THE QUESTION

Does Matthew 19:9 allow a person to remarry after a divorce?

Asked by a THF member on April 29, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 8 numbered quotations · the 23 early Christian passages and 106 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/does-matthew-19-9-allow-a-person-to-remarry-after-a-divorce

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

In these passages, early Christians did not read Matthew 19:9 as permission to remarry while a former spouse is alive. They allow separation from an unfaithful spouse, but Hermas, Clement, Athenagoras and Tertullian call a new marriage adultery, and point instead to staying single or being reconciled.

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HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	Jesus points back to God's design	2
2	Hermas: send her away, but stay single	2
3	Clement calls remarriage after separation fornication	3
4	Athenagoras quotes Matthew 19:9 against remarrying	3
5	Origen: no breakup except for fornication	4
6	Tertullian: stay unmarried or reconcile	4
7	Tertullian: a divorced woman cannot remarry lawfully	5
	What these passages don't tell us	6
	The Sources: 23 early Christian passages and 106 Bible verses, with links	6

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POINT 1 OF 7

Jesus points back to God's design

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In Tatian's Gospel harmony, Jesus says Moses allowed divorce because of hard hearts, but it was not so from the beginning. He names fornication as the one exception and warns against divorcing and marrying another. Tertullian takes this as more than a reminder: Christ calls us back to the beginning, so those God joined as one flesh must not be separated.

1 “Jesus said to them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses gave you permission to divorce your wives. But from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, has exposed her to adultery."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 25 (c. 150–180 AD) **Source 3, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “In the matter of divorce, He said that Moses had permitted it because of their hardness of heart, but from the beginning it was not so. By this, He clearly calls us back to the beginning, to the law of the individuality of marriage. Therefore, those whom God joined from the beginning, two into one flesh, man must not now separate.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Monogamy* 5 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 14, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

Hermas: send her away, but stay single

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hermas, one of the earliest writers here, is asked what a husband should do when his wife keeps on in adultery. The answer is that he should put her away and remain by himself. If he puts her away and marries another, he too commits adultery.

3 “And I said to him, "What then, sir, is the husband to do, if his wife continues in her vicious practices?" And he said, "The husband should put her away, and remain by himself. But if he puts his wife away and marries another, he also commits adultery."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 1, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 7

Clement calls remarriage after separation fornication

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria says Scripture does not let people end a marriage, except for fornication. He counts a new marriage by separated people, while the other spouse lives, as fornication. The man who takes a put-away wife shares the guilt, because without him she would return to her husband.

4

> “Now, Scripture advises marriage and does not allow a person to end that union. This is plainly stated in the law: "You shall not put away your wife, except for the cause of fornication." It also counts as fornication the marriage of people who have been separated while the other spouse is still alive.”
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> “It is said that the man who takes a woman who has been put away commits adultery. And if a man puts away his wife, he makes her an adulteress; that is, he forces her into adultery. Not only is the man who puts her away guilty of this, but also the man who takes her, because he gives the woman an opportunity to sin. For if he did not take her, she would return to her husband.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 2.23 (c. 190–215 AD) *THF's updated English*

Source 7, page 7 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 7

Athenagoras quotes Matthew 19:9 against remarrying

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Athenagoras quotes Matthew 19:9 and says Christ does not allow a man to send his wife away and marry again. He goes further than most here: he calls even a second marriage after a wife has died a cloaked adultery.

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5 “For we give our attention, not to the study of words, but to the showing and teaching of actions: that a person should either remain as he was born, or be content with one marriage. For a second marriage is only a specious adultery. For He says, "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery," Matthew 19:9. He does not permit a man to send away her whose virginity he has brought to an end, nor to marry again. For he who deprives himself of his first wife, even though she is dead, is a cloaked adulterer.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Athenagoras,** *A Plea for the Christians* 33 (c. 170–190 AD) **Source 5, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 7

Origen: no breakup except for fornication

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Origen says that, unlike Moses' bill of divorce, Jesus does not allow a marriage to be broken for any sin except fornication. He quotes Matthew 5:32 for this. The quote is about the reason for sending a wife away; it does not say she or her husband may marry someone else.

6 “After this, our Savior speaks in a way that does not permit the breaking of marriages for any sin except fornication alone, when it is found in the wife: "Whoever puts away his own wife, except for the cause of fornication, makes her an adulteress,"”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (c. 215–254 AD) **Source 16, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Tertullian: stay unmarried or reconcile

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian reads 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 as Christ's own command: a wife should not leave her husband, and if she does, she must stay unmarried or be reconciled. So separation can happen, but if it does, the aim is to restore the marriage bond by reconciliation.

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7 “Even Christ, however, when He here commands the wife not to depart from her husband, or, if she does depart, to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, both permitted divorce, which indeed He never absolutely prohibited, and confirmed the sanctity of marriage by first forbidding its dissolution. And if separation had taken place, He wished the marriage bond to be resumed by reconciliation.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *Against Marcion* 40 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 15, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

Tertullian: a divorced woman cannot remarry lawfully

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

In On Monogamy, Tertullian repeats Jesus' words on divorce and concludes that a divorced woman cannot lawfully marry again. His reason is that God joins two into one flesh, so bringing other flesh into either one after they are parted is adultery.

8 “So far, this concerns the fact that God's will is not destroyed, and that the law from the beginning is restored. But another reason, too, combines with this; no, not another, but one that imposed the law from the beginning and moved the will of God to forbid divorce: whoever dismisses his wife, except on the ground of adultery, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman dismissed by her husband, of course commits adultery. A divorced woman cannot even marry lawfully.”

later in the same passage

“Marriage is this: when God joins two into one flesh; or else, finding them already joined in the same flesh, He has given His seal to the union. Adultery is this: when, after the two have been disjoined in whatever way, other—no, rather, alien—flesh is mingled with either one; flesh concerning which it cannot be said, "This is flesh out of my flesh, and this bone out of my bones."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Monogamy* 9 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 11, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- None of these passages gives an innocent spouse clear permission to remarry while the other spouse is still alive, and none works through hard cases such as danger in the home or an unbelieving spouse who leaves.
- These passages do not work through how each word of Jesus' teaching should be applied; most treat it as a firm rule rooted in God's plan from the beginning.
- Athenagoras goes further than the others quoted and calls even remarriage after a spouse's death adultery, so not every view here is the same.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 23 early Christian passages and 106 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–23, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 24–43, in Bible order), then 86 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *23 passages from 9 writers*

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · source 1*

1 *Shepherd* **Quote 3, page 2** “he said to me, "As long as he remains ignorant of her sin, the husband commits no transgression in living with her… [continues online] **read ›**

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · source 2*

2 *First Apology* (1885 English; on point 1) shall marry her that is divorced from another husband, committeth adultery… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 3*

3 *Diatessaron* 25 **Quote 1, page 2** “his custom. The Pharisees came to him to test him, and they asked him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He said, "What did Moses command… [continues online] **read ›**

Theophilus of Antioch, *c. 169–183 AD · source 4*

4 *To Autolycus* 13 (1885 English; on point 1) “5:28 And he that marries, says [the Gospel], her that is divorced from her husband, commits adultery… [continues online] **read ›**

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Athenagoras, *c. 170–190 AD · source 5*

5 *A Plea for the Christians* 33 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 4** "19:9 not permitting a man to send her away whose virginity he has brought to an end, nor to marry again… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 6–7*

6 *Stromata* 3 (1885 English; on point 3) "Corinthians 7:14 Quid est autem, quod Dominus quoque dixit iis, qui interrogabant de divortio: An liceat uxorem dimittere, cum Moyses id permiserit… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Stromata* 2.23 (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** "it regards as fornication, the marriage of those separated while the other is alive… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 8–15*

8 *Against Marcion* 34 (on point 1) "of your hearts, allowed you to give a bill of divorcement; but from the beginning it was not so." Matthew 19:8 For this reason, because He who made them… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *To His Wife* 2.2 (1885 English; on point 7) "before all (other arguments), that the Lord holds it more pleasing that matrimony should not be contracted, than that it should at all be dissolved: in short, divorce He prohibits… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *On Modesty* 16 (on point 1) "that fornication, which that penalty awaits, is not pardonable. Meanwhile, while forbidding divorce, he uses the Lord's precept against adultery as a means of providing, in place of divorce… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *On Monogamy* 9 **Quote 8, page 5** this concerns the fact that God's will is not destroyed, and that the law from the beginning is restored. But another reason, too, combines with this; no, not another… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *On Monogamy* 10 (on point 7) In short, I ask the woman herself: Tell me, sister, have you sent your husband before you to his rest in peace? What will she answer? Will she say, "In… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Against Marcion* 40 (on point 1) "Corinthians 7:27. Christ plainly forbids divorce. Moses unquestionably permits it… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *On Monogamy* 5 **Quote 2, page 2** "In the matter of divorce, He said that Moses had permitted it because of their hardness of heart, but from the beginning it was not so. By this, He clearly calls us back to the beginning, to the law of the individuality of marriage. Therefore, those whom God joined from the beginning, two into one flesh, man must not now separate." **read ›**

15 *Against Marcion* 40 **Quote 7, page 5** "Even Christ, however, when He here commands the wife not to depart from her husband, or, if she does depart, to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, both permitted divorce, which indeed He never absolutely prohibited, and confirmed the sanctity of marriage by first forbidding its dissolution. And if separation had taken place, He wished the marriage bond to be resumed by reconciliation." **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 16–21*

16 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 **Quote 6, page 4** "For in the case of adultery, or any such great indecency, there is no need to write a bill of divorce and put it into the wife's hands. But… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (on point 5) a wife should be put away for every cause. Second, He answered the question about the bill of divorce. For He saw that not every cause is a reasonable ground… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (1885 English; on point 5) "they can no longer do the things enjoined on them by the law, because of the bill of divorcement… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (on point 1) to Jesus: "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Matthew 19:7 And rightly, for this purpose, we will bring forward… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (1885 English) "since the Apostle understands the words, And they two shall be one flesh, Matthew 19:5 of Christ and the church, Ephesians 5:31-32 we must say that Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Commentary on Matthew* 14 (on point 6) while discussing this passage, I would say that perhaps we can now understand and clearly explain a question that is hard to grasp and examine, concerning the Apostle's rule… [continues online] **read ›**

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Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 22–23*

22 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 1) “the Lord says, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 4) “they two shall be one flesh. Genesis 2:24 But to the younger women let a second marriage be allowed after the death of their first husband, lest they fall… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *20 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

24 **Matthew 5:31** “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **read ›**

25 **Matthew 5:32** But I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except on account of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. **read ›**

26 **Matthew 19:3** Pharisees came to him, testing him and saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?” **read ›**

27 **Matthew 19:5** and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? **read ›**

28 **Matthew 19:6** So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.” **read ›**

29 **Matthew 19:7** They asked him, “Why then did Moses command us to give her a certificate of divorce and divorce her?” **read ›**

30 **Matthew 19:8** He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. **read ›**

31 **Matthew 19:9** I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her when she is divorced commits adultery.” **read ›**

32 **Matthew 19:10** His disciples said to him, “If this is the situation of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” **read ›**

33 **Mark 10:11** He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. **read ›**

34 **Mark 10:12** If a woman herself divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” **read ›**

35 **Luke 16:18** Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. He who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery. **read ›**

36 **John 2:14** In the temple he found those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, and the money changers sitting there. **read ›**

37 **John 2:15** He made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen. He poured out the money changers’ coins and overturned their tables. **read ›**

38 **John 2:16** To those who sold the doves, he said, “Take these things out of here! Do not make my Father’s house a marketplace!” **read ›**

39 **Romans 3:1** Then what advantage does the Jew have? Or what is the profit of circumcision? **read ›**

40 **Romans 3:8** Why not (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), “Let us do evil, that good may come?” Those who say so are justly condemned. **read ›**

41 **Romans 3:9** What then? Are we better off? Not at all. For we have already charged both Jews and Greeks with all being under sin, **read ›**

42 **1 Corinthians 7:11** but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and that a husband not send away his wife. **read ›**

43 **Hebrews 13:4** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled; but God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. **read ›**

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ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *86 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 2:24 · 6:1

Proverbs 4:25 · 6:27

Isaiah 33:14

Malachi 2:15

Matthew 5:17 · 5:28 · 5:46 · 6:1 · 9:13 · 10:2 · 19:4 · 19:12 · 20:1 · 22:30 · 24:2 · 27:21

Mark 10:2 · 10:5 · 10:9 · 12:23 · 12:25

Luke 1:52 · 6:28 · 6:30 · 6:36 · 9:20 · 9:35 · 12:48 · 16:19 · 16:22 · 16:23 · 16:29 · 20:35

John 1:14 · 2:18 · 2:19 · 14:2 · 14:6 · 19:15

Romans 4:11 · 7:1

1 Corinthians 3:8 · 3:16 · 4:5 · 4:9 · 5:1 · 5:5 · 5:7 · 5:13 · 6:9 · 6:13 · 6:14 · 6:15 · 6:18 · 6:19 · 6:20 · 7:1 · 7:7 · 7:8 · 7:9 · 7:10 · 7:12 · 7:14 · 7:15 · 7:17 · 7:27 · 7:39 · 12:27

2 Corinthians 3:6 · 4:4

Ephesians 2:12 · 4:5

Philippians 3:8 · 3:12

1 Thessalonians 4:3

2 Thessalonians 3:14

1 Timothy 3:1 · 3:12 · 4:3 · 5:9

Hebrews 2:2

1 Peter 1:19

1 John 2:18

Jude 1:7

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Does Matthew 19:9 allow a person to remarry after a divorce?” on April 29, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY