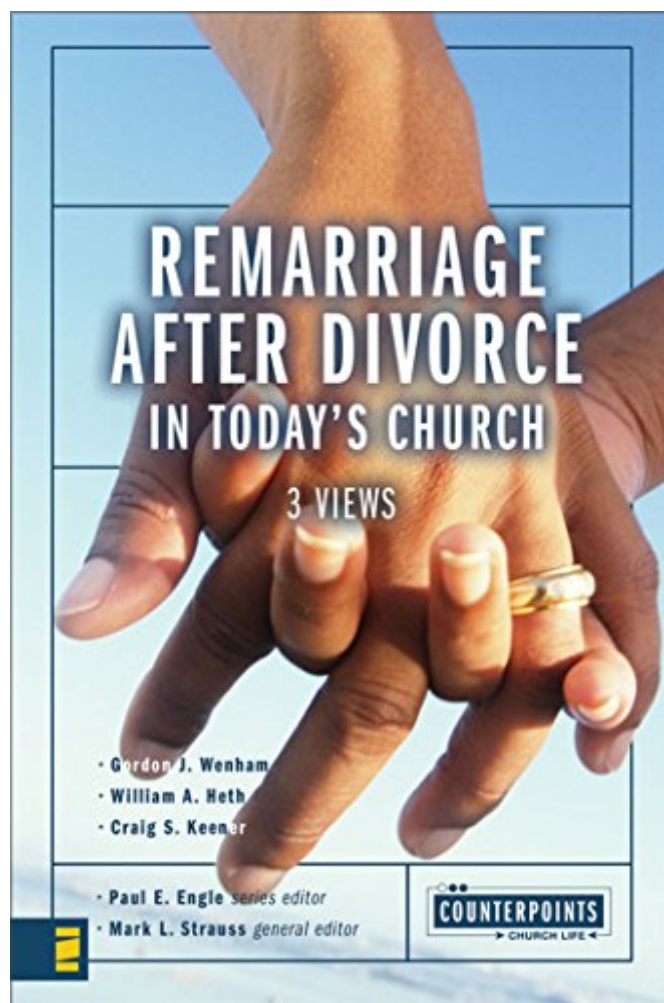


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# Remarriage After Divorce In Today's Church: 3 Views (Counterpoints: Church Life)



## Synopsis

A biblical and practical case for three main evangelical views on remarriage after divorce Among born-again Christians, 27 percent have experienced divorce as compared to 24 percent in the general population. Yet no consensus exists among evangelicals on their views of remarriage, leaving many Christians confused. This single volume summarizes and explores three main evangelical views: no remarriage, remarriage after adultery or desertion, and remarriage for a variety of reasons. Each of the three contributors offers his point of view succinctly with biblical support, and each interacts with the others to help readers come to their own conclusions. Contributors include: Gordon J. Wenham • No remarriage after divorce William A. Heth • Remarriage (two grounds) Craig S. Keener • Remarriage (variety of reasons)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is the 7th "Counterpoints" book I've read, and it's quite different from all the others in this

series. All 3 authors see the Bible as granting Christians permission to divorce under certain circumstances. The 3 positions defended are: Permission only to divorce, & never to remarry (Gordon Wenham) Permission to remarry only in cases of adultery or desertion (William Heth); and Permission to remarry for a variety of reasons. (Craig Keener) This book is more of an introductory primer to the remarriage-after-divorce debate: the chapters are shorter (about 30 pages each, contrasted w/ 50-100 in earlier Counterpoints) and the responses 5-6 pages. Also the argumentation is more abridged and less technical: none of the authors refer to the original biblical languages much in defending their positions, other than a passing reference to the word \_porneia\_ ("adultery, sexual immorality") and its possible meanings in Matt. 19:9. Also, the authors frequently refer to other published works, not just in defense of their own views, but as a substitute for defending their own views; at several points the contributors dismiss a defense of a certain point they are making by simply mentioning another author or book that defends it, and adding that the issue is treated more exhaustively there. This book, more than any of the other Counterpoints that I've read, left me wanting to read more from each of the contributors on the topic. One benefit of this more cursory treatment is that the book is an easier and quicker read than earlier Counterpoints books.

Up to a year or so ago, I had always thought divorce and remarriage was acceptable in the cases of unrepentant adultery or desertion. I would quote the exception clause in Matthew 19 as well as the one about an unbeliever leaving in 1 Corinthians 7. Yet, I had simply accepted them without a lot of thoughtful study or consideration. After some study, I came to the determination that remarriage while the spouse is alive is prohibited. I've held this viewpoint ever since. This book has been very helpful for me. Gordon Wenham is one of the leading proponents of the No-Remarriage position. I've thought he has had a rock solid argument and agree(d?) with him wholeheartedly. William Heth, who had co-authored a book with Wenham, after many years as a no-remarriage advocate has now changed his stance on remarriage to the traditional Reformation/Protestant understanding of remarriage allowable in cases of unrepentant adultery and desertion by an unbelieving spouse--the position I had formerly accepted blindly. Heth changed his position because of many of the same questions & issues that I still feel uncomfortable with on this side of the remarriage/theological fence. Heth deals with texts; he doesn't run from them (so does Craig Keener...although I certainly don't agree with his permissive viewpoint of other circumstances than adultery and desertion). All three authors extensively deal with the many practical issues that result from divorce and remarriage. This book is very balanced in its approach and allows each position to be presented

clearly and evenhandedly. While the book is short enough to start a debate and answer as well as create some questions, it is not complete enough in its format to fully convince or change one's mind.

The book *Remarriage After Divorce in Today's Church: 3 Views*, is a conversation between Gordon Wenham, William Heth, and Craig Keener, with introductory and concluding notes by Mark Strauss. Strauss facilitates the conversation well by exploring the complexity of the issue, which tempers the reader from expecting a complete treatment by the authors. The three views are certainly not exhaustive, there could be at least one or two more views presented, but what the book sets out to do is be a catalyst for thought on a number of the issues ranging from Biblical theology to Pastoral care. Each of the authors represents somewhat of a caricature of what are surely more nuanced views. This is helpful, though they all fail for the most part to address one critical issue, which is the role of the local Church, not just the pastor, in preventing and reacting to divorce. Each of the writers makes some note of their individual or pastoral responsibility in a divorce situation, real or hypothetical, but the Biblical theological view is never fully developed or explored. The main thrust of this review will be to highlight the unique contributions to the conversation by each author and a general critique of the overall book's absence of developing an ethic for the onlooking community in a divorce situation. This book is basically 3 chapters, with each chapter featuring an argument and two rebuttals. The body of conversation is enveloped by an introduction and conclusion by the general editor, Mark Strauss, professor of New Testament at Bethel Seminary. The arguments range from No Remarriage After Divorce (Wenham), Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion (Heth), and Remarriage for Adultery, Abuse, or Desertion (Keener).

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