

Divorce and Remarriage
A Bible Study for Christians
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Preface

Few things in life are as anguishing as a ruined marriage, unless it's the comments and instructions given to the divorced by religious people claiming to speak on God's behalf. Written for Christians who need to know what the Bible says about divorce, a no nonsense education using scriptures to answer your questions.

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Divorce

Many a saint finds her/himself going through a heart wrenching divorce. Then again, when she/he starts over with a new spouse, heart-wrenching questions concerning what God thinks about the remarriage are always asked.

- Does the Bible allow divorce?
- Can Christians remarry and still be right with God?
- Are divorced men forbidden to hold the office of pastor or deacon?

I reluctantly point out we are dealing with religious rule. Although we live in an age of grace, in contrast to law, God still delivers rules pertaining to this present age. Telling Christians what God thinks about their divorce and remarriage is serious business. The pastor's and teacher's words affect people for whom Christ died and rose. Divorce and remarriage is an adult problem, and the Bible gives adult answers. Let us not error, as did many Pharisees in their handling of the scriptures. Let us not commit ourselves to such rigid legalism we neglect the weightier matters of God's law and purpose.

Matthew 23:23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

If the law's weightier matters are judgment, mercy, and faith; surely the Church Age must include the same? Righteous judgment never kills mercy. When we must judge, let us judge wisely and with righteousness.

John 7:24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

1 Corinthians 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Remarriage after Spouse Dies

The Bible is very clear, no binding laws against remarriage after a spouse dies. The only restriction is the surviving spouse marries a Christian.

Romans 7:1-3 *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

1 Corinthians 7:39 *The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.*

What does the Bible say about divorce?

The Bible says a great deal about divorce. Trouble is not everyone understands it the same way. And even sadder, some people who understand choose to ignore the truth and teach their church policy instead.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 *When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath*

found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. 3 And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; 4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

We see God did not forbid divorce. The law lays down a procedure to follow. Understand God allowing divorce does not mean God approves of divorce. Before continuing, methinks I hear someone yelling, *Old Testament verses should not be used in this study! That was the law, and Christians are not under the law.*

Romans 6:14 *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

This kind of thinking is reasonable only until we learn what Jesus said about the Law. If one insists not to be under any law or religious rule based on *Romans 6:14*, how then could we adhere to any regulations on marriage or anything else? Furthermore, *Romans 7:1-3* was retrieved from the law, and God directs the whole discussion to those who know the law.

Matthew 5:17-19 *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Jesus did not disregard the Law. Everything He said about marriage and divorce was based on the law. Everything Jesus had Apostle Paul say about marriage and divorce was based on the law. In the Gospels, certain Pharisees brought the law to Jesus' attention.

Matthew 19:3-9 *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for*

fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

To the question is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? We learned the holy word of God says *yes*. But the Pharisees asked if divorce was legal over *every cause*. And to that the answer is no. When Jesus says *from the beginning* he was directing their attention back to the creation of marriage. *Genesis. 2:21-24*. He explains God's original and perfect intention wanted a marriage to be permanent.

The Pharisees ask *why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*

Between the *beginning* and Moses- an event takes place we call the Fall. The Fall affected many things, including mankind's heart. And because of sinful and hardened hearts, God gave the laws of divorce. Although God's perfect will is marriage remains permanent, God acknowledges the fact bad marriages happen; therefore, God gives us laws and advice to regulate divorce.

Jesus states plainly in verse *Mt. 19:9*, one can lawfully divorce over fornication. We also learn consequences for putting away a spouse. If a person puts away his spouse and remarries, he commits adultery. Unless he/she divorce because a spouse is guilty of fornication! Fornication remains legitimate Bible grounds for divorce. And the innocent person is not held accountable for committing adultery when

he/she remarries. (See also Adultery and Responsibility in this study)

Some people interpret *Mat. 19:9* as allowing divorce, but not remarriage. Observe Jesus says and *shall marry another* in the same verse. The whole statement concerns someone who remarries. And the person who remarries commits adultery, unless his spouse committed fornication. Jesus gives a legal exception to the rule.

If a particular church forbids divorce when fornication has been committed, that church is wrong; the church directly opposes the clear teaching of Jesus Christ. I stress, however, because one retains the legal right to divorce, this does not necessarily mean one should divorce. A betrayed spouse also has the right to forgive and exercise the same charity God bestows to Christians over and over again. But that, of course, is a prayerful decision for the troubled couple to make, not a decision for the elders of the church.

Divorce by Desertion

Quite another matter is when one person leaves for no apparent reason. Apostle Paul discusses these situations.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: **11** But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife*

Once a man and woman marry, they should stay married. However, if they do split up- hopefully the separation ends in a reunion of the couple. Notice the person who leaves is commanded to remain unmarried. Interestingly, that same command is not given to the one who does not want the divorce. Do not dismiss this as an insignificant omission. What does this one sided command mean? Are we to assume the one who does not want the divorce is commanded never to marry again? Even if his/her spouse never comes back! Before answering, consider what Paul says to unequally yoked couples (a believer married to an unbeliever).

Observe Paul provides his opinion (additional advice) for troubled couples; he is not issuing binding law. However, do not dismiss Apostle Paul's wisdom without prayer and careful consideration.

1 Corinthians 7:12-15 *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*

Focus on verse 7:15. If the unbeliever wants a divorce, give it to him. And the believer is not under bondage. What does not being under bondage mean? Bondage constrains or limits people; therefore, it must mean something giving freedom and peace. Not being under bondage can only mean- not being subjected to the law directed at the one who departs. If the believer was commanded to remain alone for the rest of his/her life that would indeed be bondage. It would be like putting an innocent person in jail. God does not sentence innocent people to a life of loneliness and unfulfilled normal human passions; religious people do that, but not God.

Therefore, I conclude the believer may remarry (in the Lord) and have peace with God. This would be true also in the case where both husband and wife are believers. The one who does not want the divorce may remarry and be right with the Lord.

Adultery & Responsibility

A causal reading of *Matthew 5:31, 32* and *Matthew 19:9* may lead one to the conclusion Jesus is making exactly the same comments. But this is not true. Very important distinctions exist between the passages. For the reader's scrutiny, I print both verses below.

Matthew 19:9 *And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*

Matthew 5:32 *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

In *Matthew 19:9* the emphasis is on the man who wants the divorce. And on the person who marries the divorced wife. Careful reading reveals Jesus does did not say that the wife commits adultery.

In *Matthew 5:31, 32*- the emphasis is on the divorced wife. This is very important. If a man divorces his wife when she is not guilty of fornication, he causes her to commit adultery; therefore, he is responsible for her adultery.

God expects the woman to get married again, that's why he says, *causeth her to commit adultery* - And, yes, technically the innocent wife partakes in adultery when she remarries. It's as if the sexual consummation of the new marriage terminates the old marriage. **But she is not guilty of adultery.** The unjust husband is held responsible for the sin. Notice the scripture says he caused the sin, not her. It is justifiable adultery.

To make this clearer, I appeal with an analogy: If an armed man breaks into your home and threatens your family's life and you shoot him and kill him. You have technically committed murder. But under the law, you are not guilty of murder, because he caused you to do it. He was responsible for your actions. It's called justifiable homicide.

Defining Adultery

Everyone knows what adultery is, or do they?
The Bible identifies four types of adultery:

1. Spiritual Adultery
2. Classic Adultery
3. Adultery committed in the Heart
4. Justifiable Adultery

#1 Spiritual Adultery

Jeremiah 3:8-9 *And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. 9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.*

God uses the terms adultery, fornication, and whoredom numerous times throughout the Bible to describe Israel's idolatry and backsliding. Adultery typifies the highest act of treason a person can commit against her/his spouse. Nothing crushes an innocent and loving wife/husband as does this sin. Nor is there anything that so jeopardizes a relationship; thus, God chose this sin to metaphorically describe his own feelings when believers step out on him. By this I mean when believers love or worship people or things more than

God. Not to be overlooked is the fact that God is divorced.

#2 Classic Adultery

Leviticus 20:10 *And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death*

Classic adultery is what most people think about when they hear the word adultery. A married person steps out on his/her spouse and has sexual relations with another person. As you can see from the verse, the consequences could be quite serious; however, let the bible student ponder this curious fact. There is no biblical record of the death penalty being carried out for adultery, but numerous accounts of the guilty being shown mercy exist. Consider: Judah, Reuben, David, and Samson, Gomer, the adulteress in *John 8*, and countless un-named Israelites. God manifests grace under the law numerous times. This provides a good reference when people mistakenly believe the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament; Jesus remains very consistent. Mercy is one of God's attributes.

Hebrews 13:8 *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

#3 Adultery Committed in the Heart.

Matthew 5:28 *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Jesus says when a person imagines he/she is having sex with someone other than his/her spouse commits adultery. How many Christians commit this adultery? Would the gentlemen answer first please?

#4 Justifiable Adultery

Matthew 5:32 *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

When a person divorces his/her innocent spouse and the spouse remarries, the innocent spouse is not held accountable.

Christians should ponder these four kinds of adultery. They are all biblical, so let's not ignore them. As Christians judge others, isn't it amazing how they focus on the adultery they have not done? And then interpret all the relating scriptures from the premise of their supposed innocence? Perhaps it's time to back up, or face up to our own self-righteousness. Maybe there is more Pharisee in us than we realize? Really now, haven't you ever noticed the sins you don't do are the worst ones?

Romans 2:21-23 *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? **22** Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? **23** Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

Impossible Marriage

What about situations other than fornication which makes staying in a marriage impossible?

Thinking Christians, should realize situations exist besides infidelity that are intolerable. All too often Christian leadership seems afraid to exercise a little clear thinking outside their denomination's official policy. Unless an answer to some difficult life problem is very simply spelled out, they are reluctant to even offer one. Or worse, clinging to partial understanding or church policy, they give hurtful advice. The intellectual equivalent is like people who don't believe Jesus is God, because there isn't a verse that says exactly *Jesus Christ is God* (spelled out in one and two syllable words). Or they won't believe God is a trinity, because there isn't a verse that says *God is a trinity*. Absolutely, the Bible teaches both the deity of Jesus Christ and the triune nature of God, but it takes some reasoning and thinking skills on the reader's behalf to comprehend those truths. Just because the Bible does not present every possible destructive scenario for marriage, this does not mean we ignore the problems when we see them.

Take, for example, the true story of a Christian woman whose husband physically abused her and their children. This situation went on for years and years and was getting worse. She actually feared for her life. The woman asked her Pastor if God would permit a divorce in such a circumstance. Although, the Pastor felt very sorry for the woman, his advice was to stay married. Why? Because he truly believed

the Bible only allows divorce when adultery is committed. As far as he knew, child and spouse abuse were not biblically lawful reasons. And, according to this pastor, if she left him, she should stay alone for the rest of her life (in poverty).

Many different behaviors deny the marriage and mock God. For Christian leadership to sanction intolerable situations and think they are obeying God is absolutely pathetic. When mistreatment and abuse in a marriage reaches an intolerable level, something must be done. We must use our brains and judge wisely and with righteousness. Serious abuse violates:

1 Timothy 5:8 *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*

1 Peter 3:7 *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

1 Corinthians 7:2-4 *Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.*

Ephesians 5:21-29 *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

Just as modern day secular lawyers wrestle with American law, religious leaders must, at times, wrestle with God's laws. Too many times our secular judges, for the sake of obeying one or two lines in the American Constitution, compromise the entire intent of the Constitution. In America today, we have so failed with handling constitutional law; our courts have been reduced to being only a legal system. But the intent was for our courts to be a justice system. Justice has been sacrificed for law.

In the Bible, the Pharisees were guilty of this same thing. They were so careful to obey the letter of the law they lost sight of the spirit of the law. Jesus said they strained at gnats and swallowed

camels. They reduced Judaism to a religious system nearly void of righteousness and wise judgment.

Matthew 23:24 *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

Christianity, especially concerning divorce, becomes similarly unwise. Problems such as: child abuse, physical/emotional spousal abuse, selfishness to the point of not providing adequate food and clothing, sexual abuse this includes everything from bizarre perversions to denying sex to one's spouse, etc. – none of these behaviors may have a scripture depicting the exact description of the sin, but all can become so destructive (even life threatening) something has to be done.

One of the biggest problems the Pharisees had with Jesus Christ is they truly believed Jesus and his disciples broke the law in regards to the Sabbath day. God had given a clear, concise law, and the church leadership understood every word in the verse. Since Jesus worked on the Sabbath, Jesus broke the law. To the Pharisees, the reason did not matter. God gave them a law, and they were absolutely incapable of assessing the situation with moral clarity or righteous judgment. This is exactly the same problem religious people have with divorce. Consider the passage below.

Matthew 12:1-5 *At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it,*

*they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. **3** But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; **4** How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? **5** Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?*

Notice Jesus does not deny working on the Sabbath day. He justifies his actions with righteous reasoning. Jesus cites historical examples from the Old Testament where circumstances forced believers to break the law, but God did not hold them accountable. Due to extraordinary circumstances, they were blameless! In other words they were not guilty!

Matthew 12:9-14 *And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: **10** And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. **11** And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? **12** How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. **13** Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. **14** Then the*

Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

Again we see under special circumstances, the law of not working on the Sabbath day is set aside. Look at verse 12, Jesus actually declares the act of doing good work on the Sabbath day lawful. When confronted with situations demanding righteous judgment, the religious leadership was dumbfounded.

Today many church leaders have become Pharisees, their religious reasoning is void of mercy and understanding. Their commitment to obeying religious law, which is often private interpretation and tradition, violates righteousness. They shoot the wounded when they should be applying the balm of Gilead. Like Job's three friends, they are physicians of no value.

Matthew 23:23-24 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 24* *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

Exceptions to the Rule

Consider these commandments:

Exodus 20:13 *Thou shalt not kill.*

Exodus 21:12 *He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*

This is not a contradiction. Exceptional conditions, which exempt or seem to go against the general commandment involves righteous judgment. Although God commands men not to kill, a murderer is to be killed. Another example where killing would not be a transgression of the law is during war.

The Guilty

What about the guilty adulterer? What about Christians who absolutely caused the divorce? What about those not married who commit fornication?

Unfortunately, many Christians put themselves in guilty situations. Their selfishness and immoral behavior has no defense. Make no mistake; the sin is a bad one. Adultery and Fornication (sex outside of marriage) is addressed in this section.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

The first thing a guilty person needs to do is repent. Repentance, however, may not fix the damage. Consequences must be faced. Sin can be devastating. Never forget, however, Jesus Christ puts repentant Christians' lives back together. Let's examine the life of one guilty person in the Bible. I have selected the familiar story of the Samaritan woman at the well.

John 4:16-19 *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. 17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said*

unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. 19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

This is a remarkable discourse. **Jesus acknowledges the woman has had five husbands.** And he acknowledges her present relationship with a man to whom she is not married. I now step off into dangerous territory. I must do some inferring (interpreting) about the text. But I proceed prayerfully and reasonably:

Five marriages! I think it unreasonable to assume her five past husbands all died, and she remarried with the blessing of God's law; therefore, I assume she has been divorced. I also assume this woman is no stranger to the sin of adultery. Concerning her present relationship with a man, I assume she is not cohabiting as a celibate. In other words, she is fornicating with her boyfriend.

When Jesus says *thou hast had five husbands* he acknowledged five separate marriages. This is a very important statement. The Lord accepted the marriages as legally binding. The real evidence is learned from observing what Jesus says about her boyfriend. By stating the man she lived with was not her husband, Jesus tells us plainly he still judged between being married and just living together.

God's acknowledging numerous marriages does not mean he condones the events preceding the

union. God accepted King David's marriage to Bathsheba, but he certainly did not approve of the sins that brought them together. And even though God *put away David's sin, 2 Sa. 12:13*, David carried the consequences for the rest of his life. Nothing could bring back the lives of the men David murdered in his attempt to cover the sin. David also severely damaged his testimony. David's reputation being badly damaged (even till this day) manifests some disturbing facts about believers' willingness, perhaps even their capability to forgive others. In my opinion, many Christian leaders are more worried about their own religious opinions and church policy- far more than they are righteous judgment. The Bible is only minimally studied or considered. Religious traditions become more important than scripture.

Many Christians have a difficult time believing God honors a new marriage for guilty persons. But it's just one more human condition that needs forgiveness. A thief can repent and stop stealing. A liar can stop lying. And an adulterer can repent, find forgiveness, and remarry. It's only some religious men and women that do not accept the new marriage, not God.

Some Christians point to *Romans 7:3* as evidence for not accepting remarriage. The verse does make a strong statement against a guilty person. God is clearly calling the individual an adulterer. Still, it is the wrong conclusion to believe God does not accept the marriage.

Romans 7:1-3 *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

The first two verses deal with a woman's right to marry after her husband dies. But notice the parenthetical reference to the law in verse one. Those who know the law acknowledge legal reasons for divorce. Since the remark is made to those who know the law, let us look to the law. *Deuteronomy 24:1-4* gives legal permission for the divorced wife to remarry. Remember she was put away for some uncleanness. That uncleanness could well have been legal grounds for divorce, thus making the woman guilty. On the other hand, the divorce might be largely the husband's fault. Either way, God accepted the new marriage; God said she could go and be the wife of another man.

Deuteronomy 24:1-3 *When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be*

another man's wife. 3 And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

Considering *Romans 7:3* - How can a person be called an adulteress when she is married? By definition, adultery can only be done outside marriage. We have a paradox. The correct interpretation cannot erase established law. Nor can we forget Jesus acknowledging the Samaritan woman's five husbands. Therefore, I conclude when a guilty person is divorced and remarried: It seems the first act of sexual intercourse with his/ her new spouse is considered adultery. Sort of a physical announcement the first marriage is terminated. It is also the consummation of the new marriage. But from that point on, the sexual union is sanctified as in all legal marriages. God acknowledges the new marriage, and he expects the new couple to honor it as well.

As far as the statement, *she shall be called an adulteress*. Apparently it was her adultery that caused the divorce, so she certainly was an adulteress. But if she confesses her sin to God and repents she is forgiven. For Christians who are not convinced, and still believe God never accepts a new marriage. How do you explain Jesus acknowledging the five husbands of the woman at the well? Furthermore, think about the ramifications of an alternative interpretation. Do you believe divorced

and remarried persons commit adultery every time they engage in sexual intercourse?

Do you believe every time David had relations with Bathsheba he was committing adultery? That would make King Solomon a bastard. Would God have a bastard build his temple? King Solomon cannot be considered illegitimate.

Deuteronomy 23:2 *A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.*

I have a very well educated Christian friend who emphatically disagrees with me about divorce and remarriage. Concerning David's marriage to Bathsheba, he believes the only reason God accepted it was because Bathsheba's husband was dead. The problem with his reasoning is David murdered her husband. To this, my friend replies, God forgave him of the murder so everything was legal. Ironically, his answer does contain some truth. His reasoning threads the needle concerning the law of divorce, but it ignores the law concerning murder, as well as the law regarding the consequence of adultery. Hence a perfect example of using law to judge un-righteously.

Here is an amazing thing to me, my friend acknowledges the legality of King David's marriage, but condemns marriages of divorced and remarried Christians. Would murdering a person's spouse legitimize adultery today? NO! And it didn't justify David either. It made things worse. There are lots of

Christians like my friend. All they comprehend is a part of the law that seems to side with their ethics. In King David's case, since the law directly says after a man is dead, his wife may remarry and be guiltless-- this they understand. Yet everyone ignores what another law says about murder. They are too prideful and judgmental to judge with wisdom and righteousness. And they seem to ignore God's mercy and forgiveness.

Bathsheba's husband being dead did not make David's marriage accepted by God. God's mercy and forgiveness made the marriage legal! If people can accept God forgiving a murderer, why can't they accept God forgiving adultery or divorce? The evidence many Christians do not comprehend God's great attributes of mercy and forgiveness-- is their constant ignoring of *1st John 1:9*; for anyone other than themselves. As King David found mercy and forgiveness, so can Christians today.

1 John 1:8-9 *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 1:8-9 is a tremendous truth and promise to Christians. This is not a salvation verse; it is a Christian getting right with God verse. Another passage dealing with the guilty is found in John's Gospel chapter eight.

John 8:1-12 *Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. 2 And early in the morning he came again into*

the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. 3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? 6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. 7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? 11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. 12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Sure the Pharisees set the whole thing up. The Pharisees probably targeted some lonely married woman (*Maybe an arranged marriage to a man three times her age?*). They employed some good-looking fellow to go after her with false promises. And then when the right moment arrived, they burst into the

bedroom, and dragged her off to Jesus. Need I mention they conveniently forgot to bring the man? Whatever happened, Jesus knew all about it. Notice he never told anyone they couldn't stone her. According to the law, one could argue they had the legal right to throw the rocks. So what if the man wasn't there; they knew who he was. They could take care of him later. I wonder what would have happened if the potential stone throwers had been a group of modern Christian preachers.

The law says an adulterer and the adulteress should be put to death *Le. 20:10*. And Jesus stated he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill. Why didn't Jesus name the man, and then order them both stoned? Dare we ask the ludicrous question, did the Lord break the law? For the Pharisee who can't see past the instruction of one verse, his answer would be yes. For the Christian who refuses to see judgment, mercy, and faith are the weightier matters of God's law, his answer would be yes. Of course, we know Jesus handled the matter in a way that glorified righteousness and fulfilled the law.

Are you guilty of adultery, a wicked imagination, fornication, or some other sin that destroyed your marriage or ruined the marriage of someone else? Perhaps your sin is secret, but breaks your fellowship with God? Read and listen to the words of the great I AM as he addresses a guilty sinner.

John 8:11 *She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more***

You must confess your sin to God. Repent. Make things right as you can. Get on with your life. Serve God.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*

Proverbs 28:13 *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*

Marriage

When does God consider a man and woman married?

Most people are surprised when they learn a marriage ceremony is not in the Bible. Scripture acknowledges and discuss marriages, but decrees no procedure or specific ceremony. This leads to the logical question, when exactly does God consider a man and woman married? Some Christians believe the act of sexual intercourse, alone, determines marriage. Although I disagree with that position, it is not as silly as it may seem. Consider this warning by Paul, and then compare the passage to God's initial statement on marriage.

1 Corinthians 6:15-16 *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*

Genesis 2:24 *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

The idea becoming one through sexual union is implicit in both texts, thus the conclusion; *becoming one equals marriage* is established. To refute the teaching, I again refer to the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus acknowledged five different husbands, and He made the distinction between a live in boyfriend and a married man. Jesus also acknowledged

weddings as proper social functions. Indeed, he performed his first miracle at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. With weddings acknowledged as social, legal, and civil events, they obviously represent something different than sexual intercourse. The physical union, however, did finalize or consummate a legal marriage. But all things done decently and in order. The warning in *1 Cor. 6:15, 16* is serious. There is no such thing as casual sex. If people are having sex outside of marriage, they are living in sin.

Hebrews 13:4 *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

Staying Single

Matthew 19:10-12 *His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. **11** But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. **12** For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

Just so we all know, a eunuch is a man without testicles. The testicles produce a hormone called testosterone. This hormone is largely responsible for sexual desire. Kings, in old times, made the men who watched their harems eunuchs. A birth defect can also cause this unfortunate physical condition. An accepted historical truth is eunuchs do not marry.

When Jesus says some men made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, he means some men deny themselves the pleasure of a wife so they may serve the Lord more devotedly. He did not mean some men should castrate themselves. Jesus did not order anyone vow never to marry. Only religious doctrines outside the Bible forbid marriage. Basically, Jesus says, if you can handle staying single, good for you, you'll be able to serve God with unique devotion. But it is certainly not for everyone. Some people choose a life of celibacy and then, years later, change their minds and decide to get married.

Nothing is wrong with them changing their mind. Apostle Paul, who elected not to have a wife, teaches this as well.

1 Corinthians 7:7-9 *For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.*

1 Corinthians 7:25-28 *Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.*

1 Corinthians 7:32-33 *But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: 33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*

I see no need to give lengthy commentary on these verses. The gist of the teaching is to serve God. Some people can do a better job if they stay

single; most of us cannot. Marriage has serious consequences. Marriage can be wonderful and very fulfilling in many ways, but married people also experience numerous problems they would not experience if they stayed single. (And all the married folks say- Amen) Being married is no guarantee of not being lonely. And being married is certainly no guarantee for being happy.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness remains a struggle; especially for the betrayed; infidelity is a painful ordeal. Yet, forgiveness remains a main doctrine and component of Christianity; it becomes essential for spiritual and emotional growth. Forgiveness is also a fundamental component of grace. All Christians need to forgive others, it is not an option. In our transformation to be like Christ, we must learn to forgive. Below is checklist on forgiveness; I pray it helps.

1. Forgive does not mean forget. You do not forget what happened even when you forgive the person. No one expects you to forget.
2. You do not forgive people because they deserve it; you forgive people because you deserve it. Otherwise you keep reliving the hurt and pain.
3. Ask God to allow you to forgive this person/ group/etc. *Lord, help me to forgive- the guilty are in your hands. I need to move on with my life.*

Example: I was talking with a person who had something terrible, humiliating, and demoralizing done to him/her. Listening to this person's vivid and traumatizing telling of the ordeal made me think the crime happened only a few weeks previous (if not only a few days) however,- upon further counseling, I learned the actual event happened twenty-two years earlier.

Not forgiving the guilty person forces the victim to keep reliving the pain. In worst cases, not

forgiving allows the guilty to keep doing the deed over and over to you. Why allow this kind of victory to an assailant? In all likelihood, the guilty person moves on with life and has forgotten all about you? I need to stress here- most acts of forgiveness are not for notorious or criminal sadists; rather, our forgiveness is for more average human sinful situations. The moral principle and healing benefits of forgiveness, however, remain the same.

A serious mistake- Some people don't want to forgive because they receive gratification by their constant retelling the incident. They deceive themselves into believing this is helping them heal. They want other people to anguish along with them and truly dislike the person who hurt them. A sort of revenge- pretending they get even by letting more and more people know. Although this is self-destructive, it is very common. It is called bitterness.

No matter what was done to you, no matter how anguishing the betrayal, how unjust or unfair. Put it alongside of how many times Jesus Christ has forgiven you- (even for sins since you were saved) Ask God to allow you to forgive this person/ group/etc. Lord, help me to forgive- the guilty are in your hands. I need to move on with my life.

Deacons & Pastors

Are divorced men forbidden to hold the office of pastor (bishop) or deacon?

The question: Who is eligible for pastor or deacon comes up from time to time in almost all churches. Texts from *1st Timothy and Titus* give criteria from which churches draw their policies. Let the Christian notice God lists numerous concerns. Why the *one wife* takes precedent over all other issues is actually quite interesting. Generally, there are two interpretations regarding the one wife issue. Before looking closely at the whole biblical criteria, I provide summary of the two opposing religious positions.

POSITION #1

The majority of church leaders believe if a man has been divorced, he is not eligible for either pastor or deacon. It does not matter if the man has only one wife at the time he is considering the office. If he has ever been divorced, regardless of the reason, he is ineligible. A divorced-remarried man has had more than one wife and that violates scripture.

POSITION #2

The minority opinion believes a man must have one wife when he is called to office. A remarried man has only one wife. Even though he had another wife in the past, after the divorce, she is no longer his wife; therefore, the one wife criterion is fulfilled. The minority opinion points out a common Middle Eastern

practice was polygamy. This is still true today. And this is what the one wife order forbid.

The minority opinion argues those holding position #1 are inconsistent in their one wife per lifetime interpretation, because they accept remarried widowers. The scripture emphasis is on one wife- the criteria does not excuse remarried widows. If one allows a remarried widower, then the man has had more than one wife. Why church leaders acknowledge this exception allowed by the law, but then not accept another legal exception manifests an obvious contradiction. Jesus allowed legal remarriage in the case of fornication. The majority justifies the exception based on *Romans 7:1-3* and *1st Corinthians 7:39*. Peculiarly, no one holding position #1 seems to mind that both scriptures retrieved from Old Testament law are considered valid- and Jesus' teaching, declaring fornication as a legitimate biblical reason for divorce is ignored. Why Christian leaders try and obey an Old Testament law, while they deny a New Testament doctrine taught by Jesus Christ is quite fascinating.

Biblical Criteria for Being Pastors/Deacon

1 Timothy 3:1-12 *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in*

subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Titus 1:6-9 *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

Quite a list isn't it? Is there one pastor or deacon that could honestly say he steadfastly fulfills these requirements? Let's be kind and only trace his life back to the second year after he got saved. Who among us fulfills all those requirements?

Why do we allow men who were once drunks, but have since repented, to be pastors? Has there ever been a pastor who loved money? Do we accept a pastor who was once self-willed? How about a pastor whose children do not exemplify Christian character? Have you ever known a deacon who is not apt to teach? Many pastors actually feel at ease with deacons not capable of teaching. How serious and inquiring do we really get about our deacons? So a man has never been divorced; has he ever committed adultery? Has he ever committed fornication? Do we even ask them if they did? We won't even talk about being blameless, or covetous, patient, and holy.

The point is this: If we hold a man accountable for having a bad marriage in the past, why is he not accountable for all those other requirements for which he was once guilty? **Why does repentance fix everything on the list, but divorce?** The hypocrisy on divorce by church leadership is overt and embarrassing. The truth is many churches do not consider the whole list. It seems church leaders single out the one requirement they have personally met and made it nonnegotiable.

In other words, the one thing for which they are not guilty. Again I ask the readers- Have you ever noticed the sins you don't do are the worst ones?

Consider this:

Two young people, Steven and Danielle, grow up in church and get saved in their early teenage years at church camp. A few years later, they fall in love and get married, (both were virgins), and both

feel called into Christian service. Steven in particular is certain God called him to be a pastor. They have children and everything is going along fine- but then WHAM, divorce happens. Five years go by and both people put their lives back together. They remarry (to different people) and are still active in church work.

Steven is a gifted speaker, educated at Bible College, and still believes he should be a preacher. When he discusses his calling with the pastor and church elders he is told "Sorry- but since you were divorced you cannot be a pastor, or a deacon, in fact we are going to pray seriously and discuss whether or not we should even allow you to teach Sunday School."

Consider this:

Two young people, Joseph and Diane, (amazingly at the same church as Steven and Danielle) Although, Joseph gets saved, after a few years backslides and follows his flesh. Joseph gets involved with crime and drugs, and did many things that need not be mentioned here. Joseph mocked God. And sexual promiscuity was his way of life. Joseph may even have a child, but that was a wild summer and all those wild parties, and no one can be sure. So why investigate? One can turn over too many rocks, if you know what I mean? Although Joseph had numerous partners and even a live in girlfriend, he never married.

Years go by and God's conviction compels Joseph to repent and get right with the Lord. He gets

married and has children. He is a decent speaker and feels called to the ministry. He approaches the pastor and tells him about what God has called him to do. The pastor is excited for Joseph and encourages him to pursue God's calling in his life. In the meantime, Joseph is asked to teach Sunday school. And all the elders agree, *after checking 1 Timothy 3 and Titus*, Joseph remains a good prospect to be a deacon in the future.

Modern Church Judgment and Conclusions:

In religious reality, the two most important qualifications for leadership positions.

1. He Must Tithe
2. He Was Never Divorced

Tithing is not mentioned in either *1st Timothy or Titus*. But it is covered, some would insist, under statements like being faithful, not greedy, or covetous. That is arguably true, but curiously, the specific doctrine most important to many church leaders is not mentioned specifically by God.

Dear Brothers in the Lord, if God calls you into service do not let religious men dissuade you. Serve God. How many God called pastors refuse to serve because they obey religious doctrines of men? Search the scriptures and prove what God says about requirements.

Chapter Notes

Acts 5:29 *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

Job 32:11 *Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.*

Romans 11:29 *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

2 Peter 1:10 *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:*

Romans 3:4 *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*

Acts 17:11 *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, **and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.***

1 Corinthians 10:15 *I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*

John 7:24 *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

1 Corinthians 2:15 *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*

Matthew 23:23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and*

anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Books by Joseph Dulmage-

- Angels, Giants, and Things under the Earth (paperback available)
- Approaching Adventure; Understanding Heaven
- Consider Melchizedek
- Distress of Souls (paperback available)
- Divorce and Remarriage, Bible Study for Christians (Paperback available)
- GAP
- Healing
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