this.

E. Financial problems

1. You may need to help them actually set up a budget.
2. You may need to explore how they do at living inside of their means.
3. You may need to teach on biblical principles of stewardship and spending.



4. There may be some conversations that center around what the future of finances for the family unit are.
5. There may be significant debt that has been brought into the marriage.

Additional Notes:

F. Substance abuse (both drugs, alcohol, and others)

1. You may need to determine how they were impacted by a spouse's substance abuse.
2. You may need to ask if that spouse participated in any substance abuse.
3. You may need to encourage a current spouse to not engage in drinking of alcohol.

G. Domestic violence

1. This may really require some time to explore and understand if a spouse was abused or was accused of abuse.
2. If the spouse was abused, you may need to consider teaching how to deal with trauma and abuse from a biblical perspective.
3. You may need to teach the current spouse about how to be extra careful when it comes to how they interact and have arguments.
4. You may need to consider if there is value in having a police report filed.

H. Health Problems

1. Depending on how this is listed and talked about, this could be because of financial issues or even lifestyle differences.
2. Health problems don't always mean that the other spouse was dying, but that they were not able to live life a certain way.
3. There may be a need to teach on how to consider the other person and suffer well with them.

**Additional
Notes:****I. Lack of support from family**

1. You may need to explore what in-law relations were like in the previous marriage. Was the spouse's mom overbearing?
2. Or did the spouse have a hard time leaving and cleaving?
3. Did the extended family become the area in which conflicts happen?
4. You may need to teach on what it looks like to honor parents and yet have a new family.
5. You may need to help the husband provide leadership for the family while at the same time being patient in the new situation.

J. Religious differences

1. You may need to explore if the differences were because one person was of a different religion or had different beliefs within Christianity.
2. A couple may have gotten married, but not spent a lot of time exploring what they believe about certain things.
3. How did they determine where to go to church?

IV. Marriages that End in Death**A. For the Bereaved**

1. How often do you think about your former spouse?
 - a. Constantly thinking about a former spouse can be a significant barrier to counseling.
→ Possible Course Changes:
 - i. Focused time (possibly one-on-one) to determine if they are functioning out of hurt and loss? Have they properly mourned the death of the first spouse?
 - ii. What steps are they taking to mourn the loss of their first marriage, while at the same time, focus their thinking on the here and the now?

**Additional
Notes:**

- iii. Homework that can redeem the moments when God allows the previous spouse to be remembered:
 - a) Taking time to thank God for all His provision.
 - b) Taking time to reflect on God's goodness and sovereignty.
 - c) Taking time to communicate to your current spouse that you love her and are thankful for her.
- b. If they never, or almost never, think about the former spouse, that too could provide insight into a heart that is hurting.
 - i. Exploring if they are just hiding their emotions out of fear of hurting the other spouse.
 - ii. Teaching how to mourn properly.
 - iii. Teaching the permanence and value of marriage.
- 2. When do you tend to most often think about your former spouse?
 - a. Encouraging the current spouse to consider not doing a certain thing or going somewhere if that causes either lots of pain or too much joy.
 - i. For example, if you like going to a former restaurant because it reminds you of your former marriage, that would be bad.
 - ii. But on the other hand, if going camping brings a lot of pain because of the former marriage, it may be best for a season to abstain.
 - b. Teaching the counselee how to redeem memories.
 - c. Teaching the counselee how to have a plan for situations or places that they cannot avoid.

**Additional
Notes:**

3. How often do you compare your current spouse with your former spouse?
 - a. The more that a person compares their current spouse with their former will lead only to destruction.
 - b. This information may need to be drawn out in a one-on-one session so as to not cause a lot of pain for the current spouse.
 - c. Encourage the counselee when they do compare, to take time to change their thinking and possibly even confess their wrong actions to God.
 - d. If the counselee has verbally compared in the midst of an argument or in a moment of despair, encourage them to seek forgiveness from the spouse.
4. Does the holiday season or any other annual events pose any significant issues for the counselee?
 - a. This is obviously a situation that you cannot change like the others.
 - b. Encourage the counselee to be spending time in prayer as the day(s) get closer and closer.
 - c. Consider asking current spouse to be in prayer.
 - d. Get very practical with ways to get the focus off of yourself and on to others.
5. How are you impacted on the anniversary of your former spouse's death?
 - a. You may need to help them craft plans for mourning well.
 - b. You may need to lead them through things like visiting the grave site or other ritual that they desire to do. How much is appropriate versus overboard?
 - c. Consider leading them to have conversations with current spouse about the level of receptivity to any regular mourning.

**Additional
Notes:**

- d. Teach through what you believe are Bible requirements and parameters for mourning.
- 6. What does it look like to interact with your children (if they have any) with the new spouse?
 - a. Age of children matters a lot
 - b. How do you have the children address the current spouse?
 - c. What role will the current spouse play in parenting?
 - d. Have you provided clear communication that helps them live out their role as step-parent?
 - e. If they have young children, you may need to spend time working through what it looks like to parent biblically here.
 - i. How to honor and respect the former parent and yet embrace the new parent.
 - ii. How to train the children to recognize the new parent's authority.
- 7. Do you keep pictures of your former spouse in areas and places that you can see?
 - a. On the one hand, there may be a place for not doing everything we can to forget a former spouse, especially when there are kids in the picture.
 - b. But on the other hand, having a small shrine to a former spouse may make things hard.
- 8. Do you talk about your former spouse with your current spouse?
 - a. What are the goals and desires that are present when talking about the former spouse?
 - b. How often do you consider your current spouse when talking about your former?



- c. If your current spouse brings up your former spouse, how do you respond to talking about them?

B. For the New Spouse

Additional Notes:

1. How does your current spouse think about your former spouse and how does that impact you?
 - a. You may need to spend time with the new spouse as they struggle with “living in the shadow” of the old one.
 - b. You may need to spend time helping teach them to endure when times are hard.
 - c. You might consider assigning a mentor or another person that can share their experience and point them to truth.
 - d. You might consider asking for a seasoned wife/husband who has gone through a similar experience to meet with them to share about their experience and how they navigated it successfully.
2. Does it make you uncomfortable to talk about their former spouse?
 - To the degree that the current spouse is uncomfortable with talking about the former spouse, you may need to lead the couple to consider talking with another person to help with grief.
3. Do you feel that they compare you frequently to their former spouse?
 - Do you feel that your current spouse tries to get you to be like their former spouse?
4. How do you feel the children respond to you?
 - You may need to encourage the spouse to provide leadership and have conversations with the children if they are not responding well to the new parent.
5. If they live in the home that the former couple had together, you may need to ask if there is some ‘updating’ that would help with the transition process.

**Additional
Notes:****References:**

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Recommended Resources:

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