



1 Corinthians 7:10-11

(10) And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: (11) But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

King James Version

The word "reconciled" in verse 11 is *katallasso*, which specifically refers to mutual reconciliation, that is, "a return to harmony." However, the force here is a little different. Paul is speaking to a wife who has decided to leave her husband. The apostle is emphasizing that *the onus of reconciliation* rests on the one who departs, who leaves the relationship. Reading between the lines, the scenario is that the husband does not want to divorce. The wife separated on her own; she took the initiative to separate.

In such a case, Paul says she should either make every effort to reconcile—it should be her chief priority—or she must be willing to remain alone until the marriage is dissolved by death. The critical part is that, because she left, she should be the one to pursue reconciliation the hardest.

Another detail to note is that Paul does not imply she is at fault. The husband's words or actions may have caused her to leave. But, because she decided to leave, she must take the initiative to be reconciled.

Every time the Bible speaks of the reconciliation of people, the responsibility to reconcile is always on *us*, not on the other person. We should take the lead in reconciling ourselves with our brethren. It is never the other person's job. *We* are the ones reading the Bible and growing into the image of [Christ](#), so we should do the hard work of reconciling. If two brethren are reading the same scriptures, they should be responding to the commands the same way with the same initiative to solve the problem.

So, [God](#) never gives us the "out" that reconciliation is the other party's responsibility. In this marriage case, its weight rests mainly on the wife because of her actions in leaving and the assumption that the husband desired reconciliation. He did not leave the marriage. He is already doing what he is supposed to do. The apostle is stressing that *the person who has departed* should attempt to reconcile.

The responsibility to do this sort of thing is very heavy. It is something we must do. Enmity between brethren—especially as close as mates!—should not be shrugged off. It must be taken care of. It takes a lot of effort and determination, but it must be done! We cannot allow such a breach between brethren to stagnate. If they lie unresolved, they will worsen; the gap between the two parties will widen. And we do not want what comes with that.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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