

Dear Esperanza,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You told us that your daughter is married to a man with an explosive temper, which has caused him to be verbally and physically abusive to her. The couple has been separated for over a year and has a two-year old son. Although you realize that the only permissible biblical reason for divorce is adultery, you said you could not help but support the impending divorce, since your daughter has tried counseling many times, but to no avail. You wanted us to help you understand if divorce would be acceptable if abusive treatment was involved.

Let us first say that our hearts go out to your daughter. Her situation is indeed a difficult one. You are correct that the Bible clearly states that adultery is the only grounds on which a Christian couple may seek divorce. Matthew 19:9 says, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, **except for marital unfaithfulness**, and marries another woman commits adultery." (See also Matthew 5:32.) These scriptures are very clear that the only acceptable reason for divorce between two Christians is marital unfaithfulness (adultery).

However, we also believe that if your daughter is suffering under physical or emotional abuse, a separation may be the best course of action. If both she and her husband are Christians, the Apostle Paul gives this advice. "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife." (1 Corinthians 7:10-11) Here the Bible definitely encourages the Christian couple to remain single while working on reconciliation.

Assuming that your daughter's husband is a Christian, we would strongly recommend that they continue Christian marriage counseling, as abusiveness has no place in a Christian household. Perhaps, with further counseling and prayer the underlying issues that have caused your daughter's husband to use abuse as a coping mechanism will be brought to the fore and, over time, each of them will learn to communicate your needs in a more positive manner. A marriage must be nurtured. It requires time and work but it is well worth the effort. The Apostle Paul gives much good advice to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:22-33. He ends by saying, "Each of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (Ephesians 5:33)

If, on the other hand, your daughter's husband is an unbeliever, the Apostle gives this advice. "And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified by his wife. . . . Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances." (1 Corinthians 7:13-15)

Is it ever acceptable for a woman to be divorced from her husband? Yes, if the reason is unrepentant adultery or if he is an unbeliever and wishes to divorce her. Is it ever acceptable for a woman to live separately from her husband? Yes, if the circumstances of abuse mentioned above exist. Therefore, we would advise that your daughter not divorce her husband, but continue to remain separated, unless her husband is an unbeliever and wishes to leave the marriage. Then a divorce would be acceptable. If her husband is a believer and continues to abuse her, even though they are separated, a legal divorce may be in order. However, as that divorce (while binding) would be outside of the guidelines that Jesus taught, it would be best for her to remain unmarried.

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at [www.christianquestions.net](http://www.christianquestions.net). The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

**Christian Questions Radio**