

Marriage,  
Divorce  
and  
Remarriage

A Biblical Perspective



RANDALL J. HILLEBRAND

— SECOND EDITION —

## **Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage: A Biblical Perspective**

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### **SPECIAL THANKS:**

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This book is dedicated  
to the Kiev Oblast Pastors  
who meet every Thursday morning  
for prayer in Kiev, Ukraine.

Thanks for your love and acceptance  
of me and the opportunity  
to minister with you!

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## PREFACE

Randy and his wife Annette have lived in Ukraine since 2001 and are available to lead training seminars for groups of pastors, elders, evangelists and their wives. Randy, as a former pastor, can provide training throughout the countries of Eurasia and Asia on how to build a dynamic church as well as teach on evangelism and how to mobilize your church to do evangelism. As a former pastor's wife, Annette can teach women on pertinent topics of relevance to them. Randy is also available online for those who would like to write him about issues pertaining to their churches.



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# GLOSSARY

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- **Abandonment** – when an unbelieving spouse divorces a Christian spouse
- **Adulterous state** – the condition of adultery; specifically referring to an unsanctioned marriage, beginning with the wedding and concluding with either death or divorce
- **Adjudicate** – the process by which a judge reviews evidence to determine the rights and obligations between involved parties
- **Adultery** – when a married individual is sexually involved with someone other than his or her spouse
- **Cerebral adultery** – when a person lusts sexually after another in one’s mind
- **Conjugal adultery** – a state of ongoing adultery between a husband and wife, being the result of an unsanctioned marriage
- **Consummate** – to bring something to completion; specifically, in a marriage, to both validate and ratify the marriage covenant by means of sexual intercourse
- **Covenant** – a binding legal promise made as a result of a verbal and/or written agreement
- **Establisher of marriage** – a reference to God who instituted marriage for the good of mankind
- **ESV** – English Standard Version Bible
- **Extramarital adultery** – when a divorced individual enters an unsanctioned marriage

- **Guilty spouse** – the husband or wife who commits immorality/unchastity and/or divorces his or her spouse without biblical grounds and/or is in an unsanctioned marriage
- **Innocent spouse** – the husband or wife whose spouse commits sexual immorality while married or after their divorce either through an illicit sexual union or an unsanctioned marriage
- **Institution** – an established governing structure
- **Institution of marriage** – a structure established and governed by God between a biological man and woman for the purpose of creating a family, joining them together as husband and wife
- **Legal bond** – a binding authoritative union; covenant
- **Marriage** – the sacred union where a man and woman are joined together by God by means of a covenant and consummation through sexual intercourse
- **NASB** – New American Standard Bible
- **NIV** – New International Version Bible
- **One body** – the result of sexual union experienced either inside or outside of marriage
- **One flesh** – same as one body above
- **One-flesh union** – a continuous union and existence which a husband and wife has resulting from the consummation of their marriage by means of sexual intercourse
- **Preuptial** – occurring before marriage
- **Relational bond** – a bond resulting from the sexual intimacy of a married couple, this in contrast to the covenantal or legal bond

- **Remarriage** – any marriage other than a first marriage for at least one of the spouses involved
- **RST** – Russian Synodal Translation
- **Unsanctioned marriage** – a marriage other than an original marriage where there are no biblical grounds for remarriage
- **Vow** – a solemn promise to fulfill a pledge

**NOTE:** In this document when the word “church” begins with a capital “C” in a sentence, it is referring to the body of Christ present around the world. <sup>1</sup> When the letter “c” is not capitalized, it refers to the local church.

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<sup>1</sup> A distinction is being made between the universal Church and the “body of Christ present around the world,” as the universal Church (cf., Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25; Col. 1:18) consists of all believers from Pentecost (Acts 2) until the rapture of the Church (1 Thes. 4:16-17).

# INTRODUCTION

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Living in a postmodern world has its challenges and consequences. This is especially true for local churches as they work at reaching societies which increasingly are denying absolute truth. The world, and sadly even some within the Church, are accepting this paradigm shift where all viewpoints are to be considered valid. This new paradigm demands tolerance no matter how profane and ungodly the worldview while hypocritically showing disdain and intolerance for a biblical worldview. As a result, biblical doctrines and values within the local church are becoming confused and distorted. This occurs as believers become indoctrinated by the emergence of these widely held values, accepting unbiblical paradigms and philosophies. This indoctrination is not supposed to occur as passages such as Colossians 2:8, James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15-17 clearly state.

In unstable times as these, it is important that church leaders work hard at teaching and preaching the Word of God. It is the job of the local church to raise up strong believers who “are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:14-15). The church as the “pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15) must make sure that it upholds biblical truth. It must diligently guard its flock from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31) and work hard so that the members of their churches are not taken “captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition

of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Col. 2:8). Otherwise, as the culture changes, immature, ill-prepared and ill-equipped believers will change in accordance with it. When this occurs, churches will likely be weakened as more and more worldly Christians have influence within the church.

One very important biblical doctrine which continues to be under attack is marriage. The traditional view has been an accepted norm in cultures across the world for centuries, even in some for millennia. Unfortunately, this is rapidly changing. Even some who claim to be followers of Jesus are accepting perverted views of marriage over biblical truth.

Kirk Durston, a Christian philosopher, wrote an article titled, “Why Sexual Morality May be Far More Important than You Ever Thought.”<sup>2</sup> In it he spoke about the importance of sexual morality in culture. Durston focused on the work of an Oxford social anthropologist, J.D. Unwin. Unwin wrote a book titled, “Sex and Culture,” in which “Unwin examines data from 86 societies and civilizations to see if there is a relationship between sexual freedom and the flourishing of cultures.” It is important to note that, according to Durston, Unwin’s “writings suggest he was a rationalist, believing that science is our ultimate tool of inquiry (it appears he was not a religious man).” Although he does not appear to be a religious man, his conclusions are not surprising, at least by those with a biblical worldview. Following is a summation by Durston of Unwin’s six most significant findings:

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<sup>2</sup> Durston, K.; Why Sexual Morality May be Far More Important than You Ever Thought”; 1 December 2020; <https://www.kirkdurston.com/blog/unwin/>; accessed 7 July 2020.

1. Effect of sexual constraints: Increased sexual constraints... always led to increased flourishing of a culture. Conversely, increased sexual freedom always led to the collapse of a culture three generations later.
2. Single most influential factor: Surprisingly, the data revealed that the single most important correlation with the flourishing of a culture was whether prenuptial chastity [remaining a virgin until marriage] was required or not. It had a very significant effect either way. (Note added).
3. Highest flourishing of culture: The most powerful combination was prenuptial chastity coupled with “absolute monogamy.” Rationalist cultures that retained this combination for at least three generations exceeded all other cultures in every area, including literature, art, science, furniture, architecture, engineering and agriculture. Only three out of the eighty-six cultures studied ever attained this level.
4. Effect of abandoning prenuptial chastity: When strict prenuptial chastity was no longer the norm, absolute monogamy, deism<sup>3</sup>, and rational thinking also disappeared within three generations.
5. Total sexual freedom: If total sexual freedom was embraced by a culture, that culture collapsed within three generations to the lowest state of flourishing – which Unwin describes as “inert” and at a “dead level of conception” and is characterized by people who have little interest in much else other than their own wants and needs. At this level, the culture is usu-

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<sup>3</sup> Though deism is defined as a belief in a supreme being who after creation has no interaction with his creation, in this context seems to be referring simply to a belief in a supreme being.

ally conquered or taken over by another culture with greater social energy.

6. Time lag: If there is a change in sexual constraints, either increased or decreased restraints, the full effect of that change is not realized until the third generation.<sup>4</sup>

According to Unwin's work, sexual morality which is linked to the issues of marriage and chastity is of utmost importance. Ultimately, a decline of sexual morality in a nation will negatively impact societal norms which will influence communities, individuals, families and churches. This is why the issue of marriage and its related issues of divorce and remarriage are of utmost importance to the Church of Jesus Christ.

As one would expect, marriage, divorce and remarriage are often misunderstood, distorted and mishandled outside of the church. Sadly however, this has also occurred within the Church as worldly practices are accepted by believers. The church must set the example of what is right and what is wrong, and this will only happen when a church stands firmly upon the Word of God.

The misunderstanding and abuse of divorce and remarriage can of course be expected when marriage is redefined and no longer held in reverence. This is especially true when it is being viewed only as a legal agreement and not as an ordained institution of and union joined together by God. Therefore, divorce and remarriage within the local church are all too common; which if not stopped, will eventually become a more accepted practice within the church as a whole.

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that according to Durston, Unwin's generations appeared to be approximately 33 years in length. (Durston, K.; Why Sexual Morality May be Far More Important than You Ever Thought"; 1 December 2020; <https://www.kirkdurston.com/blog/unwin>; accessed 7 July 2020.)

The Church is called to be salt and light (Mat. 5:13-16). Having strong marriages with devoted husbands and wives will definitely help in advancing the mission of the Church. This is why churches need to be training their members in systematic biblical truth, helping them understand and practice the teachings of the Bible. They must help them learn how to foster a dynamic faith and relationship with the Living God, a relationship which is ever growing and developing. Their faith must be more than just a mere existence lived in accordance with church dogmas which are suitable for satisfying one's conscience, but not suitable for satisfying God. If churches instill a dynamic and growing faith in their members, they will experience a positive change and spiritual growth which will satisfy God and impact many. This will also result in the strengthening of marriages and families which is the foundation of a healthy society, and thus decrease the rate of divorce and remarriage within local churches.

This book will examine the issues of marriage, divorce and remarriage. These are important issues which church leaders ought to consider and uphold within their churches. As the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), the church must speak in accordance with what the Bible teaches. This is especially important in a day and age when the Word of God is becoming increasingly out of season (cf. 2 Tim 4:2).

# I. MARRIAGE

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## A. Its Establishment

God created the heavens and the earth and all living things in six days, and on the seventh day He rested. Man, the pinnacle and focus of His creation, was created on the sixth day. In His creation He made them male and female, the man being named Adam and the woman, Eve (Gen. 1-2). After creating Adam, the Bible records, “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man” (Gen. 2:21-22). It was immediately after Adam saw this new and magnificent creature for the first time that marriage was established by God. This was the first occurrence to take place immediately after Eve was created and presented to Adam in the Garden of Eden. God said:

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24)

This was necessary and of first importance so that Adam and Eve would cohabit together as husband and wife as God had intended. Thus, the institution of marriage and the marriage union were established, and Adam and Eve were joined together by God. This is a union which, according to Ephesians 5:28-32, is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church.

## B. Its Anatomy

### 1. It is Heterosexual

In this first reference to marriage in the Bible it is observed that after God created Adam, He created a woman. These two people were then united in marriage and afterward began to populate the earth. While discussing the issue of divorce and remarriage with some Jewish religious leaders, Jesus distinctly made this point about gender in regard to marriage when He said:

<sup>4</sup> “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them **male and female**,  
<sup>5</sup> and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’” (Mat. 19:4-5)  
(emphasis added)

As a result, they could be joined together to become one flesh. In other words, it was God’s plan and design that marriage be established between one biological man and one biological woman with procreation being one purpose of the sexual union.

Genesis 2:18 gives further insight into why God created them male and female. God said:

“It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

In context, Adam was all alone except for the animals. This was not a good situation God said. Adam needed someone like himself with whom he could talk, have companionship, receive support and help, etc. Thus, God created Eve who was, “a helper suitable for him,” or literally, someone “corresponding to him.” So, in God’s wisdom when He created a helper that corresponded to Adam, He created a woman. By doing this God created another

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individual that fit a man like a glove fits a hand. In other words, God did not create for Adam another hand, but a glove which fits the hand; and at that perfectly. Eve was his counterpart, physically corresponding to him, as in God's reproductive design. Therefore, in order for procreation to take place, God created them male and female, designing and positioning a man and woman's reproductive organs to function specifically for this purpose.

This of course is not the case in a homosexual union of either two men or two women. For them procreation is an impossibility. Their only purpose for sexual relations is pleasure. The alternatives in comparison to a normal sexual union are anything but natural in contrast to the obvious design and function of male and female bodies when engaged in sexual relations. Even if a person has undergone gender reassignment surgery, this person remains the sex he or she was born even though regenerated surgically and hormonally. Though physiologically similar, he or she is not biologically or emotionally similar. Therefore, such a union is an inappropriate counterfeit as a person's DNA can clearly validate.

God as the designer and creator of man and woman knew the intended purpose for which He designed them. One aspect of His plan is expressed in the following verses:

<sup>27</sup> "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" (Gen. 1:27-28)

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Then the book of Genesis records:

“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31)

Homosexuality obviously does not fit into God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” Therefore, it is easy to understand God’s intention from the beginning.

In stark contrast to God’s recorded purpose for the heterosexual union of a man and a woman is God’s disapproval of any homosexual union either between two men or two women. God declared this numerous times in the Bible:

- “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” (Lev. 18:22)
- “If *there* is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood guiltiness is upon them.” (Lev. 20:13)
- “For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.” (Rom. 1:26-27)
- “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves,

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nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

- “But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.” (1 Tim. 1:8-11)

God makes it very clear that homosexuality is an abominable and detestable act which is unnatural, indecent and something in which only an unrighteous person would be involved. In other words, it is contrary to what God intended for men and women. Therefore homosexuality, as with any other deviation from God’s standards, is sin. This is true for any sexual sin including fornication (1 Cor. 6:9), adultery (Lev. 20:10; 1 Cor. 6:9), incest (Lev. 18:6-18; Eph. 5:3), and bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16; Eph. 5:3). Also associated with this topic, being a transvestite (one who finds pleasure in wearing the clothes of and acting like the opposite sex (cf. Deut. 22:5)) or effeminate (a boy or man who takes on the role of a female in a homosexual act <sup>5</sup> (1 Cor. 6:9)), are also sin.

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<sup>5</sup> Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon, copyright © 1995, Woodside Bible Fellowship. Strong’s Greek #3120.

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In conclusion, marriage was created by God to be enjoyed in a heterosexual union between two people who are biologically male and female, and not in a homosexual union.

### 2. It is Monogamous

In both the Old and New Testaments, it is very clear that God's standard for marriage is that of one biological male being married to one biological female (cf. Gen. 2:20-24; Mat. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:2; Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18-19). Monogamy is shown in the Bible to be God's ideal by the fact that He created just one wife for Adam, not multiple wives (Gen. 2:21-22). Notably, in both the Old and New Testaments, polygamy is never spoken of as an acceptable alternative. The only exception given was when a man died and left his wife childless. In such a case a brother or close relative (his marriage status did not seem to be relevant) was to take her as a wife and raise up children for her dead husband. This was done so that his name would not be blotted out in Israel (Deut. 25:5-10; Ruth 3:9; 4:5, 10).

Monogamy is further reinforced by Genesis 2:24. When a man took a wife, he was to leave his father and mother, take hold of and cling to her ("joined," Heb., *dawbak*). The corresponding Greek word for "joining" (GK., *kollao*; Mat. 19:5) has the idea of going near to something or someone. These two words give a full picture of what marriage is to be, the husband going to his wife, taking ahold of her and not letting go throughout their lives together.

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The sexual union is what consummates the marriage, an act which validates and ratifies the marriage, binding them together as one flesh (cf., Gen. 24:67; 29:23-26; Deut. 21:10-13; 25:5). Marriage in conjunction with the one-flesh union leaves no room for polygamy.

Jesus in His earthly ministry affirmed Genesis 2 as the correct standard (Mat. 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-8) by stating that sexual union with a person other than one's spouse was unacceptable (Mat. 5:31-32; 19:9). This attestation upholds the fact that God's model for marriage is to be one biological man married to one biological woman. This criterion was established before the fall of man into sin.

Polygamy which is a deviation from God's standard was ignored just six generations after Adam by Lamech, a descendant of Cain (Gen. 4:19). Consequently, because of the sinfulness of man's heart, it is not uncommon for people to deviate from God's standards, polygamy being one of those cases. Subsequently if such a deviation becomes common practice, it can become an acceptable societal norm as various forms of sexual immorality are today. Because deviations from God's standards cause harm, protective measures were needed and instituted regarding various practices during the time of Moses, such as polygamy.

God therefore regulated marriage and associated norms. This was done for the protection of those involved, especially for those most vulnerable, women and children. Knowing that people would deviate from His standard, God gave guidelines on marriage (Gen. 2:24; Exo. 20:14;

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Deut. 21:10-14; 22:13-21; 24:5; 25:5-6; Mal. 2:16). In them He stated whom a person could not marry (cf. Lev. 18:6-18) or be involved with sexually (Lev. 18:19-23). He also regulated polygamy and the rights of the children resulting from polygamous marriages (Deut. 21:15-17). In addition, He gave regulations for concubines (Exo. 21:7-11).

A flagrant example of polygamy and an associated disregard of women are seen in the life of King Solomon. In the Law God commanded concerning the kings of Israel, “He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away...” (Deut. 17:17).<sup>6</sup> Solomon however did not obey God and as a result turned his heart away from Him. In addition, being one of Solomon’s seven hundred wives or three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3) may not have been a wonderful existence for many of them. Though they were probably taken care of quite well, beyond that their lives were probably not as fulfilling as they would have wanted. Over their married lives the average woman might have spent a night or two with Solomon to live the rest of their lives as workers in the king’s household, having no one to show them affection, unloved and childless. This must have been grievous for many. However, if Solomon would not have deviated from God’s command for kings regarding marriage, these women probably would have lived normal lives. It is also possible that Solomon might not have turned his heart away from God if he had not loved many foreign women with whom Israel was not to associate (1 Kings 11:1-4).

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<sup>6</sup> What does it mean to multiply wives? The Bible never defines this directly, but considering the standard given in Genesis 2:24, it seems that having more than one wife was a multiplication of wives.

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When considering the issues related to polygamy, one would expect a husband to love one wife more than another. This is seen various times in the Bible, one of those involving Solomon's son Rehoboam. "Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom **more than all his other wives and concubines**. For he had taken eighteen wives and sixty concubines and fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters" (2 Chr. 11:21; emphasis added).

From the Scriptures it is obvious that polygamy is not a good practice nor a healthy situation for those involved. This is seen clearly in other examples, including the triads of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 16:1-6; 21:9-14); Jacob, Leah and Rachel (Gen. 29:30-30:24); and Elkanah, Hannah and Peninnah (1 Sam. 1:1-7).

In the case of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, after Abraham took Hagar as his concubine it is recorded, "He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress [Sarai, later known as Sarah] was despised in her sight" (Gen. 16:4; note added). As a result of this rivalry, "Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence" (Gen. 16:6). Then later, after Sarah had borne Isaac and a celebration was taking place on the day he was weaned, Hagar's son Ishmael was seen mocking him. It is then that Sarah said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac." Though it was the will of God that Ishmael leave (Gen. 21:12), these problems were the consequence of a deviation from God's standard.

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As already mentioned, a husband loving one wife more than another is a problem encountered in polygamous marriages, such as in the triad of Jacob, Leah and Rachel. It is stated, “So Jacob... loved Rachel more than Leah.... Now the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren” (Gen. 29:30-31). This great disparity between Jacob’s love for Rachel over Leah was a sorrow she bore throughout her marriage. Jacob’s love was something she desired and strove for, although whether she ever attained it is unknown (Gen. 29:32-34; 30:20). The associated jealousy and rivalry between the two sisters are also obvious. Genesis 30:1 says, “Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or else I die.’” Leviticus 18:18 states, “You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.” Though Jacob was tricked into his marriage to Leah, this account illustrates the problems of inequality, division, competition and lack of unity which can exist in a polygamous marriage.

Rivalry also took place in the lives of Elkanah, Hannah and Peninnah. The Bible text says of Hannah in regard to Elkanah’s other wife Peninnah, “Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat” (1 Sam. 1:6-7). This resulted from the favoritism shown Hannah by her husband, for “When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed,

he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; **but** to Hannah he would give a double portion, **for he loved Hannah**, but the Lord had closed her womb” (1 Sam. 1:4-5; emphasis added). Again, an inequality of love is seen in this triad as well for Elkanah loved one wife more than the other, and thus treated her better.

Polygamy is a deviation from Genesis 2 where God designed marriage to be one man married to one woman. It is also a disastrous equation in any family setting which can lead to strife, jealousy and even hatred. These reasons clearly show why God did not and does not approve of this practice, as well as why He regulated it. (For further information see, “Polygamous Marriage: What to do” in the appendix.)

### 3. It is Established by God

When a couple enters into the marriage union, they are entering into something which is much more than just a cultural practice. They are entering into an institution which was ordained and established by God before man fell into sin and before the existence of cultures. Marriage is His creation. Therefore, when Matthew 19:6 says, “What therefore **God has joined together**, let no man separate” (emphasis added), the word “joined” (Gk., *suzeugnumi*) has the idea of being united, yoked together; they are united by God. Therefore, it is this institution by which God joins men and women together as husband and wife. Accordingly, God as the designer and institutor of marriage has every right to regulate and judge those whom He has joined together through this institution.

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The institution of marriage God established for the good of mankind, establishing societal units – families – a framework for raising children which provides stability, order, unity, protection, interaction, growth and development and avenues for education and instruction through which love and godly values are to prosper (cf., Deut. 6:6-7).

In conjunction, married couples are responsible before God for all aspects of their marriage. Consequently, every married couple, no matter where they are married or by whom or what their faith or belief system is, will one day have to give an account to God for their marriage. This is the first and main reason why the marriage union is a sacred and serious union.

### 4. It Consists of a Covenant

Marriage, having been established by God (Gen. 2:20-24) is also a covenantal relationship recognized by Him (“witnessed,” Mal. 2:14). When a marriage begins, the husband and wife enter into a covenantal bond which is recognized by Him which He will one day adjudicate. God takes covenants, oaths and marriage vows very seriously.

The seriousness of the covenantal aspect of marriage is clearly seen in two passages, the first being Malachi 2:14 which states, “...the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth...your companion and your wife **by covenant**” (emphasis added; cf. Ezek. 16:8). God is a witness throughout the entire marriage, from the consenting of the vows which seals the covenant. He expects them to be kept because breaking them

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is sin, and God will judge all sin. Therefore, married couples need to heed the words of James 5:12, “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.” So, when a couple says, “I do,” or however they may affirm their marriage covenant in a vow, it is important that they abide by their oath and covenant so that they will not fall under God’s judgment. Divorce therefore is an obvious breach of this covenant.

Another reason why marriage is a serious union is because of the vows a couple makes when getting married. Though cultures vary as to how a marriage is sanctioned, it is important to consider that vows and/or an oath, and/or cultural norms are usually affirmed and/or presumed, which are then consummated by the act of sexual intercourse. Thus, the marriage union is a covenantal bond whereby both individuals make pledges, and these before God, who is the establisher of the union. God acknowledges the promises made and takes them very seriously. This fact is seen in these passages:

- God commanded that those who make a vow are not to violate it, but are to do according to all that proceeded from their mouth; to not do so is the deed of a fool (Num. 30:1-2; Deut. 23:23; Eccl. 5:4-5)
- Vows are not necessary when a person fulfills his or her words (making one’s yes, yes and no, no) (Mat. 5:33-37; Deut. 23:22)
- Not keeping one’s word is sinful and evil (Deut. 23:21-22; Mat. 5:37)

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- Vows made under false pretenses are still recognized as valid by God (Josh. 9:1-9, 15, 19; 2 Sam. 21:1-3, 6)
- A person who does not fulfill a vow which he or she makes will be subject to judgment (Jam. 5:12; cf. 1 Tim. 5:12)

### 5. It Consists of a One-flesh Union

When a married couple becomes one flesh as the result of the sexual union, they are one body with each other (Mat. 19:4-6). The key verse which speaks about this union is Genesis 2:24, the first record of marriage in the Bible. However, since Jesus' elaboration on Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:4-6 is more comprehensive, this passage will provide more insight.

<sup>4</sup> "And He answered and said, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,'

<sup>5</sup> and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be **joined** (Gk., *kollao*, go near) to his wife, **and the two shall become one-flesh**'?

<sup>6</sup> **So they are no longer two, but one flesh.** What therefore God has joined (Gk., *suzeugnumi*, united, yoked) **together**, let no man separate." (emphasis and notes added.)

What is the one-flesh union? The one-flesh union is a continuous union and existence which a husband and wife has resulting from the consummation of their marriage by means of sexual intercourse. Whereas before marriage the two individuals were separate, after the consummation the two become one body, one flesh. This is a special union, a union which is ongoing until the death of one spouse. This union is celebrated by sexual

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intimacy they are to share exclusively with each other. The one-flesh union continues to exist even if the sexual relationship ends between the couple for reasons outside of their control (e.g., health issues, separation, age, etc.) or if they simply agree to end sexual activity (i.e., age, disinterest, etc.).

Just as a husband and wife are one flesh and are members of one another, so are individual believers with Christ (Eph. 5:28-32; cf. 1 Cor. 6:15-16). In Ephesians 5:22-33 Paul equates these two relationships. He does this so his readers would understand that the union between Christ and His bride the Church is a representation of the relationship between a husband and wife and their one-flesh union. They are to mirror each other.

In a one-flesh union the husband is to love his wife sacrificially as Christ loves His bride for whom He gave His life (vs. 25). As Christ leads, cares for and cherishes the Church so a husband is to do likewise for his wife (vss. 28-29). Husbands are to follow His example, for “he who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh” (vss. 28-29). Therefore, a husband is to love his wife in the same manner in which he desires to be loved (Luke 6:31). While the husband has a responsibility to love his wife, she has a responsibility to willingly follow and respect him (vss. 22, 33). These are characteristics which should be inherent in a marriage because a husband and wife are members of one another (cf. vs. 30). In addition, a husband and wife should recognize the value and necessity of each other in their relationship (cf. 1 Cor. 12:14-15; 20-21). They should be emotionally sup-

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portive of each other, suffering when one suffers and rejoicing when one is honored (cf. 1 Cor. 12:26-27). Therefore, when the two become one, they are unified and conjoined, no longer separate. Their allegiance as husband and wife is to be to no other.

Christ and the members of His body have a special, exclusive and intimate relationship; thus, these same elements are to exist in the one-flesh union between a husband and wife. First Corinthians 7:3-4 states:

<sup>3</sup> “The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”

The sexual relationship between a husband and wife is to be mutual, one which they share and enjoy together. Their bodies belong to one another, though ultimately to Christ. Consequently, they are to honor Christ with their bodies in all that they do (1 Cor. 6:13; 10:31), even within their sexual relationship. Living in this manner is what it means to be unified and one flesh. (For further discussion on the one-flesh union read Section III, C below titled, “Consequences When Not Allowed,” and “First Corinthians 6:12-20” in the appendix).

### **C. For Followers of Jesus**

Marriage for believers throughout the Bible is to be entered into only with another believer. In the Old Testament, Jews were not to marry the women of Canaan

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(Exo. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:1-5) or foreign women who served foreign gods (cf. Neh. 13:23-27; Mal. 2:10-11). Men were only to marry a Jewish woman or one whose country of origin was outside of Canaan, yet she needed to be a proselyte of Judaism (Deut. 20:10-18; 21:10-13; e.g., Ruth, Ruth 1:16).

In the New Testament this pattern is continued in that believers are to marry only fellow believers (cf. 1 Cor. 7:39). Paul told the Corinthians, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?” (2 Cor. 6:14-15). A believer and an unbeliever have nothing in common when it comes to the things of God. Whereas the believer’s spiritual father is God (Gal. 4:6), the unbeliever’s spiritual father is Satan (cf. John 8:44), who are of course in opposition to one another.

Regrettably, the believer who unwisely marries an unbeliever will realize the gravity of his or her error later in marriage, especially after children are born. Seeing one’s beloved children not have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ nor attend church due to the influence of his or her unbelieving spouse is a harsh reality. Also being in a relationship where one’s spouse does not understand nor care about the faith of the other can be difficult. This can result in constant disagreements between them because of how they view and live life causing emotional sorrow and/or grief. Another heart-ache would be having to experience the death of an unbelieving child or spouse.



## II. DIVORCE

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### A. It was Never Meant to be an Option

Divorce was never meant to be an option. Marriage, which God established, is meant to be a lifelong union. This is seen in Matthew 19:6-8 where Jesus taught about marriage and the one-flesh union:

<sup>6</sup> “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, **let no man separate**” (emphasis added).

<sup>7</sup> They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send *her* away?”

<sup>8</sup> He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; **but from the beginning it has not been this way**” (emphasis added).

In verse 6 Jesus made it clear that what “God has joined together” – what He has united, what He has yoked together by means of His institution of marriage – no man is to separate. Then when asked by the Pharisees why Moses allowed divorce, Jesus again made it clear that though Moses permitted divorce due to the hardness of man’s heart, “from the beginning it has not been this way.” God’s design for marriage never included the option of divorce.

### B. It However was Allowed

<sup>31</sup> “It was said, ‘WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE’;

<sup>32</sup> but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Jesus made it clear that remarriage after a divorce, except in the case of unchastity/sexual immorality, equals adultery. For clarification, the act of divorce does not make the other spouse an adulterer or adulteress, for only a sexual union can do this. This is clarified in the last phrase, “whoever **marries** a divorced woman commits adultery” (emphasis added). The reason Jesus said that everyone who divorces his wife makes her commit adultery is because, after a divorce, the natural thing for her to do is remarry. Remarriage generally would have made her life much easier. This was especially true during that period in history if she could not return to her parents’ home. Divorcing and sending a woman away was and still is a hardship for her and her children. However, divorcing his wife would be the catalyst for her committing adultery since her next marriage would be adulterous in nature for both her and her new husband. This means that her husband who initiated the divorce would be the cause of her adultery; that is, except in the case of sexual immorality. This makes the initiator of the divorce a stumbling block to sin. Jesus said to His disciples, “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!” (Luke 17:1).

It is interesting to note that immediately following Matthew 5:31–32, Jesus taught:

<sup>33</sup> “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD...’

<sup>37</sup> “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.” (Mat. 5:33, 37)

In applying these verses to marriage, it is important that a person’s yes be yes and no be no, not only in regard to his or her marriage vows, but in all of life as well.

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God has always been displeased with divorce. In the case of the people of Judah (Mal. 2:11), God made His displeasure known regarding the state of their marriages. He told them in Malachi 2 that He had rejected their offerings. He said, “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant” (Mal. 2:14). God had rejected their offerings because of how they were treating their wives by divorcing them.

Woman is the weaker vessel, so her husband – her companion and protector – is to care for her, protect and love her. Instead he divorced her, thus mistreating his wife with whom he had a covenantal relationship. By forcing her out of his home and no longer caring for her needs, then as today, he was making her life very difficult. This is why God tells the Jews in Malachi 2:16, “For I hate divorce,’ says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘and him who covers his garment with wrong,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘So, take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.’”<sup>7</sup>

God who is omnipresent and omniscient sees and knows all things. Consequently, He is a witness to everything, being able to attest to what takes place in a mar-

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<sup>7</sup> Bible translations vary on the translation of Malachi 2:16. The version quoted is the NASB which varies from other versions such as the ESV, “For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.” The RST says, “Если ты ненавидишь ее, отпусти, говорит Господь Бог Израилев; обида покроет одежду его, говорит Господь Саваоф; посему наблюдайте за духом вашим и не поступайте вероломно.”

riage and through a divorce. God will one day bring to judgment our actions and words (Eccl. 12:14; Mat. 12:36; 1 Cor. 4:5). Therefore He, as the establisher of the institution of marriage, will hold every couple accountable to their marriage covenant and vows, watching to see if they keep them or not. It is for this reason that when a couple gets married and makes their marriage covenant, they must be sure that their yes is yes, for anything beyond this is of evil (Mat. 5:37).

### **C. Its Devastating Consequences**

The marriage union was designed by God to be an exclusive relationship which only a husband and wife are to share and enjoy together. Whenever a marriage ends for any reason, it is difficult and will cause trauma in different degrees and in different ways. The consequences are emotionally and physically taxing as a person has to move forward and navigate life alone, dealing with issues of trust, betrayal and anguish. Once they are separated or the divorce has taken place, negative images and thoughts can overwhelm a person due to speculation about the behavior of his or her former spouse. An individual may battle feelings of loneliness, emptiness and unforgiveness. These emotions may take many years to overcome. This occurs because two people who once loved each other, who shared their deepest and most intimate thoughts, dreams and emotions, and even their own bodies are broken apart. It is as if someone chopped off a part of his or her body leaving the individual feeling incomplete and shattered. This is why it is so devastating.

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Thus, divorce can be a selfish act with such harmful consequences when the offending spouse thinks only of himself or herself and not about his or her spouse and children.

In the case where after a divorce one's former spouse becomes sexually involved or remarries, the bond the married couple once had is further violated, a bond which was intended to be protected and cherished. In the case of an innocent wife, she struggles with the fact that the man to whom she had given herself left her for another. She invited and allowed him to come into her so that they could express their love for one another. To then discover that her husband has chosen the invitation and affections of another over her is devastating. In the case of the innocent husband, he struggles with the fact that the woman whom he loved and cherished, the one whom he chose to be his own has left him. To her he had cleaved and became one flesh in an exclusive union. To then discover that she has opened herself up to another, having invited him into herself in place of him, is devastating.

If children are involved when a parent leaves, abandoning them and their mother or father can be very disturbing, overwhelming and unbearable. It shatters their world and sense of security, causing them to question if they played a role in the reason why the parent left. Sometimes children blame themselves for the divorce as if they did something wrong. Divorce can tear them apart causing emotional problems, trust issues, feelings of loneliness, abandonment and being unloved. Confusion about correctly understanding issues related to commit-

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ment and unconditional love can also manifest themselves. It can also give them a misconstrued view about relationships and marriage, seeing them as unimportant and unworthy of commitment. Also, since children and even adults tend to view and understand God through how they perceive their earthly father, when a father is the guilty one in a divorce it can give the children an incorrect view of God. Children are very impressionable and easily damaged. Ultimately, even if it is not spoken, they hope and pray that their parents will reunite so that they can be a family again, wishing this even into their adult life. This is another reason why divorce is so destructive to families.

The consequences of divorce do not only negatively impact the innocent spouse and children, but the guilty spouse as well. He or she is the reason for the damage done to the former spouse, their children and others. This individual will one day have to answer to God for violating and breaking the marriage bond and for the pain it caused. When infidelity is involved, there will be greater consequences. "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). A vow is always to be fulfilled (Num. 30:1-2; Deut. 23:23; Eccl. 5:4-5), for the one who does not fulfill it is sinning and committing evil (Deut. 23:21-22; Mat. 5:37) and subject to judgment (Jam. 5:12; cf. 1 Tim. 5:12).

# III. REMARRIAGE

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## A. Allowable Exceptions

While divorce is a tragedy, remarriage can be as well, although it is usually not understood as such. For most it seems to be a wonderful, exciting and fresh start. Yet in reality, it too can have tragic consequences if not done in accordance with biblical guidelines. In the case of remarriage, there are only three instances in which God allows it.

### 1. Death

In Romans 7 Paul makes the point that the Law of Moses has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives. To illustrate this, Paul uses marriage as an example. His illustration shows that according to the Law, when a woman is married to a man, she is bound to him until his death. Yet, once he dies, she is free. If, however she is divorced and remarried (“joined to another man,” vs. 3), she shall be called an adulteress. This is the point Jesus Himself made in Matthew 5:32. It is also the same point Paul affirmed in 1 Corinthians 7:39, “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.” Paul’s main point in the use of this illustration in Romans 7 is to show that followers of Christ are dead to the Law because they have died to it (vs. 6). Nonetheless, verses 2 and 3 still give valuable insight into the divorce/remarriage issue. Therefore, after the death of a spouse, the other spouse is no longer bound and is free to remarry, even a guilty spouse. If a divorced person is already remarried in an unsanctioned marriage, and

the first spouse dies, he or she is no longer considered guilty of ongoing adultery (Rom. 7:3).

## 2. Porneia (Immorality/Unchastity)

Another situation in which remarriage is permitted is when sexual immorality occurs in a marriage (Mat. 5:32; 19:9). The words expressed in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 as unchastity and immorality come from the same Greek word, “porneia.”

There is a debate over the use of porneia within this context. Some believe that it was used synonymously for the word, “moicheuō” (adultery), and should be understood that way. The rationale is that Jesus simply used porneia as an alternative word to describe adultery.

Contrary to this view is that Jesus purposely chose the broader term for porneia to include other forms of sexual sin including adultery.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, sexual immorality would include adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, prostitution, orgies and other related sexual perversion (cf. Lev. 18; 20). This then raises the question,

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. John MacArthur stated, “And by the way, the term “fornication” is commonly used to encompass the word “adultery” - you can’t split hairs on that word. For example, the Hebrew word for fornication is zarah. It is used, according to one lexicon, Davies and Mitchell, of a married woman in committing adultery. In Jeremiah 3:1, in Amos 7:17, zarah is used of a married woman in an adulterous relationship. According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, fornication, zarah, is to commit adultery or every form of unchastity that could be included. All of the leading sources agree that the Hebrew word zarah, which we translate fornication, includes adultery. The Greek word porneia is the same. In Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, says W. E. Vine, it includes adultery. According to Arndt and Gingrich’s lexicon, it includes prostitution, unchastity, every kind of unlawful sexual activity and adultery is included, the unfaithfulness of a married woman. According to Alford’s Greek Testament, fornication must be taken to mean sin not only before marriage but after it or during it. Porneia, according to Thayer, includes adultery. I can just go on and on and on. All of these Greek scholars see it this way.” (MacArthur, J.F.; “Divorce and Remarriage, Part 3”; June 24, 1979; <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2220/divorce-and-remarriage-part-3>; accessed 3 March 2020.)

### CHAPTER III

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“Are all of these sins sufficient reasons in the eyes of God for a marriage to end, allowing the innocent spouse to remarry?”

When considering this issue, Jesus could have easily used *moicheuō* instead of *porneia*. For some, this would have prevented a lot of confusion. However, the fact that He used *porneia* makes it apparent that He was speaking about more than just adultery. Since *porneia* can cover such a wide variety of sexually related sin, are all of them allowable reasons for divorce and remarriage? When considering how *porneia* should be understood in this context, a couple of things need to be taken into account.

The first consideration is Jesus’ audience and how they would have understood what He said to them. The context of the conversation Jesus had with the Pharisees was based upon Deuteronomy 24. Two schools of thought were debated at that time regarding this passage and more than likely were the reason for their question. “Followers of Hillel felt a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason, but others, following Shammai, thought one could not divorce his wife unless she were guilty of sexual offense.”<sup>9</sup> Jesus did not comment on this debate but instead gave God’s standard. Jesus made it clear that a couple was to remain married until death while stating that sexual immorality was a reason for divorce and remarriage. Because they were Pharisees, it is natural to assume that they would have compared anything Jesus said to the Old Testament. Specifically,

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<sup>9</sup> Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). Matthew. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books. (Mat. 19:1-12).

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regarding this question, Leviticus Chapters 18 and 20 and Deuteronomy 22 would have been foremost on their minds. Therefore, by Jesus using the word porneia, this would have meant that any immoral sexual union could be a reason for divorce. In other words, porneia must involve sexual sin where two become one flesh through physical contact. Following this reasoning, bestiality too would meet this criterion. As MacArthur said:

“According to the finest of Greek scholarship in seeing what the word means, it means simply this...every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.” He went on to say, “Porneia means a sexual relationship with anybody...It has to do even with bestiality, ... incest, ... sodomy or homosexuality, ... with prostitution, harlotry, all of these things before, during, after marriage... Because all of those things in the Old Testament brought about the death penalty. They all constitute the sum of a violation.”<sup>10</sup>

Sins such as pornography, phone sex, sexting, etc., are not sins where sexual union is involved. This means that they are not allowable reasons for divorce. It is only allowable when two people, or a person and an animal are involved sexually, conjoining their bodies and making them members of the other. (For further discussion on the one-flesh union read, “First Corinthians 6:12-20,” in the appendix.)

Another consideration is that in the Old Testament adultery, homosexuality, rape, various forms of incest

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<sup>10</sup> MacArthur, J.F.; “Divorce and Remarriage, Part 3”; June 24, 1979; <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2220/divorce-and-remarriage-part-3>; accessed 17 June 2020.

and bestiality were punishable by death. In such a case, the death of a guilty spouse would have allowed the innocent one to remarry. This correlation seems to support why Jesus used the word *porneia*, a word broader in scope than adultery, to include all sexual sin which could end a marriage in the eyes of God. MacArthur agrees, stating:

“...Jews in Israel were put to death for acts of fornication, both before and after marriage. The death penalty was imposed upon marriage used for incest, sodomy, bestiality, every forbidden sex act - all you have to do is read the twentieth chapter of Leviticus, it's all in there. There were all those things that brought the death penalty, and it is that divorce is allowable when death could have ensued.”<sup>11</sup>

According to Jesus, when sexual immorality is committed by one's spouse, the innocent one is free to remarry without penalty. However, this is not the case for the guilty spouse. (For further discussion on sexual prohibitions read, “Notes on Sexual Prohibition and Defilement,” in the appendix.)

### 3. Remarriage to a Former Spouse

Remarriage is allowed to a former spouse. In 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Paul tells believers:

<sup>10</sup> “But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband <sup>11</sup> (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.”

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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Therefore, if a couple divorces, they should not remarry unless to one another. This is the best option, especially when children are involved. It is also preferred because a second marriage to another person for any reason other than sexual immorality is sin. Therefore, whereas a second marriage in most cases would lead to conjugal adultery, remarriage to a former spouse would not.

However, when a couple decides to remarry each other, despite the reason for their divorce, they need to:

- repent (change their negative behaviors which initially destroyed their marriage)
- seek forgiveness from each other
- get help to work through their past issues (especially if there was adultery, physical and/or emotional abuse of a spouse and/or of children, drug and/or alcohol addiction, etc.)

In particular for Christian couples, reconciling and remarrying would be God-honoring and a wonderful testimony of His ability to help couples repair their damaged marriages.

What about in the case where one spouse is a believer and the other is not? Please note that verse 10 begins with the words, “But to the married I give instructions.” Here Paul addresses those who are married, which is a general designation. In other words, no distinction is made regarding whether they are believers or not like he did in verses 12-16. Based upon this, a couple who divorces in which one spouse is a believer and the other is not, would be allowed to remarry each other.

Supporting evidence for this is that when a couple divorces, they remain bound together as one flesh until death (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2); the exception being sexual immorality. This is true whether both are believers, unbelievers, or a believer and an unbeliever.

Another benefit of a believer and unbeliever remarriage is found in 1 Corinthians 7:14.

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

When a couple reunites, the believing spouse sanctifies the unbelieving spouse and the children are holy once again. As a result, remarriage would be a wonderful outcome once repentance from destructive behaviors occurred, forgiveness was sought and other necessary issues have been worked through. However, seeing the unbeliever turn to Christ is the goal and best scenario.

## **B. Non-allowable Exceptions**

### 1. Abandonment

a. Explanation: “Not under bondage”

Many today teach that remarriage is permitted in the case of abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. The reason for this is found in 1 Corinthians 7:15 which states:

“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”

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To what is the believer no longer under bondage? Is it referring to remaining in the marriage or to the covenant made when the couple was married, or both?

Those who hold the position that a believing spouse can remarry if abandoned by an unbeliever point out that, “the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases.” They then refer to 1 Corinthians 7:39 which states:

“A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”

Whereas in this verse the believer is “bound” until the death of a spouse, in verse 15 the believing spouse is told he or she is no longer “under bondage.” In other words, the believing spouse can remarry whomever he or she wishes but only to a believer. Vanlaningham states:

“However, if an unbelieving spouse physically and geographically (not just “emotionally”) abandons the marriage, God no longer considers the believer married. Based on this principle, it is reasonable to allow divorce and remarriage for a Christian spouse who is abandoned by a believer as well. The verb bondage (*douloo*) was used widely in Paul’s day as a metaphor for marriage (see Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006], 303), so that not being in bondage was equivalent to being free (v. 39) as a virtual widow or widower. In this case, the believer who is abandoned is free to divorce and remarry.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Vanlaningham, M. G. (2014). 1 Corinthians. In M. A. Rydelnik & M. Vanlaningham (Eds.), *The Moody Bible Commentary* (pp. 1773–1805). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

Lowery also states:

“However, there were exceptions to the rule of no divorce. If the unbeliever insisted on a divorce, he was not to be denied (the word translated leaves is *chōrizetai*, the verb used in v. 10). Should this occur, the Christian was not bound to maintain the marriage but was free to marry again (cf. v. 39). Paul did not say, as he did in verse 11, that the Christian in this case should “remain unmarried.” (However, some Bible students say that not being “bound” means the Christian is not obligated to prevent the divorce, but that it does not give freedom for remarriage.)”<sup>13</sup>

Both Vanlaningham and Lowery reference 1 Corinthians 7:39, corroborating the view that the believer can remarry.

It is clear from verse 15 that the believing spouse is no longer obligated to remain married. This is not debated. What is debated is whether the believing spouse can remarry as a result of abandonment by the unbelieving spouse. Therefore, does the phrase, “not under bondage,” mean that the believing spouse is free to remarry? The simplest understanding of this text is that the believer is no longer obligated to remain (Gk., *douloo*, enslaved)<sup>14</sup> in the marriage, and nothing more. In reality, what one believes regarding this issue will be determined by what a person believes about marriage, divorce and remarriage.

The following arguments are theological rationale why remarriage is not permissible in such a case.

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<sup>13</sup> David K. Lowery (Lowery, D. K. (1985). 1 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books)

<sup>14</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. (37:24)

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As stated earlier, some view verse 39 as proof that the believing spouse can remarry. However, on the contrary it is proof that the believing spouse cannot remarry. It states:

“A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”

In reference to verse 15, a believer is not bound to remain married when the unbelieving spouse leaves. However, the believer is still bound to the unbeliever until his or her death since they continue to remain one flesh. Then and only then is the believer able to remarry.

This view is consistent with the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 19:6–9:

<sup>6</sup> “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. **What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.**” <sup>7</sup> They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?” <sup>8</sup> He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; **but from the beginning it has not been this way.**” <sup>9</sup> “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, **except for immorality**, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (Emphasis added)

From the highlighted portions of these verses it is obvious that God does not allow divorce and/or remarriage except in the case of sexual immorality. Therefore, it is inconsistent to believe that remarriage is permissible when an unbelieving spouse has abandoned a believer. If this were true, then this exception would supersede Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage, in particular the exceptive clause, this being highly unlikely.

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Please consider that just because one spouse is a believer and the other an unbeliever, this does not negate:

- the one-flesh union and its ongoing, continuous existence until the death of one of the two spouses
- that what God has joined together no man is to separate
- the marriage covenant and vows made by the couple to which both will be held accountable
- the exceptive clause (“except for immorality”)

Paul was not allowing remarriage, but instead a peaceful resolution to a difficult situation.

**b. Explanation: “God has called us to peace”**

Maintaining peace through a divorce and afterwards is another reason why Paul said to let the unbeliever leave. In other words, why the believer should not challenge the divorce. A believing spouse may want to challenge the divorce for different reasons. Besides one’s concern for the spiritual state of the unbelieving spouse, he or she could be of the mindset that the marriage must be saved at all costs, especially if children are involved. Yet, allowing an unbelieving spouse to go without contesting the divorce should hopefully assure a more peaceful resolution, even though it will undoubtedly be painful. As Paul wrote in Romans 12:18, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” In addition, this could possibly facilitate future reconciliation and even remarriage between the couple. Furthermore, it may also testify about the believer’s faith, helping the unbeliever further understand his or her need for reconciliation with

God. Nonetheless, abandonment does not alleviate either spouse's obligation to the covenant and vows made at the marriage ceremony when they were joined together by God.

c. Explanation: Unbelievers sanctified by believers

To clarify, Paul's words in verse 15 are not telling the believing spouse to give up on the marriage. What he is stating is that when it is clear that the marriage is over and the unbelieving spouse has left, let him or her go. However, this does not mean that the believing spouse should not work at trying to keep the marriage intact if at all possible. This however should be done peaceably with wisdom.

One reason to keep the marriage intact is that the marriage union is of spiritual benefit to the unbelieving spouse and children. While no one knows whether they will be saved (vs. 16), they may. This is why, even when it is not possible to remain married, effort should be made to work at having an amicable relationship after the divorce. This is because, through the believing spouse, the unbelieving spouse and children are recipients of and influenced by God's grace. However, once the marriage has been terminated, the influence of the believing spouse may be greatly hindered or nonexistent. Consequently, the unbelieving spouse would no longer be "sanctified" (set apart to), receiving the benefits associated with the spiritual influence of the believing spouse. This is true for their children as well. Paul emphasized this differently by means of contrast – the children either

being unclean or holy (vs. 14). In a home where neither parent is a Christian, the children do not have the benefit and influence of God's grace from the Word of God, prayer and a godly influence from the parents. This results in their being ungodly and therefore unclean (cf. Titus 1:15). Vanlaningham wrote, according to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, "unclean means 'that which is not brought into contact with the divine' (BDAG, 34)." <sup>15</sup> In other words, no godly influence within the home exists. Yet in the home where at least one parent is a follower of Jesus, the children have the opportunity to receive and be influenced by God's grace, thus setting them apart from the world.

### 2. Other Situations

What should be done in a situation where a husband physically or sexually abuses his wife and/or children, is an alcoholic or drug addict, etc.? Is not the wife free to divorce and then remarry? In the case of physical and/or sexual abuse of children, the wife should immediately leave the relationship for their safety. Regarding sexual abuse, which is *porneia*, this allows the wife the right to divorce her husband and remarry. However, in other situations separation for one's safety may be necessary, or possibly even a divorce may be warranted. Yet, God in His wisdom does not permit remarriage. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11:

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<sup>15</sup> Vanlaningham, M. G. (2014). 1 Corinthians. In M. A. Rydelnik & M. Vanlaningham (Eds.), *The Moody Bible Commentary* (pp. 1773–1805). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

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“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.”

Why would God not allow remarriage in such situations? The obvious reason is that God designed marriage to be a lifelong commitment. To divorce goes against what God has ordained. Through marriage God has joined them together, and what God has joined together no man is to separate (Mat. 19:6, 8). In addition, when couples marry, they make a covenant and usually vows in which they promise to be faithful to one another until death. This covenant and vows are made before the establisher of marriage, God Himself. Thus, God expects people to keep their vows.

Another consideration is that God desires divorced individuals to trust Him in their situation. In other words, when an individual must remain unmarried as a result of divorce, God wants this person to trust Him in his or her singleness. In other words, the individual should trust God to meet his or her needs understanding that He knows what is best for this individual. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” God knows what is best for each person, even when it may not be what a person desires. He can be trusted; and when one acts in faith, the individual will be rewarded. Regarding his singleness, Paul wrote:

“But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.” (1 Cor. 7:8)

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He also goes on to say in verses 32-35:

<sup>32</sup> “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; <sup>33</sup> but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. <sup>35</sup> This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.”

In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul was concerned about a present or pending distress (possibly persecution; vs. 26). Therefore, he advised them that it would be better if they remained as they were. Nonetheless, from these verses it is obvious that Paul saw the single life as a more unhindered opportunity to serve Christ (cf. vss. 7, 40). Those who are divorced need to seriously consider Paul’s words.

In cases where an abusive spouse claims to be a Christian, the couple’s church should be involved in the process of counseling, and/or church discipline if warranted. The purpose would be to assist this individual in getting needed help, as well as to assist and give spiritual guidance to his or her spouse and children.

If however an alleged believer continues in ungodly behavior and does not repent, this individual may not be a true follower of Jesus or possibly be a believer who is living carnally for a period of time (1 Cor. 3:1-3;

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Heb. 5:12-14).<sup>16</sup> In difficult cases such as these, a vulnerable spouse may need to separate for personal safety and/or for the safety of children until either repentance is realized or a divorce occurs (cf. 1 Cor. 7:15). If one spouse was involved in sexual immorality while married or during the time of separation, that in itself is grounds for divorce and remarriage for the innocent spouse. Also, remarriage for the innocent spouse would be an option if the former spouse:

- repents of his or her sinful behavior and they want to remarry one another
- becomes involved in sexual immorality
- remarries another thus entering an adulterous marriage
- dies

Usually such people who are involved in ungodly behavior are not concerned about biblical mandates. Therefore, they may become involved in sexual immorality, either after a separation or divorce, or as a result of an unsanctioned marriage. Such behavior permits the innocent spouse to remarry.

That being said, the objective of a believer should never be to find a way to legitimately divorce a spouse so that remarriage is possible. The goal should always be repentance, reconciliation and preservation of the marriage. This is the best situation, not only for the couple, but for any children who may be involved.

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<sup>16</sup> The word “practice” is the Greek word *poieo*, which has the idea of a habitual action. Such a person who practices sin has given himself continually to doing unrighteousness (1 John 3:8,10), whereas the true believer will practice righteousness for he is born of God (1 John 2:29).

## C. Consequences When Not Allowed

### 1. Conjugal Adultery and the Marriage Covenant

When a person who is divorced for reasons other than sexual immorality and remarries someone other than his or her former spouse, this person according to Jesus is committing adultery. Living in a state of conjugal adultery is not a healthy situation for all involved (the newly married husband and wife, children, ex-spouses, etc.). In such cases the second marriage is beginning on an unstable foundation. This may be one reason why the more often a person is divorced and remarried, the higher the divorce rate.<sup>17</sup> It may also

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<sup>17</sup> “A false conclusion in the 1970s that half of all first marriages ended in divorce was based on the simple but completely wrong analysis of the marriage and divorce rates per 1,000 people in the United States. A similar abuse of statistical analysis led to the conclusion that 60 percent of all second marriages ended in divorce... It is now clear that the divorce rate in first marriages probably peaked at about 40 percent for first marriages around 1980 and has been declining since to about 30 percent in the early 2000s.” (Heller, Kalman; “The Myth of the High Rate of Divorce”; 8 October 2018; <https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-myth-of-the-high-rate-of-divorce/>; accessed 29 June 2020.) “Among born-again Christians, 27 percent have experienced divorce as compared to 24 percent in the general population.” (Strauss, M. L., ed.; *Remarriage after Divorce in Today’s Church: 3 Views (Counterpoints: Church Life)*; 28 April 2006; Zondervan; <https://zondervanacademic.com/products/remarriage-after-divorce-in-todays-church/> (back cover); accessed 29 June 2020). In 1999 the Barna Group reported that the divorce rate for the general public and for evangelical believers (defined as people who believe “Jesus lived a sinless life; eternal salvation is only through grace, not works; Christians have a personal responsibility to evangelize non-Christians; Satan exists; 7 to 8% of the American population is the same, 25% (Sider, R.J.; “The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience Why don’t Christians live what they preach?” *ChristianityToday.com*; <https://www3.dbu.edu/jeanhumphreys/SocialPsych/evangelicalmind.htm>; Jan./Feb. 2005; accessed 30 June 2020). Strauss’ data is statistically the same as the Barna Group (+/- variation) on the divorce rate in the United States and less than Heller’s. Looking at various websites on the topic, most quote the older statistics from the 1980’s for the US, that 41% of first marriages fail, 67% of second marriages and 73% of third marriages. Although the lower statistical average for divorce of first-time marriages is presumably more accurate, nevertheless, it is obvious that the greater the number of marriages a person has the higher the rate of divorce.

be why divorced and remarried people often say, “I should have made my first marriage work. It would have been easier.” Consequently, entering into an adulterous marriage will also have negative spiritual consequences.

Why are unsanctioned marriages, those marriages which do not have biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage, not approved by God? The chart and observations below will illustrate these reasons.

## COMPARISON OF THREE TYPES OF ADULTERY AND THEIR EFFECTS

### Glossary:

**Cerebral adultery** – lusting after a person sexually in one’s mind (Mat. 5:27-28)

**Conjugal adultery** – a state of ongoing adultery between a husband and wife, the result of an unsanctioned marriage (Mat. 19:9)

**Extramarital adultery** – adultery committed by a husband and/or wife with someone outside of their marriage (Luke 18:20)

People affected	Cerebral Adultery	Extramarital Adultery	Conjugal Adultery
- Guilty individual	√	√	√
- Innocent spouse	Potential	√	√
- Illicit partner	N/A	√	N/A
- New spouse	N/A	N/A	√
- Others (i.e., children, relatives, friends, acquaintances)	Potential	Potential	Potential
<b>Divorce occurred</b>	N/A	N/A	√
<b>Unsanctioned Remarriage occurred</b>	N/A	N/A	√

**Observations:**

1. Cerebral adultery is a personal sin, though it has the potential of hurting others and can even be an impetus for various forms of fornication and/or adultery; even rape.
2. Cerebral and extramarital adultery can be impetuses for conjugal adultery.
3. In the case of extramarital adultery, there is still the potential of marital reconciliation. With conjugal adultery this option does not exist.
4. God forbids extramarital adultery. It is devastating and has a high potential for leading to conjugal adultery.
5. The issues related to conjugal adultery demonstrate why multiple marriages have a higher divorce rate than first marriages.
6. Depending upon the number of divorces and remarriages associated with a case of conjugal adultery (e.g., if both the husband and wife have been divorced one or more times), the more people that will be affected. It is like a spider's web.
7. The effects of extramarital adultery can be more immediately devastating, whereas the consequences of conjugal adultery are usually more sequentially harmful.

An unsanctioned marriage results in conjugal adultery which places the marriage in an unhealthy, disadvantaged position. Having disobeyed God's warning about such unions, the couple faces an uphill struggle. This is why those who are married multiple times have a higher rate of divorce for each subsequent marriage. Additionally, conju-

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gal adultery has more negative consequences associated with it than extramarital adultery, as devastating as that is!

When a marriage which is a sacred covenantal union established by God is terminated, the divorce and subsequent marriage are a violation of the original union. This is sin and evil and therefore not allowed by God (Deut. 23:21-22; Mat. 5:37). The guilty spouse who violates this union will be held accountable for his or her unfaithfulness to God and to his or her former companion by covenant (Jam. 5:12; cf. 1 Tim. 5:12; Mal. 2:14). This being the case, if the guilty spouse remarries, it is neither in this individual's best interest nor in the best interest of the person he or she marries. Therefore, the couple who divorce simply because they no longer wish to be married are not permitted to remarry, except to each other. In the case of a couple where either spouse is guilty of sexual immorality, as stated previously the guilty spouse is not to remarry, however the innocent spouse may. This prohibition which is in stark contrast to the common understanding (Mat. 19:3-10) and practice (cf. Mat. 5:31-32; Luke 16:14-18) of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in Jesus' day is the reason why His disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry" (Mat. 19:10). In other words, "Whatever view one takes on the exception clause, Jesus obviously affirmed the permanence of marriage. Those who heard His words understood Him in this way, for they reasoned that if there were no grounds for divorce one would be better off never to marry."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Barbieri, L. A., Jr. (1985). Matthew. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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Whenever a couple is married, God recognizes the covenant each time it is made, whether it is the first or a subsequent marriage. Therefore, God recognizes the covenant made in unsanctioned marriages as well, acknowledging the married couple as husband and wife (cf. Deut. 24:1-2; John 4:16-18; Rom, 7:1-3). Although there was unfaithfulness in the first marriage, God expects them to keep their vows in the new marriage. If one or both of them were a guilty party in his or her divorce, God expects that the couple will keep their new marriage vows and not separate what He has joined together. If the guilty person is truly repentant, this will be his or her desire as well. If not, then divorce could occur in the future.

Therefore, please consider that when Jesus stated in Matthew 19:9, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery,” He was making a statement:

- of fact
- of warning
- of disapproval
- of future condition
- not to divorce (implied)
- not to remarry (implied)
- of future consequences (implied)

A person who remarries without biblical grounds is entering a state of adultery, and Jesus is warning him or her by His statement not to do this. However, when a couple enters an unsanctioned marriage, although God recognizes it as a marriage (cf. Deut. 24:1-4; John 4:16-18),

the complexity and consequences of such a union will present various obstacles. They will have to struggle through them, possibly for their entire married life (e.g., feelings of guilt, sibling rivalry in blended families, divided families, financial strain due to child support/alimony payments, feelings of abandonment and/or rejection by children, jealousy between the former and new family, former and new spouse rivalry, etc.).

When considering all of the issues associated with divorce and remarriage, it is always wise and prudent to do as God has ordained. This is why couples need to work hard at loving and forgiving each other (1 Pet. 4:8) to make their marriage work. Not doing so only leads to heartache and devastation for so many. Multiple marriages are not the answer. They will more than likely be a continuation of the original, underlying problem which brought the first marriage to an end.

### 2. Conjugal Adultery and the One-flesh Union

Why is conjugal adultery worse than adultery? Because whenever a divorce is obtained (other than for sexual immorality), the one who remarries, along with his or her new spouse, enters a continuous state of adultery. The words of Jesus make this clear:

“And I say to you, **whoever divorces his wife**, except for immorality, and **marries another woman commits adultery.**” (Mat. 19:9; emphasis added.)

Matthew 5:31-32 gives further evidence:

“It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the

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reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” (Emphasis added.)

When a couple marries and consummates their marriage, they enter a one-flesh union. This union is an ongoing reality until the death of one of the spouses. Therefore, anyone who commits sexual immorality with either spouse is guilty of adultery along with the guilty spouse. Even after a divorce when a guilty spouse remarries, that individual along with his or her new spouse are committing adultery because the one-flesh union continues from the prior marriage.

To correctly understand the one-flesh union, one needs to understand that it can take place outside the confines of marriage. As the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

“Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, ‘The two shall become one flesh’” (1 Cor. 6:16)

When two people come together in sexual union – inside or outside of marriage – their bodies are conjoined with one another resulting from their sexual encounter. Consequently, during that interlude the two are one flesh. Outside of marriage the one-flesh union ends once the sexual interlude ends. Within marriage and even after a divorce, the one-flesh union continues to exist, being the resultant of the consummation of the marriage. Genesis 2:24 states:

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall **become** one flesh.” (emphasis added)

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The word, “become” (Heb., hayah) has the idea of an existence. In other words, the couple will exist <sup>19</sup> as one flesh within their marriage once consummation occurs. It is a continuing reality. This one flesh existence in marriage is also implied in Matthew 19:9:

“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

It is evident that the one-flesh union continues and remains a reality even after divorce until death. If this is not the case, then Jesus’ point in this verse would be irrelevant and committing adultery would not be a possibility when a person remarries. This fact is also supported by Romans 7:3:

“So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.”

In this example, the woman is an adulteress until the death of her first husband. This is because her one-flesh union continues with him while she is sexually united to her second husband. Therefore, though the one-flesh union is a continual reality in marriage, it is not the result of continued sexual intimacy. It exists even when married couples are no longer able to maintain or decide to discontinue their sexual relationship.

In the case of an innocent spouse whose husband or wife has committed sexual immorality, this person is

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<sup>19</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.; (Heb. # 2118, 1; Gk. # 1639, LN 13.1).

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free to remarry and is released from the bonds associated with the original marriage. This is because when a guilty spouse and an illicit sexual partner unite their bodies in a sinful sexual act, the guilty spouse and partner have sinned against their own bodies (1 Cor. 6:18). In addition, the guilty spouse has also sinned against the one-flesh union he or she had with his or her spouse. Furthermore, the guilty spouse has also sinned against his or her spouse directly (cf. 1 Cor. 6:15-16). Consequently, sexual immorality is sufficient grounds for ending the marriage relationship if the innocent spouse so desires.

A logical question would be, if the one-flesh union continues even after a divorce, why can the innocent spouse remarry without committing adultery while the guilty spouse is culpable for adultery? The answer to this question will be given in two parts.

The first reason is that the guilty spouse has already committed sexual immorality (*porneia*). Effectively, *porneia* in any form (as defined under Section III, point 2) is considered adultery against one's spouse. Therefore, the guilty spouse has become an adulterer or adulteress. This person's status as such will continue as long as he or she is involved in sexual relations outside of marriage or remains in a one-flesh union with someone other than his or her original spouse (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3). This is true while married, after a divorce or in an unsanctioned marriage. In other words, this person will be guilty of adultery until one of the following things occur:

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- Outside of marriage sexual immorality stops
- Within marriage
  - The original spouse dies
  - The subsequent spouse dies

Even if the guilty spouse and the subsequent spouse divorce, the guilty spouse is still guilty of adultery regarding the original spouse. This is because the guilty spouse continues to be in a continual one-flesh union with both spouses simultaneously, even after the divorce with the subsequent spouse. It is only after the death of the original or the subsequent spouse that the adultery will conclude.

The second reason is that, while death ends the one-flesh union, sexual immorality committed against one's spouse is of equal magnitude. In other words, as death separates a couple, so does sexual immorality. First Corinthians 6:15-16 gives insight:

<sup>15</sup> "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, 'THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.'"

When a guilty spouse commits sexual immorality with another, this individual is making his or her body a member of another. In this interlude the two become one flesh. As a result, the guilty spouse has violated the one-flesh union with his or her spouse. It is reasonable to assume that this infidelity and violation in and of itself is sufficient to end the one-flesh union with one's spouse.

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In such a case God allows the innocent spouse to remarry.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the guilty spouse who is culpable will be held accountable for his or her actions in accordance with the marriage covenant, vows and one-flesh union.

### 3. Divorce and Remarriage Before Salvation

What about Christians who were divorced and/or remarried before they became believers? Does their new life in Christ mean that a past divorce is no longer relevant to their current marital status?

When a divorced person becomes a follower of Jesus, his or her sin of divorce (the breaking of the marriage covenant and violating the marriage union) is forgiven. This is because the believer's new birth in Christ provides forgiveness of sins past, present and future (Col. 2:13), as well as a new beginning and new allegiance to Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Whereas the divorce is forgiven, if the person nonetheless is in an unsanctioned marriage, the person remains in a state of adultery until the death of his or her first spouse as has been previously discussed (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3). Further-

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<sup>20</sup> One difficulty is how many times immorality/unchastity needs to take place before a divorce is allowable. One time? Twenty-one times? Due to the fact that sexual immorality severs the one-flesh union the first time it occurs, it seems that one time is sufficient grounds for divorce. However, in the Old Testament God showed great restraint with Israel before divorcing and sending her away because of her prolonged, unrepentant infidelity (Jer. 3:2,6-8; cf. Hosea). He continually called her to repentance, but she refused to listen (Jer. 3:7). God's example demonstrates love and longsuffering, with the divorce occurring only when repentance was not forthcoming. Therefore, a major factor seems to be the actions of the offending spouse, if there is repentance or not. Though forgiveness is the ideal ("seventy times seven," Mat. 18:21-22; cf. vss. 23-35), there may be those situations where the offender desires to continue in sin making divorce inevitable. In each case the innocent spouse needs to look to God for wisdom concerning the appropriate thing to do.

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more, though the sin of remarriage is also forgiven, there will still be consequences resulting from his or her divorce and remarriage. This is because a believer's new birth does not negate the one-flesh union with a former spouse or the consequences of a divorce, and/or remarriage as if they had never occurred. Consequences will affect not only the individual, but also the former spouse, children, new spouse, etc. <sup>21</sup> (For further discussion on how to proceed in this situation, see the following section, point C below).

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<sup>21</sup> When Joshua brought Israel into the land of Canaan, some representatives of the Gibeonites from within the land came to him. These were a wicked race of people that Israel was to destroy. However, they deceptively came to Joshua to make peace by saying that they were from a distant land. Joshua made the mistake of not first inquiring of God, believed them, and made an unsanctioned covenant with them. As a result of this unsanctioned covenant, Israel faced negative consequences immediately and encountered others in future generations (Josh. 9; 2 Sam. 21:1-9). However, God recognized this covenant even 435 years later (2 Sam. 21:1), though it was unsanctioned and made deceptively. God expected Israel to honor the covenant they made before Him (Josh. 9:15-20). God too expects couples in unsanctioned marriages to be faithful to the covenant made when they entered marriage.

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## A. To Divorce

Healthy families are a key component to healthy churches and society. When families suffer and are divided by divorce, churches and society suffer and ultimately nations. <sup>22</sup> This is because divorce is destructive. This is one of the reasons why local churches must focus on strengthening marriages and families, beginning with its leaders. Churches needs to act, understanding who and what is at stake and embrace the biblical view of marriage, divorce and remarriage. They need to act and uphold God's principles!

Whereas many years ago divorce was not prevalent in the Church, sadly today that is no longer the case. The more that divorce is accepted in the world, the more it is being accepted within the Church. Therefore, the Church needs to be proactive in its approach to this problem, involving itself in such things as:

- Extensive premarital counseling for couples preparing to marry
- Marriage counseling for those whose marriages are in trouble
- Bible studies, marriage conferences and weekend retreats, etc., which promote marital health
- Sermon series which explain God's plan, purpose and design for marriage

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<sup>22</sup> See worldwide statistics: Divorce demography. (1 June 2020) In Wikipedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce\\_demography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce_demography); accessed 2 June 2020.

- Testimonials in church services from:
  - godly couples with good and long marriages to be examples to others
  - couples who have worked through difficult marital struggles to be examples to others
- Incorporating godly couples with good and long marriages in premarital and marriage counseling, and for mentoring newly married couples
- Providing marriage seminars, courses, and/or counseling for those in their community as an outreach to help strengthen marriages and families and introduce them to Christ

Church leaders cannot simply hope that the members of their church will not be negatively influenced by the world's practices. They need to be proactive and prayerfully take steps, working to prevent problems before they occur. As shepherds, they are to protect their sheep as the Apostle Paul made clear in Acts 20:28:

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

## **B. To People in the Church who are Divorced**

### 1. General Discussion

Sadly, for many divorced people their lives dramatically change, even if they are the innocent ones in the divorce. Friends may choose sides and may no longer contact them, or they somehow may become excluded from groups, events and gatherings. In other cases, their church may turn its back on them in subtle ways. Some may view them as if they have committed an unfor-

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giveable sin and are no longer acceptable. All of these things are tragic, especially considering what these people have already gone through.

As tragic as divorce is, it is the result of the hardness of man's heart. It is sin because a covenant has been broken, promises betrayed and relationships destroyed. Yet, it is not an unforgiveable sin. Jesus Himself accepted and forgave a prostitute (Luke 7:36-39, 48-50) and an adulteress (John 8:3-4, 10-11). He spoke to and revealed Himself as the Messiah to a woman who had had five husbands and was living in an adulterous relationship with a man who was not her husband (John 4:16-18, 25-26). God forgave David for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, forgoing the required death sentence for both crimes (Lev. 20:10; 24:17; 2 Sam. 12:13). Therefore, should the Church of Jesus Christ forgive those who are divorced? Yes, it should.

It is the responsibility of the church to help those in need. Paul exhorted the Galatians:

<sup>1</sup> "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:1-2)

Church leaders have the responsibility to help divorced people. They need to be a catalyst for reconciliation and determine what they need to do to bring about repentance. While doing this they need to take into account the part each person played both in the failed marriage and in the divorce (instigator or victim).

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In the case of the victim (the innocent spouse), the church needs to open its arms to those wounded by the divorce and help him or her through this very difficult time. In the case of the guilty spouse (the instigator), the church needs to help this individual understand the part he or she played and his or her need for repentance. The goal is reconciliation if possible, as well as restoring this person to the church as a growing, active and productive member. This too is also the goal of church discipline. As Matthew wrote, “if he listens to you, you have won your brother” (Mat. 18:15). This must be the church’s attitude toward those who have been divorced.

### 2. Specific Discussion

When helping an individual or couple who have gone through a divorce, understanding their behavior in the marriage and role in the divorce is necessary. It is important to remember that divorce is rarely only the fault of one of the spouses, though one or both may actually see themselves as innocent, or at least want to portray it that way (cf. Pro. 18:17). When working with them, church leaders need to prayerfully look at each individual in an unbiased manner to determine the best way in which to help each person. This is prudent in regard to discerning how to minister to each individual. Though the approach may be similar, it should have some different components.

#### a. Ministering to the Divorced

##### 1) The Innocent Spouse (steps of care and consolation)

For the innocent spouse in a divorce, a church needs to help this individual work through issues

related to the struggles of being betrayed and divorced. He or she needs to be cared for and consoled, possibly needing help working through such things as:

- Forgiving the former spouse and/or others who may have contributed to the circumstances which led to the divorce
- Personal pain resulting from the divorce
- Children's pain, feelings of being abandoned, or even feelings of guilt by blaming themselves as the reason for the divorce
- Personal issues which may have contributed to the divorce
- Reconciliation with the former spouse
- Financial needs resulting from the divorce
- Help make decisions and adjust to life without a spouse

### 2) The Guilty Spouse (steps of restoration)

In the case of a guilty spouse, a church may have to work through the following steps to restore this individual. This may be especially true before accepting them into church membership and before allowing him or her to serve in ministry.

#### a) Repentance without Regret

Helping the guilty spouse understand what he or she has done before God, as well as how it has negatively affected the innocent parties is important (cf. Luke 17:3; Mat. 3:8). Once the person understands this, the natural result should be a change in attitude and lifestyle which would reflect the realization of the

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sin committed. This would be a repentance without regret (2 Cor. 7:9-10). In other words, the individual would need to understand, acknowledge and be able to honestly and accurately verbalize what he or she did that was wrong, with the end result of living differently as an outcome of this process (2 Tim. 2:24-26). For example, the blame for his or her actions should not be placed upon others (such as the former spouse), but should instead acknowledge one's own part in the divorce. This was the case with King David. When he was brought to the point of the realization of his sin, he repented and placed the blame firmly upon himself (2 Sam. 12:13). Once true repentance takes place, there should be a clear conscience, a peaceful heart and no more struggling with regret as one strives to live in accordance with the will of God.

### b) Forgiveness

Whenever a person sins, the appropriate thing for the individual to do is seek forgiveness. Therefore, after true repentance forgiveness should immediately be sought, first from God (cf., Psa. 51:4; 1 John 1:9) and then from others (cf., Mat. 5:23-24), such as the former spouse, children, relatives and friends and anyone else affected, including the individual's church. Doing so will demonstrate true repentance.

### c) Reconciliation

After repentance and forgiveness take place, depending upon the individual's situation, reconciliation should follow (cf., Mat. 5:23-24). Romans 12:18 states, "If possible, so far as it depends on you,

be at peace with all men.” Therefore, this individual needs to seek reconciliation with his or her former spouse, children, relatives, friends, church, etc. The goal of this is to heal any broken relationships to the greatest extent possible and restore peace.

d) Restitution

Along with reconciliation, restitution may also need to be made. In other words, there may need to be financial or other types of compensation made as a result of the divorce. Some examples would be:

- child support – current and/or in arrears
- alimony payments – current and/or in arrears
- legal fees which the innocent spouse or others may have incurred due to the proceedings
- having taken advantage of a former spouse when dividing up property, possessions, etc.

This is another step in being at peace with all men and working at restoring one’s reputation while improving one’s character (cf. Luke 19:8; Lev. 6:1-5).

e) Living a Restored Life

It is a believer’s responsibility to live as salt and light in the world (Mat. 5:13-16). He is to live a life guided by the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:16), manifesting faith, hope and love (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13) as well as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Specifically, loving the “LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND” and “YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” are the greatest commandments (Mat. 22:36-40). Living this way will be a manifestation of one’s restored life.

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### b. Receiving Church Membership

For church membership to be granted, it is imperative that the above five points be met and continue to be lived out.

### c. Performing Ministry in the Church

A question some may have is whether a person who the guilty party in a divorce is disqualified from serving within the local church. The following are some issues to be considered:

#### 1) Disqualified from

It is clear from Paul's words to the Corinthians that believers can be disqualified from certain aspects of or positions within the local church (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27).

When looking at the qualifications for an elder (which includes the pastor and evangelist [church planter]; cf. Eph. 4:11) and a deacon, these men are to live above reproach, being men who are completely committed to their wives ("the husband of one wife," 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).<sup>23</sup> In the case of a guilty husband, the fact that he divorced his wife brings his character into question, showing that he is not living above reproach. If, however he is the innocent spouse, he should be allowed when he meets the requirements to one day serve as a deacon or an elder. However, there should be a long period of time for assessment to determine if he is qualified to serve in either of these positions. Paul warned about the choosing of elders in 1 Timothy 5:22, 24-25:

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<sup>23</sup> The phrase, "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6), is understood as a moral characteristic as the rest of the qualifications given for elders and deacons, and not as a marital status.

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<sup>22</sup> “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. <sup>24</sup> The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. <sup>25</sup> Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.”

In a case where the wife is the guilty spouse, she would not qualify to serve as a deaconess since a deaconess is to be “dignified,” or in other words, honorable, noble (1 Tim. 3:11). Having divorced her husband in an inappropriate manner would disqualify her from this position. However, if she is the innocent spouse, she should be allowed when she meets the requirements to one day serve as a deaconess.

The guilty spouse in a divorce should not be allowed to hold a leadership position in the local church. Even being a teacher would be questionable because a teacher is to be a person of respect and one who upholds the doctrine of the church. Again, there should be a long period of time for assessment to determine whether or not her or she should serve in these positions.

### 2) Qualified to do

The innocent spouse should be free to serve in the local church in areas for which he or she is qualified. In the case of a guilty spouse, church leaders will need to determine what this person can or cannot do once restoration has been realized. Since service is an important aspect of the Christian life, placing this person in a position of service after repentance is essential to his or her spiritual growth.

## **C. To Couples in the Church who are Remarried**

### 1. General Discussion

In the Bible remarriage is only allowed in three circumstances (death of a spouse, sexual immorality or remarriage to a former spouse). Therefore, how is a church to respond to couples who have been divorced and remarried for any reason other than the three which God permits? This is a complicated issue since upon remarriage such couples enter into a state of adultery. How then is a church to view and involve such a couple in its body and ministries?

One option would be to ask the couple to divorce and never marry again. Doing this would bring the adulterous state to a conclusion, but is this the best solution? To destroy another marriage and everything which accompanies it for the sake of ending the adulterous relationship does not seem wise. Also, since this couple is married, a marriage recognized by God, Jesus made it clear that, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." Even though the marriage is adulterous in nature, it is still a recognized marriage (See Section III, C, for further discussion). In addition, another divorce would be devastating to each person, and especially to any children involved.

Another option may simply be to not accept the couple into the church since they are in an adulterous state. However, a second marriage which is unsanctioned is in itself not an unforgiveable sin, though

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the couple's state of continual adultery is problematic. As mentioned earlier, a plausible solution to this issue is found in the life of King David and Bathsheba and their adulterous affair:

“Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.’”  
(2 Sam. 12:13)

When David was confronted with his sin and repented, Nathan's response was, “you shall not die.” According to the Law of Moses, death was the penalty for both David's and Bathsheba's adultery (Lev. 20:10) and for David's murder of Bathsheba's husband (Lev. 24:17). Yet though David was forgiven, and God blessed him as a result of His covenant with him (2 Sam. 7:8-16), there were many painful consequences for David's sin (2 Sam. 12:10-12). God will forgive a couple who truly seeks forgiveness as David did. This however does not change the fact that they remain in a state of continuous adultery until the death of one's spouse from the first marriage (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39).

What should a couple do in such a situation? Simply, as stated earlier, repent, seek forgiveness and reconciliation, make restitution, then move forward living a restored life. King David, after being confronted with his sin, repented, reestablished and continued on in his relationship with God in his duties as king. David prayed:

<sup>10</sup> “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of Your sal-

## THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

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vation And sustain me with a willing spirit. <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You.” (Psa. 51:10-13)

David understood that what he had done would have a bearing on his future, yet it was up to him to live for the Lord the rest of his life.

In the case of a couple living in conjugal adultery, church leaders need to make sure that the individuals are restored in their relationship to God (review subpoint B of this section). Then they, as any believer, need to live a growing, active and productive Christian life, being actively involved in their local church as their situation allows. They must understand that God continues to love them and only desires their best. As the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 1:6:

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

If therefore God never gives up on His children, then the local church should not give up on them either!

### 2. Specific Discussion

When helping a couple to be restored or a new couple who comes to the church desiring membership, a church needs to consider the principles of restoration given under Section IV, B, 2. This process of restoration should be utilized when restoring couples before giving them membership and before allowing them to serve in the local church.

## **D. To the Issue of Discipline for Divorce and Unsanctioned Remarriage**

### 1. Issues to Consider

When considering divorce and unsanctioned remarriage, should either of these sins be quantified as sins requiring church discipline?

What is the purpose of church discipline? “Church discipline is a process which is intended for the glory of God, for the health of the church, and for the restoration of the individual in sin. The question then is, “What sins and/or in what situations should the process of church discipline be initiated? The following principles will help in giving guidance in this matter:

1. The person's sin has the potential of negatively influencing the church if it is not addressed (1 Cor. 5:6-7)
2. The person's sin is habitual and considered a deed of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); wicked behavior (cf. 1 Cor. 5:13) which is completely unacceptable for believers (1 Cor. 5:11)
3. The person's sin is causing division in the body of Christ (Titus 3:10-11; cf. Gal. 5:20)
4. The person is leading an undisciplined life (2 Thes. 3:6-14; cf. 1 Tim. 5:8)

When a person is involved in sin, individuals or church leaders should evaluate the sin in light of these four principles. If the sin meets one or more of the criteria, then the church discipline process should be initiated.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hillebrand, R J. (2011). Building a Dynamic Church (2nd edition). Church Discipline. Oleksandriya, Ukraine. Digibook Press. (pg. 169).

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The problem with divorce is that it can be multifaceted and include such things as sexual immorality, abuse, hatred, disputes, lying, slander, etc. (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). These obviously are sins which can be associated with a divorce which should be disciplined. However, when a divorce is amicable, both parties being in agreement, is it a disciplinable offense?

When looking at the sins which Paul listed in 1 Corinthians 5:11 as disciplinable (“an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler”),<sup>25</sup> an amicable divorce does not fit this category of iniquity. The sins which Paul listed represent those which are practiced over a period of time; i.e., habitually. This is seen in Matthew 18:15-17 as well. If a brother sins, the believer who is aware of it should go and speak with him about it. If he repents, the matter is to be concluded. If he continues and does not repent, the process continues. In the case of divorce, it is a one-time act, a one-time sin. Therefore, should its penalty be the same as with habitual sin?

Another thing to consider is that if divorce is a disciplinable sin, then what would repentance look like for

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<sup>25</sup> Church discipline is to be initiated when any "so-called" brother is involved in a sin which needs correction (1 Cor. 5:11). Even if there is doubt whether a person is a true believer or not, if he claims to be a Christian and is involved in a type of sin which requires discipline, the church should discipline him. If on the other hand he does not claim to be a believer but is involved in a sin that would normally be disciplined, the church is not to discipline him. Instead the church needs to try to reach him with the gospel so that he will be saved and turn from his sin (1 Cor. 5:9-10, 12). If, however his sin is one that is negatively impacting the church (e.g., leading people away from the faith, attempting to lead people into sexual sin, causing division, etc.), he needs to be confronted about it. If he is still unwilling to stop practicing it, he may need to be asked to stop attending the church. The church needs to protect itself from those who would harm it as stated earlier (Acts 20:28-30). Ibid.

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the discipline to conclude? In other words, if a divorced person is put out of the church, what must this individual do to demonstrate repentance? If repentance can only be accomplished by means of reconciliation with one's spouse, what is to be done if this is not possible? Is this person then to be banished from the church and ministry for the rest of his or her life?

Another concern is if nothing is done. What does this say to the congregation? What does this say about marriage? For example, what if the divorced person is a church leader or someone who ministers in front of the congregation on a regular basis, such as a person who participates in leading worship? This person will then be a constant reminder of his or her divorce about which nothing was done. This is important because divorce is the act which separates two individuals from the union which God joined together. It is also a violation of the covenant and vows made at the marriage ceremony. It is a sin with ongoing consequences in many lives, even within the life of the church.

Lastly, can divorce have a potentially negative influence on the church (principle # 1 above) and potentially cause division in the church (principle # 3 above)? Yes, it can! These are difficult questions which church leaders must wrestle.

### 2. Analysis of the Issues

#### a. Pre-divorce

Should church discipline be implemented when a couple is contemplating divorce?

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The first course of action church leaders should pursue is to counsel the couple to help them work through their issues to reconcile. If through this process one or both are unwilling to be reconciled, and sexual immorality is not the reason the divorce is being pursued, the unwilling spouse(s) should be immediately removed from all church-related responsibilities. The reason for doing this is so that they can focus on their marriage and to help them understand the seriousness of their situation. In addition, depending upon an individual's attitude, church leaders may want to restrict them from taking communion if they feel that their participation would show disrespect to Christ and His table (1 Cor. 11:27-30). If one or both of the individuals are defiant concerning the church's involvement in its attempt to reconcile them, then church discipline may need to begin. "The church is a family (Eph. 2:19), and as such there are times when discipline needs to occur. Discipline in itself is not a bad thing. In reality it is an act of love for even God disciplines His children for their own good because He loves them (Heb. 12:4-11). His discipline is a form of training by which His children 'may share His holiness' and which yields 'the peaceful fruit of righteousness' (Heb. 12:10-11)." <sup>26</sup>

If sexual immorality is the reason for the divorce, then the church discipline process must commence immediately. The guilty party should without delay be removed from all church-related responsibilities and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

from partaking of communion as well. These things should occur because of his or her lack of obedience to the Lord and for acting treacherously against one's spouse (Mal. 2:14-16). The writer of Hebrews states, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

### b. Divorce

If a couple divorces unexpectedly without any knowledge of church leadership, what should be done? As stated earlier, divorce is not a habitual sin, but a one-time act.<sup>27</sup> Although this is true, it is a devastating sin which can negatively impact many with the results being felt for decades. It is a sin which can destroy lives and lead to adultery in an unsanctioned marriage.

The church's first response should be to seek reconciliation of the couple. They need to help them understand the gravity of what they have done, that divorce is sin, and forgiveness needs to be sought from

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<sup>27</sup> In 1 Corinthians 5, a related passage regarding church discipline, Paul wrote about a situation of sexual immorality. There he exhorted his readers not to allow leaven (sin) to spread throughout the church (vss. 6-8). From this and other passages it is observed that church discipline is to be carried out on those whose sin has the potential of negatively impacting the body of Christ. This is why Paul tells the Corinthians not to associate with any so-called believers who are involved in habitual sin, but to put them outside of the church (vss. 9, 11, 13). Accordingly, in Titus 3:10-11, a factious individual is to be "rejected" (to not associate with) [Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.], after just one or two warnings. This is a swifter process than Matthew 18. In 2 Thessalonians 3, verses 6 and 14, Paul tells the Thessalonian believers not to associate with church members who did not obey his instructions. Each of these situations had to do with habitual sin which could negatively impact the body of Christ. What about sin which does not have this potential? Such sin needs to be taken care of privately between the individuals involved (cf. Mat. 5:23-24; Gal. 6:1; 1 Pet 4:8; Jam. 5:19-20).

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God and others. If sexual immorality was not the cause of the divorce, then they should be informed that, according to the Bible, they are not to remarry except to one another (1 Cor. 7:10-11). Until the individuals come to repentance, they should also be removed from all ministry within the church and from participation in communion. As stated earlier, the goal of doing this is so that they can focus on repentance and possible reconciliation with one another. This is a time of reflection when they can contemplate what brought them to divorce and what needs to change in their lives, while also helping them understand the seriousness of their situation. Communion should be withheld due to their unrepentant hearts.

Even if repentance were to occur immediately, it is still prudent to have a specified period of time when the individuals are restricted from service and taking communion for the reasons stated above. Also, if nothing is done, it sends a message to those inside and outside of the church that marriage is not an important institution. It also says that divorce is an acceptable way out of a difficult marriage in contrast to working toward a resolution and keeping their marital vows. It further diminishes in the eyes of others the innate authority of the Word of God, that marriage is a God-ordained institution and union which no one is to separate. The church is the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), thus church leadership is to stand firmly behind biblical truth making sure that it is honored and obeyed. Allowing divorce without any

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consequence shows disrespect for the authority of God and His Word.

What then should repentance look like for a divorced individual? The answer is found in 2 Corinthians 7. Here Paul continues his discussion of a church discipline case which he previously spoke about in Chapter 2, verses 1-11. In 2 Corinthians 7:11, Paul gave seven characteristics of godly sorrow which leads to a repentance without regret. Such sorrow and repentance are in accordance with the will of God (vs. 10). This kind of repentance results in a clear conscience and a peaceful heart. Consequently, godly sorrow will produce:

1. earnestness – a diligent desire and haste (to resolve and reconcile, to make amends)
2. vindication of oneself – (GK, apologia) an eagerness to clear one’s name through making amends (cf. NIV, ESV)
3. indignation – a disgust and anger against what one has done (or not done, but should have)
4. fear – of God and His discipline for unrepentant behavior (Heb. 10:31)
5. longing – a desire to be reconciled
6. zeal – to do right (before God and man, Acts 24:16)
7. avenging of wrong – a readiness for justice to be administered for one’s inappropriate behavior (which brings closure and peace because just recompense has been made for the wrong done, knowing that justice was accomplished for the offended party, thus being “without regret”)

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A guilty spouse in a divorce must be brought to a place where these seven characteristics are evident in his or her life before God and before the individual's former spouse. This would also extend to one's children and others who were hurt by the divorce, such as one's church family. When this kind of sorrow is evident, the desire and main goal of this individual will be to correct the wrongs done and seek forgiveness. When this is accomplished, repentance without regret will be the end result. (For further discussion read "Characteristics of Worldly and Godly Sorrow" in the appendix).

Repentance does not necessarily mean that the couple will be remarried, or even that there will be reconciliation between them though this outcome is desired. What it does mean however is that the offender will have repented before God, and where possible before others. As a result, this individual will once again be right with God and others to the best of his or her ability. These actions correspond to Paul's desire in Acts 24:16, "In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men." It also means that the offender will work hard at reconciling with those who were hurt by his or her actions. This too is necessary, for Paul wrote in Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Once such repentance occurs, the goal has been accomplished.

By what means should church leaders work at bringing a divorced person to repentance? They should meet with the individual over a period of time,

explaining and exhorting from the Scriptures about his or her need to repent and agree with God. This person must understand that what he or she has done is in disobedience to God's will and that repentance is necessary. Until repentance is realized, participation in ministry and communion would not be allowed.

Divorce has the potential of negatively impacting the church. It can cause division and polarize people as they take sides. This is why church leaders must step up and manage the situation in accordance with its severity. As stated before, repentance without regret is the goal in each case. If the divorced person or couple is not actively causing division in the church as a result of their divorce, they do not need to be disciplined, but repentance must be sought and realized.

### c. Unsanctioned Remarriage

What about in the case of an unsanctioned remarriage? Should anything be done? When a couple enters an unsanctioned remarriage, they are doing so either out of ignorance or disobedience. In either case, there needs to be repentance without regret before God so that they can move forward in their walk with Christ, in their marriage and within the church.

Should a form of church discipline be imposed in such a situation? If there is repentance, it would still be prudent for church leaders to make their repentance known before the members of the church by having this couple:

- explain their situation
- discuss their journey to repentance

## THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

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- speak about their forgiveness from God
- express their desire to live a sanctified life

Doing so will help church members understand the couple's journey to repentance, that their marriage was not God's will and that repentance has taken place. However, until repentance is realized, the couple should not be allowed to serve in the church or receive communion. This is because they are living in an adulterous marriage which needs to be recognized and taken seriously. Although they may not want to go through this process, it is necessary and will be beneficial for them and for the church. Church leaders need to explain this to them, letting them know that they are doing this for their edification in Christ and so they can be productive members of the church.

# V. GUIDELINES FOR DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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The purpose of this section is to summarize biblical truth about marriage, divorce and remarriage in contrast to the rest of the book which provides detailed explanations of the various issues. These statements are categorized in two ways, by topics and themes. Core statements foundational to these issues precede these statements. Concluding this section are statements and a brief discussion about vows. They express the seriousness and importance of fulfilling one's vows to God.

## A. Guidelines: Core Statements

1. Marriage is between one biological male and one biological female – Gen. 2:21-24 (Gen. 2:21-24)
2. Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled for fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4)
3. From the beginning God never permitted divorce (Mat. 19:6-8; Mark 10:6-9)
4. Only death was ever meant to end a marriage (1 Cor. 7:39; cf. Rom. 7:2-3)
5. All marriages are joined together by God, and no one is to separate them (Mat. 19:6; Mark 10:9)
6. Adultery is committed when a divorced person marries another (exception: sexual immorality) (Mat. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:3)
7. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16)

## **B. Guidelines: Categorized by Topics**

### 1. Statements about God and Jesus

- a. God is the designer and creator of marriage (cf. Gen. 2:20-24)
- b. God is the one who joins together a man and woman in marriage (Mat. 19:9; Mark 10:9)
- c. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16)
- d. God's perfect will is that divorce never occurs (Mat. 19:8; Mark 10:6-9)
- e. God is a witness of the marriage relationship and warns not to violate one's marriage covenant (Mal. 2:14, 16)
- f. Jesus commands married couples not to divorce (Mat. 19:6; Mark 10:9; cf. 1 Cor. 7:10-11)
- g. God holds married couples accountable to their vows until death (exception: sexual immorality) (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3; cf. Mat. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18)

### 2. Statements about Marriage

- a. Marriage is a covenant between a husband and wife (Mal. 2:14)
- b. Marriage is the means by which God joins a man and woman together as husband and wife (Mat. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9; cf. Rom. 7:2)
- c. When joined together, a husband and wife enter a continuous one-flesh union resulting from the consummation of their marriage (Mat. 19:5; Mark 10:8; cf. 1 Cor. 6:16; Gen. 2:20-24)
- d. The termination of the marriage covenant and the one-flesh union only occurs after the death of a spouse (exception: sexual immorality) (1 Cor. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39)

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- e. A believer should remain married to an unbeliever as long as the unbelieving spouse consents to this union (exception: sexual immorality) (1 Cor. 7:12-13)

### 3. Statements about Divorce

- a. No man is to separate what God has joined together (Mat. 19:6; Mark 10:9)  
[Note: By any means such as inciting estrangement; through divorce; by defilement of the marriage bed (Heb. 13:4), etc.]
- b. A husband or wife is not to act treacherously (Heb., נִבְזָה, bagad, deceitfully, faithlessly) against his or her spouse by violating his or her marriage covenant through divorce (Mal. 2:15)
- c. The only condition allowable for divorce is when one's spouse commits sexual immorality (Mat. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18)
- d. The divorce of one's spouse (exception: sexual immorality) is a stumbling block and catalyst for the other spouse to remarry, thereby entering into an adulterous marriage (Mat. 5:32)
- e. A believer is not to divorce his or her spouse because he or she is an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:12-13)
- f. A believer who is abandoned by an unbelieving spouse is to accept the divorce peaceably (1 Cor. 7:15-16; cf. Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Thes. 5:15). (Note: abandonment is not an exception for remarriage as in the case of sexual immorality (1 Cor. 7:10-11, 27))
- g. A divorced person should remain unmarried unless this individual remarries his or her former spouse (exception: sexual immorality) (1 Cor. 7:10-11)

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### 4. Statements about Remarriage

- a. Everyone who divorces and remarries commits adultery (exception: sexual immorality and remarriage to one's former spouse) (Mat. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:3)
- b. Everyone who marries a divorced person commits adultery (exception: sexual immorality) (Mat. 5:32; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:3)
- c. A person who is divorced must not remarry except to one's former spouse (exception: sexual immorality) (1 Cor. 7:10-11, 27)
- d. If a marriage ends as the result of sexual immorality, the guilty spouse is not to remarry except to his or her former spouse; otherwise he or she is committing adultery (Mat. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; cf. 1 Cor. 7:10-11, 27)
- e. In the case when an unbelieving spouse divorces a believing spouse (abandonment), the believing spouse can only remarry the former spouse (1 Cor. 7:10-11) (exception: sexual immorality) (Mat. 19:6, 9; 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3). (For further discussion see Section III, B, 1, a.)
- f. An innocent spouse whose spouse committed sexual immorality is allowed to remarry (Mat. 5:32; 19:9)
- g. If a divorce occurs for any reason other than sexual immorality, and one of the spouses commits sexual immorality or remarries thereafter, adultery has been committed thus freeing the other spouse to remarry (Mat. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18)
- h. A person can remarry after the death of his or her original spouse, this is true even for a guilty spouse

who caused the original marriage to fail (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3; cf. Lev. 18:18)

- i. If already remarried, if the original spouse dies, the guilty spouse no longer continues to be guilty of adultery in the new marriage (cf. Rom. 7:3)

## **C. Guidelines: Categorized by Themes**

### 1. New Testament Guidelines – 1 Corinthians 7

#### a. Unmarried Believers and Widowed Believers

- 1) It is good to remain unmarried to be concerned about the things of the Lord (vss. 8, 32)
- 2) If, however a believer burns with passion, it is better to marry, but only to another believer (vss. 9, 39)

#### b. Believing Husbands and Wives

- 1) Believers are not to divorce one another (vss. 10-11)
- 2) If they do divorce, they are not to remarry (vss. 10-11)
- 3) If they desire to remarry, they can only remarry one another (vss. 10-11)

#### c. Believers with Unbelieving Spouses (See Section III, B, 1, for further discussion)

- 1) If a believer's unbelieving spouse desires to live with him or her, then he or she is to remain married (this being a benefit to the believer's spouse and children) (vss. 12-14)
- 2) If a believer's unbelieving spouse desires to divorce ("leave"), the believer is to allow him or her to leave, for God has called believers to live in peace (vs. 15).

## GUIDELINES FOR DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

However, in this situation the believing spouse is not free to remarry (Mat. 19:6, 9; 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3) except to the former spouse

- 3) If a believer's unbelieving spouse leaves, the believer is free from remaining in the marriage ("not under bondage," cf. vs. 11) (vss. 15,39)
- 4) If a believer's unbelieving spouse wants a divorce, the believer is not to worry about keeping the marriage together for the sake of the unbelieving spouse's salvation, for the believer has no way of knowing whether he or she will be saved (vs. 16)

### 2. Exceptive Clause

("except for immorality")<sup>28</sup> – Matthew 5:32; 19:9

(See Section III, A, 2, for further discussion)

- a. If one spouse is involved in sexual immorality, the innocent spouse may divorce the guilty spouse and remarry (5:32; 19:9)
- b. If a couple divorces for any reason other than sexual immorality, and either of them remarry someone other than his or her former spouse, this person and his or her new spouse are guilty of adultery (5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18)
- c. If a couple divorces for any reason other than sexual immorality, and one of them remarries someone else, his or her former spouse is now free to remarry

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<sup>28</sup> The words expressed in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 as unchastity and immorality come from the same Greek word *porneia*. This word expresses any illicit sexual misconduct, including such things as adultery, homosexuality, sodomy, bestiality, incest, prostitution, orgies and any other sexual perversions (cf. Lev. 18, 20). It is broader in scope than the word "adultery" (Gk., *moicheia*), which is voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than his or her spouse.

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because the one who remarried has committed adultery by the act of remarrying (5:32; 19:9)

- d. A spouse who initiates divorce other than for sexual immorality is a catalyst and therefore a stumbling block for his or her spouse to commit adultery since this individual's next marriage would be adulterous in nature (Mat. 5:32; Luke 17:1)  
(For further discussion on this topic see, "The Exceptive Clause" in the appendix.)

### 3. Death – Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39

(See Section III, A, 1, for further discussion)

- a. If one spouse dies, the other is free to remarry (vss. 2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39)
- b. If the innocent spouse dies, the guilty spouse is free to remarry; or if already remarried, no longer continues to be guilty of adultery in the new marriage (cf. vs. 3)

### 4. Believers who are Remarried

to Someone Other than a Prior Spouse

(See Section IV, C, 2, a, for further discussion)

- a. Divorced after Salvation Occurred
  - 1) This believer needs to honestly evaluate his or her situation and conduct oneself in accordance with Sections II and III
  - 2) After honestly evaluating his or her situation, he or she needs to consider what the Scriptures say to do and then do it (which may include seeking forgiveness from God, his or her former spouse, children, etc.)
  - 3) If the believer is remarried, he or she needs to stay faithful to the new spouse and live for Christ

## GUIDELINES FOR DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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- 4) If the believer is divorced again, then he or she needs to conduct oneself in accordance with Sections II and III
- b. Divorced before Salvation Occurred (See Section III, C, 3, for further discussion)
  - 1) If the believer was divorced while an unbeliever and has not remarried, then he or she needs to honestly evaluate his or her situation and conduct oneself in accordance with Sections II and III
  - 2) If the believer is remarried, then he or she needs to conduct oneself in accordance with Sections II and III
  - 3) If the believer is currently remarried, he or she needs to stay faithful to his or her new spouse and live for Christ
  - 4) If the believer is divorced again, then he or she needs to conduct oneself in accordance with Sections II and III

### **D. Guidelines: Vows**

In the eyes of God, a vow is always to be fulfilled (Num. 30:1-2; Deut. 23:23; Eccl. 5:4-5). The one who does not fulfill it is sinning and committing evil (Deut. 23:21-22; Mat. 5:37) and subject to judgment (Jam. 5:12; cf. 1 Tim. 5:12). Regarding the marriage vow, God's decree from the beginning (Mat. 19:8; Mark 10:6-9) is that only the death of a spouse can terminate this bond (1 Cor. 7:39; cf. Rom. 7:2-3). Beyond this only one condition is allowable for terminating a marriage, which is when one's spouse commits sexual immorality (Mat. 5:32; 19:9).

Furthermore, when a marriage vow is not fulfilled, whoever violates it will be held accountable because the vow remains in effect until the death of one of the spouses. Consequently, except in the case of sexual immorality, when a violator enters into another sexual union, either outside of marriage or in a new marital relationship, this individual is committing adultery with the new sexual partner; both are guilty.

1. God commanded that a person who makes a vow is not to violate it, but to do according to all that proceeded from one's mouth; to not do so is the deed of a fool (Num. 30:1-2; Deut. 23:23; Eccl. 5:4-5)
2. Vows are not necessary when a person fulfills his or her words (making one's yes, yes and no, no) (Mat. 5:33-37; Deut. 23:22)
3. Not keeping one's word is sinful and evil (Deut. 23:21-22; Mat. 5:37)
4. Vows made under false pretenses are still recognized as valid by God (Josh. 9:1-9, 15, 19; 2 Sam. 21:1-3,6)
5. A person who does not fulfill a vow which he or she made will be subject to judgment (Jam. 5:12; cf. 1 Tim. 5:12)

## **E. Guidelines: Concluding Remarks**

Marriage is an instrument of God for teaching, shaping and molding married couples. God in His sovereignty and providence has a purpose in what He decrees. Thus, He desires that couples through their marriage grow in sanctification (cf. 1 Thes. 4:1-7), persevere in trials

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(Jam. 1:2-4) and not divorce when things become difficult. Even in the case of sexual immorality where divorce is allowable due to the violation of the marriage bond, covenant and one-flesh union, forgiveness and reconciliation is the preferred biblical response. This is God's desire (Eph. 4:32; 1 Pet. 4:8; cf. Mat. 18:21-35). In addition, because marriage is a picture of the sacred union between Christ and His Church, it is not to be broken.

# CONCLUSION

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While reading this book some of you may have had the same thoughts which I had while writing this book. Maybe you wondered, “Where is God’s grace in conjunction with these issues? Why are the guidelines given in the Bible so strict, seemingly hard and without compassion, showing a lack of understanding for people and their situations? So many find themselves in miserable marriages or on the other side of a horrific divorce. Are they to live without hope and remain confined to a miserable existence either in a bad marriage or divorced without the hope of remarriage? Is this really what God demands?”

One thing we know is that, “The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22-23). God is a compassionate God who sees and knows everything, all that we go through each and every day (Psa. 139:1-12). He does not want people to be suffering in their marriages or as a result of divorce. We are fallen beings who live in a fallen world which brings suffering and pain, yet God is here with us, understanding and giving grace which is sufficient for each and every situation. Jesus said to the Apostle Paul, “... ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’” Paul responded, “Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:9-10). Paul was a person who did not have an easy life as the New Testament clearly demonstrates. However, in all he faced

he found the grace of Christ sufficient. Christ was the one to whom he looked and in whom he found strength, not to man, nor himself nor his circumstances (Php. 4:11-13).

God as our designer and creator knows what is best for us. If we can understand, believe and trust Him, this will help us accept what He has declared about all things. What God has determined about marriage, divorce and remarriage is in and of itself His display of grace. It displays His grace in that what He has decided is what is best for us. This is grace. Our problem is that we live in a world where there are so many different messages which contradict the Bible. This too is true of marriage, divorce and remarriage which makes it hard to distinguish the voice of God over the voice of the world. When we add to that our own flesh and its desires, it makes it even more difficult to accept what God says is best. To help us hear the voice of God we need to remember that God hates divorce. We also need to remember that He is the one who established marriage and the one-flesh union; therefore, it is His desire that what He has joined together no one separate.

Couples who are struggling in their marriages, as well as those who counsel them, should view their struggle from the perspective of the book of James, Chapter One. A difficult marriage is not something to escape from but should be viewed as an opportunity to mature and grow in Christlikeness. Trials, including struggles in marriage, are designed by God to make His children more “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jam. 1:4). They are instruments which God uses to shape a couple to make them more mature. Because marriage consists of two imperfect people who sin, there will be trials, disagreements, compromises, adjustments, need for submission

and humility, etc. Therefore, the end result of years of marriage (i.e., if a couple works through the many difficulties that married life brings) should be personal growth, wisdom, and a greater manifestation of the character qualities of Jesus. When counseling a couple with marriage problems, pastors should encourage them to focus on perseverance and not on divorce, on self-sacrifice and not on self-gratification, on maturity and not on maintaining the status quo. They also need to help them work on changing themselves with the help of Christ and not just try to change each other. Such a couple needs to understand that God desires them to work through their difficulties and move forward in order to receive the rewards earned for doing so (Jam. 1:2-5,12).

Divorce is not an unforgivable sin, however it does have negative consequences to the divorced couple, to any children involved, to their relatives, society as a whole, and to anyone they may marry following their divorce. Not surprisingly, multiple marriages statistically have higher rates of divorce. This is why it is so important for churches to help strengthen marriages in their midst so that they will thrive and not tragically end in divorce. Preparing couples before marriage with premarital counseling is a key component. It is also vital to ensure that both people planning to be married are true believers. Providing Bible studies, marriage seminars, sermons, counseling, etc., are also important in strengthening marriages. Churches also need to have a biblical policy regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage which they teach to their members so they can understand this very complicated issue. By receiving training in marriage counseling and reading books on the topic, pastors can become more effective in helping struggling marriages. Families are key components in the life

of a church and in society; and if they are not healthy, churches nor their society will be either.

As God's Word and His standards are lifted up, His truth will help strengthen the marriages of your church, thereby strengthening your church as well. May God bless you and fill you with His grace in your work as a pillar and support of God's truth.



# APPENDIX

# THE EXCEPTIVE CLAUSE

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**T**he exceptive clause – “except for the reason of unchastity” (Mat. 5:32) and “except for immorality” (Mat. 19:9) – is debated. Since this clause is not found in Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:14-18, some believe that the texts in Matthew’s gospel refer to the betrothal period while Mark and Luke’s refer to marriage. This view states that since God hates divorce, He does not allow married couples to divorce for any reason; therefore, the exceptive clause could only be for those who are betrothed. In the Old and New Testaments when a couple was betrothed, it was viewed as if they were already married though the marriage had not yet been consummated. A married woman caught in the act of adultery was to be killed (Lev. 20:10), as was with the woman who was betrothed (Deut. 22:23-24), for she was considered to be a wife (Gen. 29:21; Jud. 14-15:2; Deut. 22:23-24; Mat. 1:18-19; Luke 1:27). However, in our day and age in most cultures the betrothal period is not viewed as having the same significance as during the time of Christ (i.e., the woman already being viewed as a wife).

Besides the betrothal view, another view is that since Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience, he included the exceptive clause whereas Mark who wrote to a Roman audience and Luke to a Greek audience did not. The thought is that Matthew added it because he desired to answer the contemporary debate surrounding Deuteronomy 24:1-4 about divorce and remarriage (for further information on this debate see “Deuteronomy 24:1-4” in the appendix). On the contrary, since the Gentiles were

not familiar with the Law, it would have been irrelevant to them.<sup>29</sup> Although this is possible, the following analysis will consider each passage within its context.

### Matthew 5:32

Matthew 5:32 is located in the larger context of the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5-7) where Jesus established a higher standard than to what His audience was accustomed. This was a standard higher than the standard established by the Scribes and Pharisees (5:20). Jesus taught, “You have heard” ... “But I say to you” (5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44), and “When” ... “But” (6:2-3, 5-6, 16-18). This pattern is clearly seen when Jesus taught on the topics of adultery (“You have heard”... “but I say,” 5:27-30) and divorce and remarriage (“It was said”...“but I say,” 5:31-32). Therefore, within context of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus included the exceptive clause to establish the proper standard. This standard was higher and more comprehensive than what the Jews understood according to Deuteronomy 24:1.

### Luke 16:14-18

The reason Jesus did not include the exceptive clause in Luke 16 is because the topic of divorce and remarriage was not the focus of the discussion. To understand the reason why Jesus brought up the issue of divorce and remarriage, one needs to look at the previous context, verses 1-13.

In these verses Jesus taught on the topic of using one’s wealth for the purpose of the kingdom. The Pharisees who were listening to Jesus were lovers of money

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<sup>29</sup> Feinberg, J.S. and Feinberg, P.D. Ethics For A Brave new World. Divorce and Remarriage (II). Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois. 1993. (pg. 337).

and were scoffing at Him because of His teachings (vs. 14). Jesus then rebuked them by saying, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men” (vs. 15), as those who are trying to force their way into the kingdom of God (vs. 16). Yet clearly this would not be possible because the Law will not fail (not even “one stroke of a letter,” vs. 17). This latter point was important because the Pharisees were falling short of the Law. Jesus had already made this point by showing them that they were lovers of money. Then, as He concluded, He made His point even clearer by stating, “Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery” (vs. 18). The Seventh of the Ten Commandments says, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exo. 20:14). Jesus is letting them know that this is exactly what they were doing, something which was detestable to God (vs. 15). In other words, though they may be able to justify their godless behavior before men, they would not be able to do so when judged by God according to the Law. Therefore, they would not be able to force their way into the kingdom of God.

This then is the reason why the exceptive clause is not given in Luke 16:18. It had nothing to do with Jesus’ main point to the Pharisees, only that they as teachers of the Law were guilty of it. Thus, Jesus was not answering a question about divorce and remarriage as He was in Matthew 19:3-9 and Mark 10:1-12.

#### Matthew 19:3-9 and Mark 10:1-12

When comparing Matthew 19:3-9 with Mark 10:1-12, it is clear that they are parallel accounts though not identical (analysis shows their content is 86% identical.)

Why then did Matthew and Mark record the same event although not identically? The simplest explanation is that they were teaching two different aspects of the same truth to their readers which will be demonstrated.

In both texts the Pharisees came testing Jesus, asking if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus responds the same way in both accounts, referring to Genesis 2:22-24 and stating that what God has joined together no man is to separate. Jesus and the Pharisees then discussed why Moses allowed divorce, this being because of the hardness of man's heart. It is at this point that the passages diverge. In Matthew 19 the text ends with Jesus giving the exceptive clause ("except for immorality," vs. 9), whereas Mark 10 ends with the clause excluded (vss. 10-12). The reason for this can be found in the opening portions of each of the texts. (The text in boldface have been added for emphasis.)

◦ **Mark 10:2**

Question: Some Pharisees questioned  
Jesus "whether it was **lawful** for a man  
to divorce a wife"

Answer: No, it was **not lawful**, for the one who  
divorces and remarries commits adultery  
(Mark 10:11-12)

◦ **Matthew 19:3**

Question: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce  
his wife for **any reason at all?**"

Answer: Yes, for **immorality** (Mat. 19:9)

In Mark 10:2 the Pharisees asked Jesus whether divorce was **lawful**, whereas in Matthew 19:3 they asked if divorce was lawful **for any reason at all?** While Mark's passage is focused on the lawfulness of divorce,

Matthew focused on reasons for divorce. Could the difference be that Matthew wrote to Jews and Mark to Romans? This is possible. Two issues now need to be considered.

First, under inspiration Matthew and Mark were addressing two different aspects of the same issue while both referencing the same event. Second, whereas Matthew wrote about an issue in which the Jews would want clarification, Mark wrote about an issue in which the Romans would want clarification.

Regarding Matthew, the Pharisees were interested in the Hillel and Shammai debate based upon Deuteronomy 24, wanting to know the reasons for divorce (“he has found **some** indecency in her” (emphasis added) (For further discussion see the earlier section III, A, 2 and the section titled, “Deuteronomy 24:1-4,” in the appendix.) Regarding Mark’s exclusion, because Roman law was a bedrock of Roman society,<sup>30</sup> the need to understand the legal aspect of divorce would have been of great importance to them. Therefore, these are feasible reasons why Matthew records the exceptive clause and Mark does not.

In summary, the exceptive clause provides the correct, proper and only lawful reason why a person can legitimately divorce and remarry another.

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<sup>30</sup> “Roman law was the legal system of ancient Rome, including the legal developments spanning over a thousand years of jurisprudence...Roman law forms the basic framework for civil law, the most widely used legal system today, and the terms are sometimes used synonymously. The historical importance of Roman law is reflected by the continued use of Latin legal terminology in many legal systems influenced by it, including common law.” (Roman Law. (21 April 2020) In Wikipedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_law); accessed 2 June 2020.)

# DEUTERONOMY 24:1-4

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## Context Discussed

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is the only text in the Old Testament which address the topic of divorce and remarriage. A few passages refer to divorce only (Deut. 22:13-19, 28-29; Mal. 2:16). Consequently, this was the key text which the Jews focused upon when trying to understand these issues during the time of Christ. The text states:

- <sup>1</sup> “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house,
- <sup>2</sup> and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife,
- <sup>3</sup> and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his *wife*,
- <sup>4</sup> *then* her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.”

Explicitly, verse 1 became the main focus from this text. This is the verse the Pharisees were referring to in Matthew 19:3, 7 and Mark 10:2-4 which is why Jesus also referred to it in His discussion with them. It is however important to understand verse 1 in the context of the overall passage.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is a statement about holiness. Simply stated, a man who divorced his wife could not remarry her after she was married to another man who either divorced her or died. Remarrying the first husband was not allowed because she had been “defiled”

(“polluted,” Jer. 3:1) by her second husband. Jeremiah 3:1 makes this point clearly:

“God says, ‘If a husband divorces his wife  
And she goes from him  
And belongs to another man,  
Will he still return to her?’

**Will not that land be completely polluted?**

But you are a harlot with many lovers;  
Yet you turn to Me,’ declares the Lord.”

(emphasis added)

After having been in a one-flesh relationship with her husband (cf. Gen. 2:24), for a wife to return to him after another man had her would have been an abomination. By her having had sexual relations with the second husband, he would have polluted her, defiling what once belonged to the previous husband. This would cause her to be unacceptable and unclean to him because the Jews were to be holy (cf. Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2). Again, the main issue of these verses was not divorce and remarriage; it was a regulation of the process of divorce and remarriage in regard to the first husband.

From this passage the following can be observed about divorce and remarriage:

1. A man could write his wife a certificate of divorce if he found some indecency in her (which was not defined, this being the reason for the debate) (vs. 1)
2. After writing the divorce decree he would send her from his home (vs. 1)
3. After the divorce she could remarry (though not stated, it is implied he could as well) (vs. 2)
4. If her second husband divorced her or died, the first husband could not remarry her because she had been defiled (vss. 3-4)

This is the extent of what can be gleaned on divorce and remarriage from this passage.

The main question then is, “What does the word “indecenty” mean in this context?” This is important to understand so that the grounds upon which Moses gave men the right to divorce their wives could be understood.

The word “indecenty” in Deuteronomy 24:1 has a sexual connotation, though it does not refer to any of the following sexual sins:

- Adultery (Lev. 20:10)
- Homosexuality (Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27, 32)
- Incest (Lev. 20:12)
- Bestiality (Exo. 22:19; Lev. 18:23, 29; 20:15-16)

This is obvious because whoever committed any of these sins was to be put to death. Therefore, the meaning must be different.

The word “indecenty” comes from the Hebrew word meaning “genitals,” specifically those of a woman. In context, the woman was probably involved in some type of inappropriate behavior, maybe exposing her nakedness in an improper way (e.g., her genitals, her body or parts of it) to someone other than her husband. Although the “indecenty” is not specified, whatever it was, her husband found it shameful. Possibly the indecenty was not specified in order to allow personal leeway in the application of this verse.

However, over the centuries since the writing of this text it is not surprising, considering the condition of man’s heart, that the word “indecenty” evolved. Its meaning deteriorated from a sexual inappropriateness to almost any offense, no matter how insignificant, for which a husband would desire to divorce his wife. Gordon Wenham in his book, “Divorce in First-Century Judaism and the New Testament,” wrote:

“Brewer argues that divorce for any cause was an innovation of first-century Hillelites. The evidence of the ancient Near East and the Old Testament on the other hand shows it was a very ancient practice. This is also the implication of the first-century Jewish writers Philo and Josephus: the latter says a man may divorce his wife ‘for whatever cause’. Amram in *The Jewish Law of Divorce* says ‘This ancient right of the husband, to divorce his wife at his pleasure, is the central thought in the entire system of Jewish divorce law.’ Illustrations of this from the Hillelite school include ‘He may divorce her even if she spoiled a dish for him... R. Akiba says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, “And it shall be if she find no favour in his eyes.”’<sup>31</sup>

The reason for its deterioration may simply be due to the hardness of man’s heart (cf. Mat. 19:8; Mark 10:5). If the hearts of the Jewish people had been circumcised (cf. Jer. 4:4; 9:26) and pliable, desiring to obey God’s will, they would not have focused on this verse during the time of Christ. Rather than of looking for ways to justify a divorce, they would have instead focused on Malachi 2:16, “For I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel.” Rather, they focused on what they perceived as an exception available in the Law – that a man could write his wife a certificate of divorce if he found any indecency in her.

The treacherous act of divorce (Mal. 2:16), according to Jesus, was never meant to occur (Mat. 19:8). When the Pharisees asked Jesus, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” (Mat. 19:3, emphasis added), “No, except for immorality,” was His answer.

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Whennen, *WiseReaction*; “Divorce in First-Century Judaism and the New Testament,” page 3; [http://www.wisereaction.org/ebooks/wenham\\_divorce\\_first.pdf](http://www.wisereaction.org/ebooks/wenham_divorce_first.pdf); accessed 2 June 2020.

# FIRST CORINTHIANS

## 6:12-20

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First Corinthians 6:12-20 is an important passage regarding insights into the sexual union and sexual immorality. This is helpful in understanding the issues related to the topics of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Its interpretation however is not without difficulties.

Christian liberty was an issue Paul addressed several times with the Corinthians in his first epistle to them. He addressed this topic in Chapters 6, 8 and 10. In Chapter 6 Paul's main focus was on liberty regarding the sexual union. In Chapters 8 and 10 his focus was on food sacrificed to idols and not letting what one eats be a stumbling block to other believers.

Keeping this in mind, Paul began his discussions on Christian liberty in Chapters 6 and 10 with the same argument, though with a slight variation. In Chapter 6, verse 12 Paul wrote:

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”

Then in Chapter 10, verse 23 he wrote:

“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

These are complementary verses which teach that not all things which a believer might involve himself in are profitable or edify, and that nothing should ever be master of a believer, with the exception of Christ.

When comparing the first phrase of 1 Corinthians 6:12 in the American Bible translations NASB and ESV, a variation in punctuation is observed.

NASB All things are lawful for me

ESV “All things are lawful for me”

This same variation is seen in Chapter 10, verse 23. In the ESV, quotation marks have been added to this phrase, showing that Paul was quoting. In the NASB, the lack of quotation marks implies that these were the words of Paul. This difference is again seen in verse 13.

NASB Food is for the stomach  
and the stomach is for food

ESV “Food is meant for the stomach  
and the stomach for food”

Therefore, could these statements be idioms or slogans which some within the Corinthian church believed, which they would repeat, or are they the exclusive words of Paul?

When considering the abruptness with which Paul began this portion of Chapter 6 and that he immediately qualified the two statements after he made them, it seems unlikely that they were Paul’s words. An obvious explanation could be that since he opened his discussion this way, he was stating and then challenging what some in the Corinthian church believed. Fee observed:

“As in the preceding two sections, Paul comes out swinging. In contrast to those sections, however, he does not begin by attacking their illicit behavior directly; rather, he confronts the theology on which that behavior is predicated. The clause ‘everything is permissible for me’ is almost certainly a Corinthian theological slogan. This is confirmed by the way Paul cites it again later (10:23); in both cases he qualifies it so sharply as to negate it—at least as a theological absolute.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Fee, G. D. “New International Commentary on the New Testament, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition.” Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. (pg. 278).

This distinction is noteworthy for Paul referenced these two slogans to alert his audience that erroneous thinking is a catalyst for theological error. Theological error then is a catalyst for improper behavior. Improper behavior leads to a carnal lifestyle. Thus, Paul qualified their statements so that they would be understood within a correct theological framework.

When trying to understand the slogan in verses 12, it is important to define how comprehensive the phrase, “all things,” was likely understood by some of the Corinthian believers. Did this include sinful activities such as fornication which this passage addresses or not? Maybe it referred to just all things which are not sinful, but lawful. Or perhaps it denotes all things which the Law prohibited; things of which believers who were no longer under the Law were no longer constrained.<sup>33</sup>

Since the majority of the Corinthians were Romans who had not been under the Law of Moses, no longer being constrained by the Law does not seem a plausible explanation. If the view is correct that “all things” included sinful activity, then why did Paul simply not disagree with the statement directly? A reasonable conclusion would be that Paul was agreeing with the fact that all things which are not sinful are lawful, however within limits, thus the reason for his qualifying statements.

Paul did not want the Corinthians living recklessly and immorally. However, although the slogan, “all things are lawful for me,” did not refer to sinful activity, nonetheless this slogan was a steppingstone which led to

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<sup>33</sup> Fee, G. D. “New International Commentary on the New Testament, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition.” Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. (pg. 278).

indulging oneself in inappropriate behavior, that of sexual immorality (vss. 13, 15-16). Thus, Paul showed how this slogan and the one following in verse 13 had led them to this false conclusion. Consequently, Paul made it clear in verse 12 that not all permissible things are profitable and should never master them. Anything, even good things, taken to an extreme generally does not contribute to spiritual health.

As Paul made his next point in verse 13, he again quoted another Corinthian slogan, this time regarding food.<sup>34</sup> Christian liberty regarding food was another matter which Paul had to address three times in this letter (Chapters 8, 10 and 11). The slogan, “food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food,” Paul did not disagree with. Yet, as in verse 12, he again qualified this statement with the fact that God will do away with both of them.<sup>35</sup> Again, this statement in and of itself was not a problem, but how some understood and applied this slogan in conjunction with the statement in verse 12 was.

What does Christian liberty and food have to do with sexual immorality? Needing to qualify these two presuppositions as not being theological absolutes, Paul used them to show an underlying flaw in their reasoning. It was this flaw which led some to a troubling pattern of self-cen-

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<sup>34</sup> As stated earlier, Gordon D. Fee holds this view (Fee, G. D. “New International Commentary on the New Testament, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition.” Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. (pgs. 278-283); David K. Lowery (Lowery, D. K. (1985). 1 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) and other commentators do as well.

<sup>35</sup> The stomach and food will not be relevant for future existence – they are for the present age. However, it seems that in eternity the new body will have the ability to eat as Jesus ate fish after receiving His resurrected body, and the believer’s body will be like His (1 John 3:3; Php. 3:21). Also, there will be a marriage supper of the Lamb at which the bride of Christ – the Church – with resurrected bodies will be present, indicating that food will be eaten at this meal (Rev. 19:6-9).

tered behavior inside the church.<sup>36</sup> Thus, whereas in verse 12 he demonstrated a flaw in their presupposition, in verse 13 he illustrated it.

Vs. 12 FLAW:

All things are lawful for me **THUS** I can do as I please  
Qualifiers: But not all things are profitable  
I will not be mastered by anything

Vs. 13 ILLUSTRATION:

Food is for the stomach and **THUS** I can fulfill bodily urges  
the stomach is for food  
Qualifier: But God will do away with both of them

LOGICAL PROPOSITION BASED UPON VERSES 13, 15 AND 16:

*Sex is for the body and the* **THUS** I can fulfill sexual urges  
*body is for sex* with a prostitute

Qualifier: Yet, the body is not for immorality,  
but for the Lord... (vs. 13)

Yet, although all things are lawful, and food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord. Commenting on Paul's argument Lowery wrote:

“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food was another slogan by which some Corinthians sought to justify their immorality. They reasoned that “food” was both pleasurable and necessary. When their stomachs signaled hunger, food was taken to satisfy them. So too, they argued, sex was pleasurable and necessary. When their bodies signaled sexual desire, they needed to be satisfied. But Paul drew a sharp line between the stomach and the body.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> They lived as unbelievers (3:1-3); judging one another's ministries (4:1-8); one man had a sexual relationship with his father's wife (5:1-2); misuse of Christian liberty (6:12); caring more about self than others (8:9-13; 10:23-24, 29; 11:17-22); not loving others as they should have (13:1-8); misuse of tongues for personal edification (14:1-4); women not respecting church authority (14:34-35)

<sup>37</sup> Lowery, D. K. (1985). 1 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Flawed thinking can lead to more wrong thinking and distorted patterns in one's life, therefore Paul showed them this progression. Since some in the Corinthian church believed that visiting prostitutes (a common, acceptable practice in Greek culture) was permissible, it was Paul's desire to correct this sinful practice. Thus, he continued his argument in the last half of verse 13 and verse 14.

Paul wanted them to understand that what they did and how they used their bodies mattered. One day their bodies will be resurrected as Christ's body was, and they will live eternally. Thus, he wrote:

“Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.”

This was important for them to understand because some in the church believed that there would be no resurrection of the dead. Thus, Paul wrote later in this letter:

“Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12).

If they were concerned only about the eternity of their souls, they may not have been concerned about their bodies. Such thinking could have led them to believe that their bodies were of no eternal significance, therefore they could do with them as they pleased during their earthly life.<sup>38</sup>

In response, Paul let them know that they were not to involve their bodies in sexual immorality. Conversely, their bodies were meant to be used for the things of the Lord, for His purposes. He then affirmed that the Lord is for their bodies. In other words, the Lord is benevolent toward sinful

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<sup>38</sup> Borysov, Eduard A. Viber text chat with author. 17 April 2020.

people and the redemption of their bodies. As a result, Jesus came to give His life for the purpose of redeeming, regenerating and giving eternal life to sinful people and their bodies.

Paul wrote in verse 15:

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!”

This is to be an unthinkable act for a follower of Jesus. This is why Paul asked them in verse 16:

“Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.”

When a believer in Christ joins himself with a prostitute in an immoral sexual union, or with anyone else for that matter, the members of his body which belong to Christ are being united with the body of another. During this interlude the two are one flesh. Thus, he is taking the members of his body away from Christ (from Christ’s control and influence, though not from His ownership) and turning them over to another, making them one with her. He is giving her temporary custody or mastery over himself which he has no right to do since his body was redeemed by Christ. Therefore, his body belongs to Jesus, not to him! No one else has the right over them other than a spouse in the marriage union.<sup>39</sup> By giving them to another by means of sexual immorality does not glorify God (cf. vs. 20). Thus, one’s relationship with Christ is never to be interrupted by acts of sexual immorality, which is Paul’s point in this passage (vs. 15).

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<sup>39</sup> Giving one’s body to a spouse within a marital relationship, making oneself one with him or her is allowable and acceptable. This is sanctioned by God (even if one’s spouse is an unbeliever). However, doing so in an immoral sexual relationship is not sanctioned and thus not allowed by God.

When joined to a prostitute, a believer is one body with her. However, when joined to Christ, a believer is not only a member of His body, but as verse 17 states, he is one spirit with Him as well (cf. Rom. 7:4). This is a much more significant and comprehensive union than any person can have with another, even with a spouse. Although the sexual union with another is physical, mental and emotional in nature, it does not have the spiritual element as does one's union with Christ.<sup>40</sup>

Following in verse 18 Paul wrote:

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”

The statement, “flee immorality,” within this passage is easily understood, but what about the rest of the verse.

Verse 18 is a very difficult verse to interpret and explain. One reason for this is that Paul wrote that all other sins are outside of the body and that only sexual immorality is against the body. However, when one looks at the Scriptures, it is clear that ultimately all sin negatively impacts the body.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Some may argue that the sexual union between two believers makes it a spiritual union because the Holy Spirit indwells both of them. It is true that this spiritual element is real, unifying and comforting, even in the act of sexual intercourse. However, this fact is not any more or less relevant during sexual intercourse than it is in a non-sexual relationship with another believer (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-6). “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). Therefore, the spiritual union between all believers is authentic and existent every moment of every day because of our union with Jesus and the Holy Spirit (vss. 13, 15, 19).

<sup>41</sup> All sin ultimately negatively impacts the body: Psa. 32:3-4, the body is affected by unrepentant sin resulting from God's chastisement; Rom. 7:22-23, sin wages war and can take control of the members of one's body; Rom. 6:12-13,19, sin is manifested through the members of one's body which makes them instruments of unrighteousness and lawlessness; Rom. 7:4-6, sin works in our bodies to bear the fruit of death; Rom. 8:10, sin subjects our bodies to physical death; Jam. 1:15, sin brings forth death; Jam. 3:5-6, while the tongue, a member of the body, can cause much damage outside of the body, it simultaneously defiles the entire body; Jam. 4:1, sin expressed outside of the body has its source inside the body which wages war in the body's members. Though all sin is against the body, only sexual immorality is an affront to the body itself.

Therefore, trying to understand his main point amidst these seeming variances becomes the challenge. Fee wrote that it has been said that as many as 20 or 30 solutions have been offered for this verse.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, because sexual immorality is a sin against the body, then how are all other sins a man commits outside the body? This is the conundrum.

One potential explanation of the phrase, “every other sin that a man commits is outside the body,” could be:

- Sins such as drug abuse, alcoholism and gluttony are **from outside the body, although against the body**
- Sins such as murder, stealing and slander are **of the body, although against someone else outside the body**
- Sexual immorality is **of the body, although against the body**

Another view proposed as a possible explanation by Fee<sup>43</sup> and Lowery<sup>44</sup> is that this phrase is a third slogan in this passage. According to this view, Paul needed to correct their inappropriate thinking as he had with the previous two slogans, this time regarding sin as it relates to the body. One possible correlation which gives credence to this view from the text is seen when comparing verses 12 and 18. Please note that in the Greek text the word translated, “other,” in the phrase, “every other sin,” is an addition by the translators. Thus, the sentence would actually read, “Every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.” Taking this into account, the following is observed:

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<sup>42</sup> Fee, Gordon D. “New International Commentary on the New Testament, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition.” Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1987, (pg. 289).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Lowery, D. K. (1985). 1 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Vs. 12 **“All things are lawful for me”**

Vs. 18 **“Every sin that a man commits is outside the body”**  
(Emphasis added)

Paul however let them know that this is not correct by using the example of sexual immorality, which he stated was a sin against the body. Though this phrase may have been a slogan, the majority of Bible translations do not agree,<sup>45</sup> as well other Bible commentators such as Fee.

In trying to understand this phrase, “every other sin that a man commits is outside the body,” “the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament helps with clarification. It states that the Greek word translated, “outside,” (Gk. *ektos*) can also be translated as “independent of, a marker of disassociation.” Consequently, this phrase can be translated as:

“every sin which a person does is independent of the body”

(“ἐκτός: πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ἐστίν”).<sup>46</sup>

Please note as stated previously that the Greek word translated as, “other,” is a translators’ addition, therefore it is not found in this literal translation. How then can sin be independent of, disassociated with the body? Fee gives a very simple explanation:

“In fornicating with a prostitute a man removes his body (which is a temple of the Spirit, purchased by God and destined for resurrection) from union with Christ and makes it a member of

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<sup>45</sup> Of thirty-five plus translations examined, only four show the phrase, “every other sin that a man commits is outside the body” as a slogan (Holman Christian Standard Bible, NET Bible, New Heart English Bible, World English Bible).

<sup>46</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies. LN 89.121.

her body, thereby putting it under her ‘mastery’ (v. 12b; cf. 7:4). Every other sin is apart from (i.e., not ‘in’) the body in this singular sense [i.e., in this unique way].”<sup>47</sup> (note in brackets added)

In other words, sexual immorality is a unique sin.<sup>48</sup> It is the only sin in which the body is subjected to the act of becoming part of another, becoming one flesh with another, physically conjoining bodies together. In contrast, no other sin compares. Please consider that:

**Every other sin**

Is “outside” (independent of, disassociated with) the body

Therefore:

**Sin of sexual immorality**

Is dependent upon, associated with the body

The question then is, “In what way is sexual immorality dependent upon and associated with the body in a manner where all other sins are not?” It is associated in that sexual immorality is a sin in which the body is both the principle instrument and recipient of the offence. This is apparent by the fact that when sexual immorality is being committed, the individual’s body is the principle performer (instrument) of the act of conjoining itself with another, resulting in the two becoming one flesh (vss. 15-16). It is also the recipient of the sin (offence) as the body in its participation is sinning against itself. With any other sin this is not the case. For example, in the case of drug abuse, although the recipient of the sin is the body,

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<sup>47</sup> Fee, G. D. “New International Commentary on the New Testament, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition.” Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. (pg. 290).

<sup>48</sup> This sin includes consensual acts such as fornication, adultery, homosexuality, incest and nonconsensual acts such as rape and bestiality.

the principle instrument used against the body is a narcotic. Though it was administered by the body, making the body a participant in the sin, the body itself was not the instrument of the sin, the narcotic was. Consequently, the phrase, “Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body” would be understood, not as a slogan, but as a statement of fact.

Therefore, whereas all other sins are committed “outside” (independent of or disassociated from) the body, the immoral man is acting in direct opposition “against” his or her own body. This verse is relevant to believers and unbelievers alike, but for the believer it is of special significance and consequence. Because some of the Corinthians did not believe sin committed by the body mattered, here Paul showed them how sexual immorality for the believer does matter. In the case of believers, their bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (vs. 19). Therefore, when they sin against their bodies, they are sinning against His temple thereby defiling it. In addition, because they belong to Christ and are not their own, they are not free to do whatever they want with their bodies. Consequently, when a believer conjoins himself or herself sexually with another other than one’s spouse, the believer willingly turns away from Christ during this act, making himself or herself one with the other sexual partner (vs. 15). When this occurs, the believer unites the temple of the Holy Spirit in an intimate, immoral act. Doing so defiles the body while violating and disrupting the intimacy the believer has with Christ (cf. vs. 15) with whom he or she is one spirit (vs. 17). This act is done in disregard to Christ and the Holy Spirit.

A believer’s body is not designated for such degradation; it is not for immorality, but for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13).

It is designed for a much higher and greater purpose; it has been given for the service of Christ. It is also created to be presented – offered back to God – as a living and holy sacrifice which is blameless, not conformed to this world (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Thes. 5:23). Therefore, sexual sin should be an unthinkable offence for the believer. Such behavior grieves (Eph. 4:30) and quenches (1 Thes. 5:19) the Holy Spirit, which in turn hinders the work of the Spirit, the blessings of the Father and dulls the spiritual perceptiveness of the offending believer. As a result, this sin will change him or her, moving this individual further away from righteous behavior and from God. This is especially true when a person has had multiple sexual partners. One who so freely gives himself or herself to others, entering and leaving one-flesh unions, will become more insensitive and brazen toward the things of God.

From this passage it is clear that the believer's body and its use is an issue of stewardship. Thus, the body:

- Is not to be used for immorality (vs. 13)
- Is for the Lord's use (vs. 13)
- Is the reason for which the Lord gave Himself (vs. 13)
- Will be raised from the dead (vs. 14)
- Is a member of Christ (vs. 15)
- Is a temple of the Holy Spirit (vs. 19)
- Was redeemed by Christ (vs. 19)
- Does not belong to the individual but to Christ (vs. 19)
- Is to glorify God (vs. 20)

Followers of Jesus who are redeemed individuals, who are purchased with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19) are to act differently, and according to verse 20, are to glorify God with their bodies.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES:

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Paul made two types of statements, general followed by exclusive. The general statements are true for every individual and the exclusive just for believers. They are:

- Verse 13 “Yet **the body** is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for **the body.**”  
(**general: any body**)
- Verses 15-14 “Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise **us** up through His power. Do you not know that **your bodies** are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!” (**exclusive: believers**)
- Verse 16 “Or do you not know that **the one** who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.” (**general: anyone**)
- Verse 17 “But the **one who joins himself to the Lord** is one spirit with Him.” (**exclusive: believers**)
- Verse 18 “Flee immorality. Every other sin that **a man** commits is outside the body, but **the immoral** man sins against his own body” (**general: any man**)
- Verses 19-20 “Or do **you** not know that **your body** is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in **you**, whom you have from God, and that **you** are not your own? For **you** have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in **your body.**” (**exclusive: believers**)

From the general statements, it is observed that an individual's body is not to be given over to immorality. It is meant for the Lord and the Lord is for the body (see explanation given for verse 13 above). Furthermore, it is observed that anyone who joins himself or herself in an immoral sexual union becomes one body, one flesh with the other individual. Lastly, believers and unbelievers alike are to flee immorality. In both cases, all sins they commit, except for sexual immorality, are committed outside of the body. However, in both cases sexual immorality is committed in conjunction with another against their bodies.

From the exclusive statements for believers it is observed:

**Verse 13**      **“the body is not for immorality”**

Verse 14      “God...will also raise us up  
through His power”

Verse 15      “your bodies are members of Christ”

Verse 17      you are “one spirit with Him”

**Verse 18**      **“Flee immorality”**

Verses 19-20 “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit”

“you are not your own”

“you have been bought with a price”

“glorify God in your body”

(emphasis added)

Many reasons are given for why believers are not to be involved in sexual immorality. Their bodies are not meant for immorality, and they are to flee it due to the exclusive relationship they have with Christ and the Holy Spirit. Thus, they are to glorify God with their bodies.

# POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGE: WHAT TO DO

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**A**fter a polygamist comes to faith in Christ and realizes that polygamy is not the will of God, what should he do? To fully understand the following explanation, it is necessary to first understand the content of this book.

In a first marriage the husband and wife become one flesh. A person can only exist in a one-flesh union with one person at a time (cf. Gen. 2:24; Mat. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3).<sup>49</sup> Therefore, a one-flesh union with two people simultaneously is not possible. In the case of a polygamist, because he is one-flesh with his first, legitimate wife, the marriage to his additional wife violates the existing one-flesh union. As a result, the marriage to his additional wife (or multiple wives) is adulterous in nature. As a result, he is sinning not only against his own body, but against his wife, their one-flesh union, as well as against Christ.

What complicates this situation is that when he married the additional wife, he made a covenant and vows with her before God. This covenant and vows are recognized by God and must be upheld (see section, V, D). In other words, he is not to divorce her, but is to care for her and for any children they produced together. It is his responsibility to provide for their housing, food, clothing,

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<sup>49</sup> Although a person involved in sexual immorality is one flesh with an illicit partner during their sexual interlude (1 Cor. 6:16), this is not the same as a one-flesh union. The one-flesh union is an ongoing, life-long existence which only a husband and wife can possess, beginning with the consummation of their marriage and ending with the death of one of them (except in the case of immorality).

medical care, the children's schooling, etc. In addition, all sexual relations must stop between them immediately to conclude the adultery.

If as a result of this new arrangement the additional wife decides to divorce her husband, she needs to understand that she is bound to her polygamist husband by the covenant and vows she made with him when they were married. If however she does divorce him, she will be held accountable before God for not keeping her marital covenant and vows (see section V, D). This is why she should remain in the marriage, yet celibate.

If she is an unbeliever and desires a divorce, he should grant the divorce and let her go in peace (1 Cor. 7:12-16). If she is a believer, she should remain in the marriage, yet celibate. In either case if a divorce takes place, although she was guilty of adultery due to her sexual relationship with him, she is free to remarry. This is because their marriage did not possess the continual one-flesh union which is the crucial element necessary for a marriage to be genuine (Gen. 2:24). Because this element was absent, the additional wife would not be committing adultery by entering a new marriage. Nonetheless, the fact that she can remarry should not be a reason to divorce, since she will be breaking the covenant and vows made before God at her wedding. This is a serious matter which God does not take lightly. If she remains in the marriage with her polygamist husband, she would become his legitimate wife if his original wife were to die. Once sexual relations resume, they would become one flesh.

What if one of the wives involved in a polygamist marriage comes to faith in Christ, what should she do? In the case of the legitimate wife, she has the right to divorce her

husband since he is involved in an adulterous relationship with his additional wife. Although this is allowable, it would be best that she requests her husband to discontinue all sexual relations with the other wife while yet continuing to care for this woman and her children as spoken of earlier. If he refuses and she decides to divorce him, she is free to remarry. In the case where the additional wife comes to faith in Christ, realizing that she is in an adulterous marriage, she should discontinue all sexual relations with her husband to conclude the adultery. In addition, she should remain in the marriage due to the covenant and vows she made before God. If her husband divorces her, she should grant the divorce and let him go in peace (1 Cor. 7:12-16). She is now free to remarry.

# UNCONSUMMATED MARRIAGE AND RELATED ISSUES

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What if a couple marries, but for some reason never consummates their marriage, what is their marital status? In this case the couple are husband and wife because they have been joined together by God through the institution of marriage (Mat. 19:6); however, they would not be one flesh. Their status as husband and wife can be seen in Genesis 2:24 which states:

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

In this three-step process the man, after leaving his family, is joined to his wife. Then as a result of their marriage, by means of consummation, they become one-flesh. It is evident in this verse that the woman became his wife before the consummation of the marriage (he was joined to “his wife”). This is because once an agreement was made for a couple to be married, the woman was considered to be a wife which is seen in other Old Testament passages as well (cf. Gen. 19:14; 29:21; Deut. 22:23-34; Jud. 14:3, 15-16, 20). Then after their marriage was consummated, they became one flesh. Therefore, a couple who is married but has not consummated their marriage are considered husband and wife as a result of their marital covenant. Because of this they are to remain faithful to one another even though the sexual aspect of the relationship is absent. (For further discussion see Sections I, B, 3-5 and V, D).

As husband and wife, if either of them was to become involved in sexual immorality with another, this would be a violation of their marriage covenant. Even though they had not consummated their marriage, the innocent spouse would have the right to divorce the guilty spouse and remarry. The basis for this statement is that in the Old Testament a betrothed woman who was caught in sexual immorality was to be killed for her sin because she was considered the wife of her betrothed (Deut. 22:23-24). Though consummation had not yet taken place, she was guilty of adultery (“because he has violated his neighbor’s wife”, vs. 24). Therefore, consider Jesus’ statement in Matthew 19:9:

“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality (Gk., “porneia”), and marries another woman commits adultery.” (emphasis added)

Divorce is allowable, though of course not mandatory nor desired in God’s eyes. The guilty spouse has committed sexual immorality (“porneia”) against his or her spouse by covenant (Mal. 2:14).

In the case of the guilty spouse, since the couple did not consummate their marriage, he or she would not be guilty of ongoing adultery if remarried after a divorce. This is because the guilty spouse was never in a one-flesh union with his or her spouse. This does not however negate the fact that the guilty spouse is culpable before God. He or she will be culpable for the sexual immorality, the violation of their marital covenant and vows and the indifference shown for and any damage done to his or her spouse. (For further discussion about the one-flesh union see Section III, C, 2 and the “Exceptive Clause” in the appendix).

In a case where either or both spouses decide to divorce for any reason other than sexual immorality,

the one who initiates the divorce (or both of them if it is mutual) would be culpable before God for violating their marriage covenant and vows (“What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate”, Mat. 19:6). If either was to divorce and remarry, although they should remain married to each other, neither would be guilty of ongoing adultery in their new marriage.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF WORLDLY AND GODLY SORROW

(BASED UPON 2 CORINTHIANS 7:8-11)

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## **Sorrow: Worldly** (“death;” 2 Cor. 7:10)

### **Behavior associated with worldly sorrow:**

1. Does not look to God for forgiveness and consolation (cf. Mat. 5:37)
2. Does not accept full responsibility for his or her actions, but...
  - a. tries to justify them (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:19-21, 24-26, 30)
  - b. places partial blame on the offended party for them (e.g., Gen. 3:9-12)
  - c. accuses another/others for them (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:13-15, 19-21)
3. Seeks forgiveness...
  - a. because it is expected or because he or she was caught (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:13-15, 19-20, 24-25)
  - b. to avoid shame and disgrace (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:24-31)
  - c. to gain relief from consequences (e.g., Gen. 50:15-18; Exo. 9:27-30, 34-35)
  - d. to alleviate one’s feelings of guilt (e.g., 1 Sam. 26:17-21)
  - e. because of fear (e.g., Acts 8:18-24)
4. Seeks self-pity for the situation, trying to find comfort and support for his or her actions (e.g., 1 Sam. 13:11-12)
5. Considers potential negative outcomes to determine if or how forgiveness will be sought (cf. Jam. 4:17)

6. Involves oneself in destructive behavior for the purpose of punishing oneself and/or in an attempt to cover one's remorse, guilt and/or pain (e.g., using things such as drugs, alcohol, self-mutilation, sex, food, pleasure, committing suicide; e.g., Mat. 27:3-5)

## **Sorrow: Godly**

("repentance without regret;" 2 Cor. 7:10)

### **Behavior associated with godly sorrow:**

1. Accepts responsibility for one's actions (e.g., Luke 15:17-19, 21)
2. Does not demonstrate a defensive attitude (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:13)
3. Shows humility (c.f. Php. 2:3-4)
4. Expresses genuine sorrow (2 Cor. 7:11; e.g., Mat. 26:75)
5. Has a broken and contrite heart (cf. Psa. 51:16-17)
6. Has a diligent desire and haste ("earnestness") to resolve and reconcile, to make amends (2 Cor. 7:11)
7. Has an eagerness to clear one's name ("vindication of oneself") through making amends (2 Cor. 7:11)
8. Shows disgust and anger ("indignation") in response to what he or she has done (or has not done but should have) (2 Cor. 7:11)
9. Has a fear of God and His discipline for unrepentant behavior (2 Cor. 7:11; Heb. 10:31)
10. Has a zeal to do right before God and man (1 Cor. 7:11; Acts 24:16)
11. Seeks forgiveness from and reconciliation with God (e.g., Psa. 51:1-4, 7, 9-10; Luke 15:17-21)
12. Seeks forgiveness from and reconciliation with the person/people offended ("longing," 2 Cor. 7:11; cf. Eph. 4:32; Mat. 5:23-24)

13. Forgives offences committed by the person he is forgiving, and others involved (cf. Col. 3:13; Mat. 6:14-15; 1 Pet. 4:8; e.g., Mat. 18:21-35)
14. Has a change of behavior according to the will of God (2 Cor. 7:11; e.g., Mat. 21:28-31)
15. Willingly faces the unpleasant consequences of one's actions due to a desire to see justice administered for the wrong committed ("avenging of wrong," 2 Cor. 7:11)

# NOTES ON SEXUAL PROHIBITIONS AND DEFILEMENT

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## Sexual Prohibitions

- I. Incestual Marriage (Lev. 18:6)
  - A. Mother (Lev. 18:7; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 10)
  - B. Stepmother (Lev. 18:8; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 10)
  - C. Sister (Lev. 18:9; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 11)
  - D. Granddaughter (Lev. 18:10)
  - E. Stepsister (Lev. 18:11; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 11)
  - F. Aunt (Lev. 18:12-14)
  - G. Daughter-in-law (Lev. 18:15; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 11)
  - H. Sister-in-law (Lev. 18:16; 20:21)
  - I. Stepdaughter (Lev. 18:17a)
  - J. Step-granddaughter (Lev. 18:17b)
  - K. Two sisters at the same time (Lev. 18:18)

**Note:** The prohibition of marrying one's daughter or son is naturally assumed to be wrong and therefore not spoken of in the Law.

- II. Sexual Immorality (death penalty for A-G, J-N)
  - A. **Adultery** (Lev. 18:20; 20:10; Deut. 22:22)
  - B. **Homosexuality** (Lev. 18:22; 20:13)
  - C. **Bestiality** (Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16)
  - D. **Incestual marriage: Stepmother** (Lev. 20:11; Deut. 22:30)
  - E. **Incestual marriage: Daughter-in-law** (Lev. 20:12)
  - F. **Incestual marriage: Marrying a woman and her mother** (Lev. 20:14)

- G. Incestual marriage: Sister (Lev. 20:17)**
- H. Incestual marriage: Aunt (Lev. 20:19-20)
- I. Incestual marriage: Sister-in-law (brother's wife, not a brother-in-law's wife; see # I, H above) (Lev. 18:16; 20:21)
- J. Harlotry of a priest's daughter (Lev. 21:9)**
- K. Woman not being a virgin on her wedding night ("playing the harlot") (Deut. 22:13,20-21)**
- L. Sex with a betrothed woman ("he has violated his neighbor's wife") (Deut. 22:23-24)**
- M. Rape of an engaged woman (considered a married woman) (Deut. 22:25)**
- N. Cult prostitution by men (Deut. 23:17; Lev. 18:22; 20:13)**
- O. Cult prostitution by women (Deut. 23:17)
- P. Rape of a virgin (Deut. 22:28-29)
- Q. Fornication (Exo. 22:16-17)
- R. Sex with a child or sibling (unwritten though assumed)

III. Summary:	<u>Penalty</u>
• Incest	Death (in different cases)
• Adultery	Death
• Homosexuality	Death
• Bestiality	Death
• Rape of an engaged or married woman	Death
• Rape of a virgin	Bride price payment and marriage/cannot divorce
• Fornication	Bride price payment and possibly marriage

In the Old Testament death penalty cases would have allowed the innocent spouse to remarry, therefore it is

reasonable to conclude that such sins today would also be appropriate allowances for an innocent spouse to remarry after a divorce.

The five sins above which lead to death “defile” a person, making him or her sexually impure, unclean. Remarrying a former wife who was remarried and then divorced would defile the first husband (Deut. 24:1-4). Sex with an animal defiles a person (Lev. 18:23). Homosexuality defiles a person (Lev. 18:24). Leviticus 18:6-23 lists all incestual sexual sins which defile. Rape also was a defilement (Gen. 34:5,13). Leviticus 18:19 in combination with Leviticus 15:24 show that sex during menstruation defiles. Since menstrual sex was in reference to sin committed by the husband and the wife, it was not a reason for death. Those who practiced this sin would be cut off from among their people (Lev. 20:18). Other things also defile (e.g., touching carcasses, Lev. 5:2-3), but they were not reasons for death.

## Defilement

**There were different types of defilement in the Old Testament, each having their own consequence depending upon the level of defilement.**

Definition: defile – to become unclean

### I. Sexual (Death penalty)

#### A. Adultery

1. While married (Lev. 18:20; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 11)
2. Intercourse with one who is betrothed (Deut. 22:23-24)

#### B. Homosexuality (Lev. 18:22)

- C. Rape of an engaged (thus married) woman (Deut. 22:25)

- D. Incestual marriage (close blood relatives)
  - 1. Stepmother (Lev. 20:11; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 10)
  - 2. Daughter-in-law (Lev. 20:12; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 11)
  - 3. Marrying a woman and her mother (Lev. 20:14)
  - 4. Sister (Lev. 20:17; cf. Ezek. 2:9b, 11)
- E. Bestiality (Lev. 18:23)
- F. Not being a virgin on one's wedding night (Deut. 22:13, 20-21)
- G. Harlotry of a priest's daughter (Lev. 21:9)

**NOTES:**

1. The penalty for these sins was severe because of their vile nature
  2. Due to their vileness, Jesus decreed ("porneia") that they were sufficient reasons to break the marriage covenant and one-flesh union
  3. The word porneia (immorality, unchastity, fornication) can always be translated as "sexual immorality" (except when referring to spiritual porneia, spiritual adultery). Defining sexual immorality from the Old Testament is any spouse involved in adultery (which includes sex during the betrothal period with another other than one's intended spouse), incestual marriage, homosexuality, rape and bestiality. In the New Testament bestiality is not mentioned and incest is not defined. Examples of porneia in the New Testament are incest (1 Cor. 5:1), premarital sex (1 Cor. 7:2; cf. John 8:41) and sex with a prostitute (1 Cor. 6:13-18)
- II. Sexual (Cut off from Israel/will be childless)

**NOTE:** The phrase "cut off" has the idea of being forgotten (Ruth 4:10); death of the individuals (not referring to the death penalty) (1 Sam. 24:21; 28:9);

to separate or remove (1 Kings 9:7; 2 Kings 10:32; 2 Chr. 26:21); to stop or discontinue (Jer. 50:23; Lam. 2:3) and having no hope or future (Ezek. 37:11).

A. Incestual marriage (other than blood relatives)

1. Aunt – Lev. 20:19-20

2. Sister-in-law (brother's wife, not a brother-in-law's wife; see I,H above under Sexual Prohibitions) – Lev. 18:16; 20:21

B. Sex with a woman during menstruation – Lev. 20:18; cf. Ezek. 22:9b, 10

III. Sexual (Remarriage to a former wife who had been remarried and is now single)

• This was an abomination – Deut. 24:1-4

IV. Sexual (Bride price payment and possibly marriage)

• Fornication (Exo. 22:16-17)

V. Sexual (Rape of a virgin)

• Bride price payment, marriage and could never divorce – Deut. 22:28-29

VI. Related to death

A. Touching a dead body (Num. 5:2)

B. Touching something unclean (Lev. 22:5)

C. Touching a carcass of a dead animal (Lev. 11:39; cf. Num. 19:1-6)

D. Touching a carcass of an unclean animal/thing (Lev. 5:2; 11:31)

E. Most things which the carcass of an unclean thing touched (Lev. 11:31-35, 38)

1. food upon which there was water

2. items used for cooking

3. an oven

F. Food touching something unclean (Lev. 7:18)

G. Eating the carcass of a dead animal (Lev. 11:40;  
17:15)

VII. Leprosy (Lev. 13:3)

VIII. Seminal emission (Lev. 22:4)

IX. Discharge from one's body (Lev. 15)

X. Eating blood (cf. Lev. 17:10-14, death penalty)



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randy was raised in a Catholic home in Cross Plains, Wisconsin, USA. During his childhood he began to question the existence of God, and in his early adult life considered himself an atheist. Later as a result of people speaking to him about Christ, he began to question his beliefs. While married and at the age of 24, he read the entire New Testament and portions of the Old Testament and considered the claims about Jesus. After understanding that Jesus is who He claimed to be, Randy understood that there had to be a God. It was at that time (August 18, 1982) that he placed his trust in Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Within the year following Randy's conversion, he began to pray for Soviet believers who were imprisoned for their faith. During this time a desire developed in his life to go to the Soviet Union and train pastors. It was however not until 11 years later in 1994, after having completed Bible college and while a pastor that he made his first trip to Ukraine. Two years later he returned, first to teach for two weeks in Russia, followed by two weeks in Ukraine. It was these experiences that helped him better understand God's specific direction for his life. Randy, his wife Annette and their four children moved to Kiev, Ukraine, in July, 2001. To the date of this writing they remain involved in the training of church leaders and women in Eurasia.

During Randy's time of ministry in the United States, he was the interim pastor of two small churches which needed assistance and was involved in jail ministry, as well as evangelism to the homeless in the Chicago area. He later served as senior pastor of the Bark River Bible Church, Bark River, Michigan, for over eight years. He also ministered as an Associate of Bible Related Ministries for

10 years (1990-2000), an organization which assists churches in need of help by providing pulpit supply, pastors for churches and mediation in church disputes.

Randy holds a technical degree in electronic technology, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Bible and a Master's degree in Ministry, both from the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois.

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