

What God Hath Joined Together in Marriage

Scripture texts are from the King James Bible

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, divorce was almost unheard of except in some avant garde elements of our culture. In the church, divorce was virtually not found. When we compare the church of today with the church of 50 years ago, we are astounded at the appearance of the dreadful phenomenon of divorce.

Today, divorce is as common as grass. In almost every church, not only are the people in the pews divorcing, but deacons and elders and pastors are also divorcing. The institution of marriage has become a shambles.

How did this come about? Did the church of 50 years ago have an incorrect understanding of the Bible's rules concerning marriage and divorce? The situation is terrible and all-pervasive. We see the problems of those who have been divorced and those who are contemplating divorce, and the trauma of the children of these unhappy marriages is indescribable.

With the wreckage of families has come an overwhelming lusting after sexual pleasures and perversions. Indeed, it appears that Sodom must be moved down to second place as the capital of perversion and lust.

The magnitude and awfulness of the problem cannot be overemphasized. Marriage has everything to do with the family, and the family is the foundation of society. The family is the cornerstone of every nation. When the families are destroyed, the destruction of the nation is not far behind. Therefore, it is imperative that we find a solution to this terrible plague that is sweeping over the land.

In this study, we will start and stand with the principle that the Bible is absolute truth. Only our understanding of the Bible can be erroneous. We Christians have an obligation to search the Scriptures to discover truth. God has much to say about the marriage relationship, and we will examine all that the Bible has to say on the subject.

Biblical Divorce

We see churches falling away from the truth of the Bible

We are embarking on a search for answers to a serious and perplexing problem: To discover the truth about the binding character of the institution of marriage. In our day, virtually every church and denomination has decided that under certain conditions a marriage can be broken and the divorced are permitted to remarry.

Such permissive rules are taught and preached as the Word of God. Solemnly, pastors claim that they have the full authority of God to encourage divorce under certain conditions and to call God to witness the joining together in marriage of those who have been divorced from their first spouse. What does the Bible say about this?

To understand the Biblical teachings concerning marriage and divorce, we must start with an understanding of the ceremonial laws of the Bible, where God first spoke concerning marriage and divorce, and their relationship to the world and church of today. Many theologians of our day believe they have in the ceremonial laws a Biblical basis to permit divorce and remarriage. In their misunderstanding of these laws, they have made a caricature of the ceremonial laws and used them to justify divorces.

WHAT ARE THE CEREMONIAL LAWS?

When Christ was on earth, He spoke in parables and "without a parable spake He not unto them" (Mark 4:34). Sometimes Jesus told the people He was telling a parable. At other times He simply told a story and from the setting in the Bible we know it was a parable. For example, frequently He would begin a story or a declaration with the words "the kingdom of heaven is like." When He used these introductory words He was teaching with a parable.

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is, a parable is a story or illustration taken from the secular world, but the application relates to some aspect of salvation. It might teach some aspect of Christ's death or resurrection; it might relate to faith in the life of the believer; it might emphasize the sending forth of the Gospel; it might point to Judgment Day. Because of the nation of Israel was an intimate part of the Gospel story, some parables teach about God's plan for them. For example, in Matthew 21:33-45, the parable of the wicked husbandmen points to the fact that the kingdom of God would be taken away from national Israel and given to others.

In the Old Testament, this teaching method was used extensively; for example, in the types and

shadows God employed in the ceremonial laws which outline worship activities and in the civil laws which governed much of the Israelites' civil pursuits. These laws are called "ceremonial laws" by theologians because on the earthly, physical level they were to be rigorously obeyed by the nation of Israel.

Biblical Divorce

After Christ had hung on the cross, the physical aspect of these laws was no longer to be obeyed. Now only the heavenly meaning inherent within these laws is to continue. When Christ hung on the cross the great curtain separated the holy of holies from the holy place was torn apart from top to bottom by the finger of God. This signaled the end of the literal, physical keeping of the ceremonial laws. From that time forward the eyes of believers are to be focused only on the spiritual teachings set forth in the ceremonial laws as opposed to the literal, physical keeping of the ceremonial laws.

In fact, when the New Testament church met together to decide which of the ceremonial laws were to be obeyed by saved Gentiles, they concluded in

Acts 15:28-29: For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. Thus, the observance of ceremonial laws ended. The ceremonial laws ran the gamut from blood sacrifices and burnt offerings to the dimensions and characteristics of the temple building and laws concerning planting fields and weaving cloth.

These laws were to be obeyed by Israel literally, as earthly experiences, but they were to realize that the earthly event was only a shadow or type of some aspect of God's salvation. In

Colossians 2:16-17, God emphasizes this principle: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ."

Included within the ceremonial laws were laws concerning marriage. Three of these were especially noteworthy.

BELIEVERS ARE NOT TO BE UNEQUALLY YOKED WITH UNBELIEVERS

The first of these three laws was given to national Israel when they were coming into the land of Canaan. Deuteronomy 7:2-4: And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them; Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

The first part of this commandment points to the spiritual judgment of the unsaved at Judgment Day, when believers will judge those who must be sent to hell for their sins (I Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 2:26-27). The earthly application is that Israel was to destroy the nations of the land of Canaan.

The second part of the commandment points to the spiritual principle that believers are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. The nation of Israel typifies the body of believers in Christ. The heathen nations surrounding Israel typify the world with its enticements and temptations. Men of the nations of Israel were not to marry heathen wives, and believers are not to become attached or "married" to the world. God declares in

Isaiah 52:11: "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

In this exhortation the Israelites were effectively told that they were to divorce themselves from that which was unclean. The literal, earthly application meant that if (in violation of Deuteronomy 7:2-4), they had married heathen wives, they were to divorce them. The truth of this can be seen dramatically in the Book of Ezra.

The last two chapters of Ezra reveal a sad and traumatic experience faced by Israel. Under the leadership of men like Nehemiah and Ezra, a number of Israelites had returned to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem they discovered that a number of the men had married heathen wives who had borne children. Ezra 9:2-4:

For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

In answer to the serious charge of violation of the commandment of Deuteronomy 7:2-4, the leaders of Israel made an important and difficult decision. They decided that these men must be divorced from their heathen wives. Ezra 10:2-3:

And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land, yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our god to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law.

The decision was to let it be done according to the law. In Isaiah 52:11 God's law decreed that those who had become involved with the unclean thing were to depart from that which was unclean. In the

practical sense, if an Israelite married a heathen wife, he was to divorce that wife, which was the way Ezra and the other leaders understood that law. **Ezra 10:10-12:**

And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them. Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so we must do.

We read in **Ezra 10:16-17:**

And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by their names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

Combining the commands of Deuteronomy 7:2-4 and Isaiah 52:11 with the last two chapters of Ezra, we see that the earthly application of the first ceremonial law concerning marriage is that there was Biblical divorce. If a man violated the law of Deuteronomy 7:2-4 by marrying a heathen wife, the law of Isaiah 52:11 decreed that he was to correct that sinful situation by divorcing that wife.

The spiritual or heavenly meaning introduced by these laws continues today. In

II Corinthians 6:14-17 God declares:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

God is emphasizing that believers are not to be unequally yoked to anything that is of the kingdom of Satan. This can be someone we are planning to marry, or it can be any situation in which we become so entangled with the world that it is like being married to the world.

If we find this condition in our lives, we are to separate ourselves from it. We are to turn away from the unclean condition. Turning away from the world is what God was typifying by the Biblical divorce presented in the last two chapters of Ezra.

I DIVORCE MY UNSAVED SPOUSE?

Since the men of Israel were to divorce heathen wives, what about a mixed marriage of today wherein a believer is married to an unbeliever? Is the believer to divorce the unsaved spouse?

In the New Testament when God says "Israel," He means the body of the believers. The Old Testament men of Israel were not to marry heathen women, and the New Testament men of Israel, the true believers, are not to marry unsaved people. Does that mean that God intends for a believer to divorce his unsaved wife? God answers this question in

I Corinthians 7:12-13.

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. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

God further answers this question, when He speaks of the wife who is married to the unsaved husband, in

I Peter 3:1:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.

God says there is not to be divorce in the case of this kind of marriage. Thus, the earthly application of the ceremonial laws of Deuteronomy 7:2-4 and Isaiah 52:11 is no longer observed. No longer do these laws provide a valid basis for divorce.

The heavenly meaning of these laws continues today. Anyone who is so involved in or attached to the world that he seems married to it is to turn away from it. He is to separate himself from the unholy alliance.

Thus, until Christ went to the cross, a biblically sanctioned divorce was required when man violated Deuteronomy 7:2-4 by marrying heathen women. The earthly aspect of this law came to an end when Christ died (**I Corinthians 7:12-13, II Corinthians 6:14-17, I Peter 3:1**).

ADULTERY CALLS FOR THE DEATH PENALTY

A second ceremonial law that relates to marriage is found in Deuteronomy 22:22: "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel." This law demanded the death penalty for a man and woman who were discovered in an adulterous relationship. Dramatic judgment of those who commit adultery was the literal, earthly application of this command.

The heavenly meaning for Gospel application of this command is found in the New Testament, where this command points to an awesome spiritual marriage. This marriage is revealed in

Romans 7:1-4:

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? 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. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the laws by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

In a spiritual sense every one in the human race is automatically married to the law of God. This marriage is not the result of man's desire. Rather, it is a marriage in which God has joined two parties together into an indissoluble union. These two parties are the human being on the one hand and the law of God on the other hand. Because God has joined these two together, no man can break the union. No matter how we might wish we were free from our spiritual marriage to the law of God, we cannot be freed from it.

It is a marriage between a perfect husband and a very imperfect wife. The husband, the law of God, is absolutely blameless. The wife, however, is the human being, and she is altogether adulterous. We know that the law of God is the husband because Romans 7:1 declares that the law has dominion over the man. In any marriage, the husband is the head of the wife and the wife is to be submissive to the husband.

Therefore, within this spiritual marriage, we humans are to submit obediently to the law of God, which is our spiritual husband. Every time we commit a sin we are engaging in spiritual adultery. We are being unfaithful to our spiritual husband, the law of God.

The law of God, as the husband, cannot divorce the adulterous wife because what God has joined together cannot be put asunder by man. God takes this principle so seriously that even a perfect husband, the law of God, cannot become separated from the adulterous wife (each human) to which it is married.

Spiritual adultery is in view in James 4:4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." In this verse, God is clearly speaking of the adulterous nature of mankind. Men are adulterers and women are adulteresses because they live in spiritual fornication in relationship to the law of God to which they are spiritually married. Jesus makes reference to the adulterous condition of the human race in

Mark 8:38:

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

The adulterous and sinful generation of which He speaks includes the human race throughout time. The kingdom of Satan, to which all of the unsaved of the world belong, is described as the great whore in Revelation 17. Because of man's sinfulness, he is living adulterously as a harlot. Each sinful act is an act of spiritual adultery.

However, even though the law of God, as the husband, cannot divorce the fornicating wife, the human race, there is a way that this terrible marriage can be ended. Because of fornication, the wife deserves to die. Only if she dies can this marriage be brought to an end.

Because the husband is absolutely just and holy, it (the law of God) will bring accusation against the adulterous wife, demanding her death. It is this death that was anticipated in the ceremonial law of Deuteronomy 22:22.

ONLY ETERNAL DAMNATION CAN BREAK THE SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

The earthly story required that that adulterous wife and the individual with whom she had committed adultery be stoned to death. The heavenly meaning of this terrible punishment is far more serious because the death that is required by mankind's husband, the law of God, is the second death, which is eternal damnation. Only after we have spent eternity in hell can the marriage between the law of God and each human being be ended.

~~When a man, a woman, or a child dies physically, that death does not end the spiritual marriage to the law of God. On the last day, when the individual is resurrected, his spiritual husband, the law of God, will accuse him of spiritual fornication.~~

Even in hell the law of God is present and demands the full penalty, eternity in hell. Because eternity is forever, there will never be an end of this awesome relationship. God gives us this warning in the ceremonial law of Deuteronomy 22:22.

Since Christ went to the cross, the earthly aspect of this ceremonial law is not to be observed. This is shown by Jesus; reaction to the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). According to Deuteronomy 22:22, she should have been stoned, but Jesus, who is eternal God, nullified that command by telling the woman to sin no more.

The spiritual meaning of Deuteronomy 22:22 continues throughout time (Romans 7:1-4). The recognition of this spiritual situation points to our intense need for the Savior.

ONLY DEATH CAN END THE HUMAN MARRIAGE

The word "bound" in Romans 7:2 is important; it is the Greek word "deo." It connotes being "shackled together." For example, in Mark 5:3 it is translated "bind" and in verse 4 as "bound."

Mark 5:3-4:

Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that

he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

In Acts 12:6 we read of Peter in prison, "bound with two chains." The word "deo" is found many times in the Bible and is always used in the sense of someone who is tied or shackled. God uses this word to describe the wife's relationship to her husband. This is seen in Romans 7:2, and also in I 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."

In I Corinthians 7:27 we read, "Art thou bound unto a wife?" The binding or shackling of the wife to the husband can be broken only by the death of the husband as Romans 7:2-3 plainly teaches. She is bound to him as long as he lives.

The situation where a man be found to lie with a consenting virgin, who is not spoken for.

We read in Deu 22:29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

HOW TO BECOME FREE FROM OUR MARRIAGE TO THE LAW OF GOD

The Bible has a glorious teaching that shows how we can end the spiritual application of this ceremonial law. In Romans 7:4 God gives the way of escape:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

What does we have "become dead to the law by the body of Christ" mean? The death required by our spiritual husband, the law of God, is eternal damnation, and this is precisely the death Jesus endured when He took our sins upon Himself. In the atonement He was found guilty with our sins and God poured out His wrath upon Him as punishment for those sins. That punishment equaled the punishment we endure if we had to spend eternity in hell.

ADULTERY CALLS FOR THE DEATH PENALTY

Romans 7:4 indicates that Christ rose from the dead which is proof that the penalty demanded by the law of God had been entirely paid. Because Christ, our substitute, endured the equivalent of eternal damnation for each believer, each believer has become dead to the former husband, the law of God. Thus, the law of God has no dominion over him. He is dead to the law.

He is a new creature; he is born again; and he is free to become spiritually married to someone else. That someone else is Christ. The believer becomes the eternal bride of Christ. God has joined the believer to Christ in an eternal, indissoluble marriage relationship that no man can break asunder.

Death can never again occur to either Christ, the husband, or to the believer, the bride; thus, there is no possible way that this beautiful marriage can end. Even though the believer might engage in spiritual fornication (sin), Christ cannot divorce His bride.

The law of God, the husband, cannot divorce the fornicating wife (the unsaved person), so, too, Jesus cannot divorce His bride, the person who has become saved. In the human marriage relationship, there cannot be divorce for fornication. What God has joined together cannot be put asunder. Only death can break the marriage.

Because the believer was given eternal life at the time of salvation, and because Christ rose from the dead to live forever, Christ can never end the blessed marriage union between Himself and the believer. How marvelous! How wonderful! How magnificent is the grace of God.

The law of God is no longer the husband of the believer, and it no longer has dominion over the believer. The law can never again threaten the believer with death, but this does not mean he is no longer related to the law of God. The law of God has now become his friend. The law shows him how to enjoy to the highest possible degree his new relationship with his new husband, Christ Jesus Himself. The believer is no longer shackled to the law of God the way a wife is shackled to a husband.

God uses the marriage relationship between the law of God and mankind to help us understand human marriage, and God also uses the marriage relationship between Christ and His bride to help us understand human marriage.

Believers are found in every political nation, and national Israel no longer has preferred spiritual status (since the cross); therefore, this law no longer applies to marriages between individuals of different nationalities.

GOD'S MARRIAGE TO ISRAEL

A third ceremonial law that relates to marriage and divorce was introduced into the Bible because of the spiritual marriage (which was entirely different from the marriage of the law of God to the human race), wherein God took ancient national Israel as His wife. Israel, as a corporate, external body, was the representation of the kingdom of God on earth during the historical period from Abraham to Jesus. The marriage relationship was established by God because national Israel typified and foreshadowed the spiritual Israel of God which was to become the eternal bride of Christ. We know this spiritual marriage between God and national Israel existed because of God's complaint against the spiritual fornication of His wife, recorded in Jeremiah 3:14: "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you." He was not married to them as individuals; individually they were spiritually married to the law of God. He was married to them as a corporate entity.

At no time in national Israel's history were they faithful. Repeatedly they lusted after gods. What was God to do with His fornicating wife?

According to God's eternal law, death is required for the adulterous wife, but God could not utterly destroy the nation, for Christ was to come out of national Israel. Moreover, national Israel was the seedbed from which the New Testament church would spring forth.

God's plan was to use national Israel as an example of His patience and mercy. In the parable of Luke 13, the fig tree that repeatedly had not borne fruit was to be cut down but was given one more opportunity. If there still was no fruit, it was to be cut down. Today national Israel is a viable nation amongst the nations of the world. Only if it ceases to bear spiritual fruit will it be destroyed.

For these reasons and possibly others, God chose not to have his spiritual wife, national Israel, killed, and yet God planned to break His spiritual marriage with national Israel. Once Christ went to the cross, God had purposed to end forever the spiritual relationship He had with national Israel.

To accomplish this goal, God introduced another law into the body of ceremonial laws. In order to divorce Israel, God had to introduce a law that would permit divorce. God is the giver and maker of the law, and He may introduce any law He desires. Whatever law He sets forth, God in His perfect righteous obligates Himself to obey. In His Word in **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**, God placed a law that permitted divorce for fornication:

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. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. 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; 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.

This law permitted a husband to divorce his wife in whom he had found some matter of uncleanness. (Later we will show that this related to fornication.) The inclusion of this law permitted God to divorce national Israel. We are told this in

Isaiah 50:1:

Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Likewise, in Jeremiah 3:8 we read:

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.

God continues to reveal the sinful nature of the wife He had married in **Jeremiah 3:20**: "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord."

In the ceremonial law God introduced two dominant laws concerning adultery within a marriage. In the case of Deuteronomy 22:22, both a man and woman who engaged in the act of adultery were to be put to death. In the case of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, only the wife could be divorced for fornication. No language is employed here or anywhere else in the Bible that even suggests that a wife could divorce an adulterous husband.

Because these laws were part of the ceremonial laws, the citizens of the nation of Israel were to obey them. If a husband found his wife in an act of adultery, he was to have her stoned to death along with the man with whom she was caught. If there were some act of obvious fornication, but the wife was not actually caught in the act of adultery, the husband still had the right to divorce her.

In the New Testament, Jesus made several references to this law to show that it was rescinded with His coming and to that Israel had grossly misapplied this law. It is still grossly misapplied by the church as a Biblical basis for divorce.

ISRAEL'S MISUSE OF DEUTERONOMY 24

The language of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was sufficiently unclear that the men of national Israel used it as a basis to divorce their wives for any reason whatsoever. When we understand why, we will better understand Matthew 5:32, a verse some people use to justify divorce for fornication.

The key words of Deuteronomy 24:1 are "some uncleanness." For "some uncleanness" found in a wife the husband had Biblical cause for divorce. What was this sin?

The Hebrew word "debar," which is translated as "some" in the phrase "some uncleanness," normally means "word" or "matter." Out of about 2400 usages in the Bible, "debar" is translated in at least 1000 verses as "speak" or "talk" or something similar. In other verses it is translated "word" (at least 770 times). Thus, "word" or "talk" are the dominant meanings of the word "debar."

Less often, but with considerable frequency, "debar" is translated as "act" (52 times), "matter" (63 times), and "thing" (215 times). Thus, we can safely say that in Deuteronomy 24:1, "debar" should be translated as "act," "matter," "thing," or "word."

The Hebrew word translated as "uncleanness" in this same phrase is "ervah," which is found 54 times in the King James Bible. In more than 50 of these places it is translated "nakedness." When we examine the places where it is translated "nakedness," we find that it usually relates to gross sexual impurity. For example, in **Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20, where God sets forth commands prohibiting incest**, God employs the word "nakedness" ("ervah") at least 30 times.

Thus, the word "ervah" takes on the meaning "fornication." In Leviticus 18:8 God warns, "The nakedness [ervah] of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover." A commentary on this warning is found in I Corinthians 5:1:

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. In this verse, God uses the word "fornication" in connection with sexual impurity between a man and his father's wife. In Leviticus 18:8 God speaks of this kind of sexual impurity as uncovering the nakedness. Therefore, we can see that "nakedness" or "uncleanness" is synonymous with "fornication."

Bringing these facts together, we know that in Deuteronomy 24:1 God is teaching that if a man found a "word" or a "matter" of fornication in his wife, he could write a bill of divorcement and divorce her. Certain acts of fornication were punishable by death, but if the particular act or word of fornication did not require the death of the fornicating wife, the husband had the right to divorce her. Another understanding of the meaning of "ervah" was what opened the door for the Israelite husband to divorce his wife under almost any circumstance.

DIVORCE FOR ANY CAUSE

In Deuteronomy 23:12-14 God uses the identical phrase, "ervah dabar," which is the key phrase of Deuteronomy 24:1. "Ervah debar" does not refer to fornication; rather, it refers to ceremonial uncleanness, Deuteronomy 23:12-14:

Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon, and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee. The phrase "unclean thing" near the end of this quotation is "ervah debar." What was the "unclean thing"? In this context it was nothing more than the discharge from a person's body when he or she felt the call of nature. When a person felt the urge, he was to go outside the camp, dig a hole and receive his body's discharge, and then cover it so that the surface of the ground would be clean.

Actually, any discharge from the body made a person unclean. According to the ceremonial laws of Leviticus 15, any running issue, any kind of discharge from the body, made a person unclean. A woman menstruating was unclean. Someone experiencing diarrhea that spotted his garments was unclean.

Therefore, the "ervah debar" in Deuteronomy 23:14 gave the men of Israel tremendous leverage in their marriages. All he had to do was spot menstrual blood on his wife's garments, or any other discharge that touched her or her garments, and that would serve the hardhearted husband's purpose. In the intimacy of marriage the opportunities to see "some uncleanness" in one's wife were numerous.

Thus, the men could divorce their wives quite easily. The wife had no security whatsoever. Even if she had not been guilty of fornication, the husband could find plenty of "Biblical" reason to divorce her if this was his desire.

JESUS SETS THE MATTER STRAIGHT

Jesus took issue with this understand of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Jesus clarified the law by showing that these verses of Deuteronomy 24 only permitted fornication as a ground for divorce.

Matthew 5:31-32:

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 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.

Verse 31 relates back to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the only passage of the Old Testament that relates in a clear way to Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:31. Jesus points out that ancient Israel had widened the application of the cause for divorce far beyond the scope intended by Deuteronomy 24:1, where the cause had to be a specific word or matter of fornication. Matthew 5:31 states that all that was required for divorce at that time was the writing of divorcement. Jesus, therefore, restates Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in verse 32. Jesus accomplishes three things by this restatement. First, He underscores the Jews' total disregard for the sanctity of marriage and will show that the cause for divorce was to have been something quite adulterous.

Second, He reveals the awful sinfulness of divorce in that it causes the divorced wife to commit adultery even though she, by her own action, might be innocent of adultery.

Third, He restates Deuteronomy 24:2-4 to show that the wife who was divorced should not remarry.

DEUTERONOMY 24 ALLOWS DIVORCE ONLY FOR FORNICATION

The first phrase we must understand in Matthew 5:32 is, "saving for the cause of fornication," which relates closely to Deuteronomy 24:1.

The word "saving" is the Greek word "parektos," which is used in only two other places in the Bible. It is translated "except" in Acts 26:29: "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." In this verse "parektos" is translated "without" in II Corinthians 11:28: "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Here the Biblical meaning of "parektos" is "without."

Returning to Matthew 5:32, we discover that the English phrase "for the cause" is the Greek word "logos," which is translated as "word" more than 200 times in the Bible. It is also translated in a few

instances as "matter" or "thing." Thus, "logos" can mean either "word" or "matter" or "thing," and is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "debar" used in Deuteronomy 24:1. The word "fornication" used in Matthew 5:32 is the Greek word "porneias" which is always translated "fornication." Therefore, the phrase "saving for the cause of fornication" can be accurately translated "without a word or matter of fornication." This is surprisingly close to the literal rendering of the Hebrew "ervah debar" of Deuteronomy 24:1. Remember, the usual translation of "debar" was "word" or "talk" or "matter," and the usual translation of "ervah" was "nakedness" in the context of fornication.

Thus, we see evidence that Jesus was focusing in on Deuteronomy 24:1 by the specific language He used in Matthew 5:32. He was teaching that the "uncleanness" of Deuteronomy 24:1 was not meant to be understood as some ceremonial uncleanness such as menstrual blood or a diarrhea discharge. Rather, the "uncleanness" was meant to present fornication as the only cause for which a man could divorce his wife.

DIVORCE CAUSES AN INNOCENT SPOUSE TO BE ADULTEROUS

Christ introduces an additional principle in the next phrase in verse 32, where He says: "causeth her to commit adultery." How are we to understand this?

Let us begin by reading verse 32 without the phrase "saving for the cause of fornication." It now reads "whosoever shall put away his wife...causeth her to commit adultery." In this statement Jesus introduces a very serious matter: While it is altogether wrong for a divorce to occur, should it occur, such a divorce causes the wife to commit adultery. Does this merely mean that the divorced wife becomes prone to adultery because, if she should marry someone else, that marriage would be adulterous as Romans 7:2-3 teaches? No. There is no evidence that Jesus is teaching this. He is simply saying that if a man divorces his wife, regardless of how holy or pure she might be in herself, she has been forced by the divorce itself to commit adultery. The very act of the divorce caused her marriage to become adulterated and in that sense she has been caused to commit adultery. Jesus underscores the terribleness of the sin of divorce. Not only does the husband who desires the divorce sin, but he also causes his wife to sin, even if she does not want the divorce.

This becomes understandable when we remember that those who have married have become fused by God into one flesh, a divine union which no man can break apart. Therefore, if a man breaks apart that which God has joined together, the union has been adulterated. However, if the wife had committed fornication before the divorce, then she herself committed adultery. Based on Deuteronomy 24:1, the man had a right to divorce his wife in such a case. Since she was adulterous before she was divorced, the husband's act of divorcing her was not the cause of her sinful state of adultery. Jesus does not call attention to Deuteronomy 24:1 to indicate that this command is to continue in force throughout time. He is simply showing that while Deuteronomy 24:1 was in force, a man had to discover actual fornication in his wife to divorce her and to put her away for any lesser cause was a violation of that command.

Since that command was repealed (as we shall see when we study Mark 10 and Matthew 19), Jesus definitely is not teaching that fornication is a cause for divorce. Therefore, This verse is not dealing with the question of whether or not there is any cause for divorce. Rather, Jesus is emphasizing the seriousness of the sin of divorce.

THE WOMAN WHO IS DIVORCED BECOMES DEFILED IF SHE MARRIES AGAIN

The third point that Jesus makes involves a restatement and clarification of Deuteronomy 24:2-4. In the King James Bible, the use of the word "may" in the phrase "she may go," appears to say that the fornicating wife who was divorced was free to marry. However, in the original Hebrew the word "may" is not included; thus, the Bible is not teaching she may go and be another man's wife. This can be seen by the language found in verse 4, where God indicates she will have become defiled if she remarries. Effectively, God is teaching that if the divorced wife becomes another man's wife, she will be defiled so that she cannot return to her first husband.

This principle is reiterated and expanded in the last phrase of Matthew 5:32 where Jesus declares that "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Because the divorced wife who has remarried has become defiled as a result of the remarriage, it logically follows that the man who married her has entered into an adulterous marriage. Jesus emphasizes the fact that such a man has indeed committed adultery.

DEUTERONOMY 24:1 ALLOWED ONLY ONE-HALF OF ISRAEL TO DIVORCE

The law that permitted a man to divorce his wife for fornication applied to only half of Israel. Deuteronomy 24:1 only permitted the husband to divorce his wife. This was because, in its ceremonial nature, the law was pointing to the coming divorce of national Israel. No provision of any kind was made for the wife to divorce the husband because no aspect of God's salvation plan or of God's dealing with national Israel included the possibility or national Israel divorcing God. Therefore, a wife could never divorce a fornicating husband. In her relationship to her husband, she was under the universal law given from the beginning of creation that there was not to be divorce for any reason whatsoever.

Thus, in the case of the law of God (the husband) being spiritually married to the individual (the wife), there never was a time when divorce for fornication or for any other reason was allowed. Also, in the nation of Israel, the wife could never divorce the husband for his fornication. Only the husband could divorce the wife for fornication because that was part of the ceremonial law which pointed to God's coming divorce of corporate, national Israel. In summary, we see that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 taught the following principles:

- 1 A husband could divorce his wife only if she were found guilty of fornication.
- 2 The wife, who was guilty of fornication and, as a result, was divorced, would become defiled if she married someone else. Thus she was to remain single.
- 3 No permission was given to the wife to divorce her husband for any reason whatsoever.

In Matthew 5:32 Jesus reiterated the basic principles of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and expanded them to teach:

- 1 A husband who divorced his wife for any reason other than fornication caused her to commit adultery.
- 2 Any man who married a divorced woman committed adultery.

What does the Bible teach concerning the continuation of the law of Deuteronomy 24:1-4? The spiritual, heavenly meaning of these verses ended when Jesus hung on the cross. The veil of the temple was rent asunder, which signaled the finality of God's divorce from national Israel. Because it was written into Old Testament law in order that God might divorce national Israel for its spiritual fornication, we have reason to suspect that it (like other ceremonial laws), ceased to have any physical application after the crucifixion. The Bible shows that this law was rescinded by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Pharisees came to Jesus with a question concerning divorce, and we read in **Mark 10:2: "And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him."**

Their question must relate to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 for it is the only Old Testament passage that speaks of the possibility of a man divorcing his wife. This can be seen in Jesus' answer in Mark 10:3-4: "And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away." Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is clearly the passage that Jesus is addressing as He continues to teach.

In **verse 5** Jesus explains why this command has been inserted into Old Testament law: **"And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept."** It was because of the hardness of the hearts of ancient Israel that the law was given to allow divorce for fornication. Did God want to provide relief to the husbands by setting forth a law that permitted them to divorce if their wives were involved in fornication? Or did He give the law because the husbands would be so unforgiving of their fornicating wives that, because of the hardness of their hearts, these unforgiving husbands were allowed to divorce their wives? These possibilities do not make sense. God lays down laws that help us to live more holy before Him rather than to allow us to live sinfully.

Only when we realize the truth as to why God inserted this law into the ceremonial laws of the Bible can this verse be understood. **The phrase "hardness of heart" relates to that which is rebellious, and rebellion against God is spiritual fornication.** God gave this law so that He, as the husband of national Israel, could divorce His fornication wife. Because of the hardness of heart, or spiritual fornication of national Israel, the law was given. Thus, once God had divorced national Israel, this law had no further purpose.

Therefore, in **Mark 10:6-9, Jesus directly and plainly rescinds the Old Testament command:** **But from the beginning of the creation of God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**

Jesus indicates that it was never God's intention for divorce to be permitted. It is true that temporarily God did open a very narrow window permitting a man to divorce his fornicating wife, but this was only so that God could divorce fornicating national Israel.

Jesus says in Mark 10:11-12: **And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.**

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 allowed a husband to divorce a fornicating wife. A wife was given no right whatsoever to divorce a fornicating husband. Jesus has rescinded the husband's right to divorce a fornicating wife, and He emphasizes the impossibility of Biblical divorce from both directions, the husband divorcing the wife and the wife divorcing the husband.

In Mark 10:11-12 God underscores another vital principle: A divorced man or woman cannot become remarried. According to verse 11, if a man remarries, he commits adultery against his first wife. Why is this?

We learned in Romans 7:1-4 that the wife is bound to her husband as long as they both live. Therefore, even though a divorce may have seemingly broken the marriage relationship, from God's vantage point the man and wife are still bound to each other. Therefore, if the man takes another wife while his first wife is still living, he is committing adultery. He is adulterating the lifelong union God has made between this man and his first wife. Likewise, verse 12 emphasizes that the wife may not marry someone else after divorce. Even though she is legally divorced, in God's sight she is still bound to her first husband. Therefore, she commits adultery if she marries another while her first husband is still living. The principle of the binding relationship of the wife to the husband is repeated in **I 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.**

In **I Corinthians 7:10** we are instructed, **"Let not the wife depart from [that is, divorce] her husband."** In **I Corinthians 7:11** God says, **"and let not the husband put away his wife."** All of the Bible's teachings are

consistent and in agreement. In Luke 16:17 Jesus makes reference to the eternal nature of the law of God: "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Having indicated the perpetual nature of the law of God, Jesus immediately addresses the question of a man divorcing his wife. He exhorts in

Luke 16:18:

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

In this statement we find the same truth we have learned from Mark 10:2-12, Romans 7:1-4, and I Corinthians 7. There is not to be divorce! No exceptions!

MATTHEW 19:9

We want to look carefully at the one verse that has been abused most consistently in man's efforts to find a Biblical basis for divorce. Matthew 19:9, which immediately relates to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, has the appearance of allowing divorce for fornication.

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 whose marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Many theologians read this verse and quickly conclude that it teaches there can be no divorce except in the case of fornication. We have already seen in our study that there is no Biblical cause for divorce. Therefore, we can be sure that this one verse, Matthew 19:9, cannot allow divorce for fornication or for any other reason. If we concluded otherwise, we would have before us a major contradiction. The Bible is one harmonious whole. While it may have statements that appear contradictory, we know that they are not actual contradictions. They only appear to be contradictions because our understanding of the questionable passages remains incomplete.

Let us assume for a moment that we must base our whole understanding of divorce and remarriage on this one verse, Matthew 19:9. What would we learn?

Matthew 19:9 apparently teaches that a man may divorce his wife for fornication. But notice: there is no suggestion that the wife may divorce the husband for fornication. There is not even the slightest implication or indication that the wife can divorce the husband. In fact, nowhere in the Bible is there any statement that teaches that the wife can divorce the husband. Also the verse does not justify the husband for divorcing his wife for any reason except fornication.

Additionally, Matthew 19:8 tells us that Moses allowed the husband to divorce his wife for the cause of fornication only because of the hardness of the husband's heart:

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.

The term "hardness of heart" refers to someone who is unsaved, someone who is in rebellion against God.

Thus, if anyone insisted on understanding Matthew 19:9 without regard to any other teachings of the Bible, the most that he could see in this verse would be that a husband could divorce his wife only in the case of fornication, and such a divorce would be an indication of the husband's unsaved, rebellious spiritual condition. Therefore, even on the basis of Matthew 19:9, no true child of God would ever countenance the thought of divorce. Rather, he would realize that he is called upon to repeatedly forgive his wife for the sin of fornication just as he is to forgive any other sin.

When we consider what modern day theologians have done with this verse, we should be skeptical of their conclusions, for when they decide there can be divorce for the cause of fornication, they immediately conclude that not only can the husband divorce the fornicating wife, but the wife also can divorce the fornicating husband. Yet neither this verse nor any other verse in the Bible allows a wife to divorce her husband. Thus, when we hear such teachings, we should suspect gross violation of the true understanding of this verse.

"Does the Bible teach that fornication is grounds for divorce?" The answer is emphatically **"No!"**

In Matthew 19:8, Jesus emphasizes two important truths. First, this command was inserted into the law book primarily to give God a way to divorce national Israel because of their spiritual rebellion, their hardness of heart. Second, He is indicating that this was not God's eternal plan for human marriage for "from the beginning it was not so."

Jesus emphasizes in Matthew 19:8 that a man was no longer to put away his wife for fornication, so it does not make sense at all that our Lord would reintroduce in the next verse the command He has just rescinded.

NO DIVORCE FOR ANY REASON

A correct understanding of Matthew 19:9 is forthcoming if we go to the opening sentence of the paragraph in which Matthew 19:9 is found. In Matthew 19:3 we read: "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?" Jesus answered them in verse 6: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

In verse 7 the Pharisees asked about Deuteronomy 24:1, which permitted divorce for fornication. Jesus answers their question in verse 8 and indicates that Deuteronomy 24:1 was rescinded.

In verse 9 Jesus returns to the Pharisees' original question: Can a man put away his wife for every cause? In verse 8 He indicates that fornication was no longer to be a cause for divorce. In verse 9 He

covers every possible reason other than fornication and indicates that any other reason was also an invalid cause for divorce. Effectively, He is saying in verse 9, "whosoever puts away his wife for any reason [in addition to or other than or except] for fornication [which we have just seen in verse 8 to be an invalid cause for divorce] and marries another commits adultery."

The word "except" (the Greek "ei me") takes on the sense or meaning of "in addition to" or "other than" in this context. This meaning of "ei me" is fairly common in the Bible. For example, in Matthew 19:17 Jesus says: "there is none good but [ei me] one, that is, God." This verse could be read: "there is none good [in addition to or other than] one, that is, God." Likewise, in Mark 8:14 we read: "Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf." The phrase "more than" is also "ei me." Here, too, we could translate: "neither had they in the ship with them [in addition to or other than] one loaf."

Many other examples could be given, but these two should suffice to show that in Matthew 19:9, Jesus is simply covering all other possible causes for divorce "except," "other than," "in addition to" fornication. He has already eliminated the cause of fornication in verse 8.

Jesus has twice answered the question posed by the Pharisees in verse 3 concerning divorce for every cause. He has first answered it in verses 4-6 by saying there is not to be divorce for any reason. Then in verses 7 and 8, He specifically teaches that fornication cannot be a cause for divorce. In verse 9 He applies this teaching to all other causes of divorce, except the cause of fornication, which He had just covered in verse 8.

The removal of fornication as a cause for divorce so shocked the disciples that they said to Jesus in verse 10: "His disciple say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." They apparently could not envision a marriage wherein a husband had lost all right to divorce his wife. The disciples were astounded and dismayed that there could no longer be divorce. Their reaction to the statements Jesus made in Matthew 19:4-9 underscores the fact that Jesus had rescinded the command of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The earthly application of the other ceremonial laws came to an end when Jesus came, and the application of the ceremonial law of a man divorcing his fornicating wife also ended with His coming. In fact, not only did the physical application of this law end, but the spiritual application ended as well.

The last half of Matthew 19:9, "and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery," is almost an exact duplication of Luke 16:18. We saw in Luke 16:18, Matthew 5:32, and Mark 10:11-12, that God indicated that a man was not to marry another wife after divorce, and anyone who married the divorced wife committed adultery. Clearly the law stand today that as long as the divorced spouse lives, there is not to be remarriage after divorce.

The Bible records that when Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus, thought Mary had committed fornication because she was with child, he, being a just man, sought how to put her away (Matthew 1:19). The fact that the Bible says he was a "just" man underscores the fact that God was absolutely holy and righteous when He divorced national Israel as a corporate body. God divorced them as a corporate body, not as individuals. God could not divorce them as individuals within the nation because He was not married to them on that level. The law of God as the husband was married to them as individuals and in that relationship there could be no divorce. No matter how adulterous any man became, he remained under the law God, even as the wife remains under the dominion of her husband. God used national Israel to display various types and figures which were shadows of the spiritual reality that was to be fulfilled in Christ. Their corporate marriage to God was a picture of the marriage of Christ to the eternal church. God married Israel when it was a nothing, and the believer becomes the bride of Christ when he is spiritually dead in his sins. God lavished his love on his wife, national Israel, by showering them with physical and spiritual blessings, and He showers spiritual blessings on His eternal bride, the true believers in Christ.

THE UNSAVED SPOUSE BREAKS THE MARRIAGE

We will now examine a verse that is sometimes used as a Biblical basis for remarriage after divorce. I Corinthians 7:15:
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.

Does I Corinthians 7:15 teach that if the unbelieving spouse insists upon a divorce, the believing spouse is no longer bound in that marriage, and therefore is free to remarry?

We know from our previous studies that the conclusion that a divorced person can remarry is erroneous. The key word that we need to understand is the word that means "under bondage." It is the Greek word "doulos" which means "to enslave." It is from the Greek word "doulos" which is translated "slave," "bondservant," or "servant" in the Bible. It is commonly used to refer to a man's relationship to Christ. Paul was a servant (doulos) of Christ (Romans 1:1). We are servants of Christ (Colossians 4:12; II Timothy 2:24). On the other hand, we may be the slave of sin (II Peter 2:19). The word "doulos" or "doulos" is never used of the relationship that exists between husband and wife. Insofar as the Bible is concerned, the husband is never the slave of the wife; the wife is never the slave of the husband.

God says in I Corinthians 7:27, "Art thou bound unto a wife?" but this word "bound" is entirely different from "doulos" or "doulos." It is the Greek word "deo." It is a word that gives the sense of two things being bound or tied together. The prisoner is bound (Mark 6:17). The donkey was tied (Mark 11:2). The husband and wife are bound to each other (I Corinthians 7:27, 39; Romans 7:2), but the idea of being a servant or a

slave is not found in the word "deo."

Nowhere else in the Bible is "dooloo" identified with the husband-wife relationship. How are we to understand its use in I Corinthians 7:15? The answer can be seen if we properly understand the problem being addressed by this verse. Let us look at a situation common to our day. The Christian wife knows there is not to be a divorce under any circumstance, but the unsaved husband insists on a divorce. He refuses to obey God's Word because he is unsaved. God's Word means little or nothing to him.

What is his wife to do? Is she bitterly and relentlessly to fight her husband in order to prevent the divorce? God has an answer for this situation. She is called to peace. She is not to fight. In her bondage to Christ, earnestly desiring to do God's will, she is not to fight the divorce. She is not bound to Christ's written law to the point that she is to engage in such a fight.

If her husband divorces her, she cannot remarry as long as her husband is living (Romans 7:2-3). Instead of marrying, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband as

I Corinthians 7:11 says:

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

I Corinthians 7:15 is not intended to give aid or comfort to those seeking divorce. When carefully understood in the light of everything else the Bible teaches about marriage, this verse is found to be in perfect agreement with the principle that there is not to be divorce for any reason.

ART THOU LOOSED FROM A WIFE?

Another passage that is sometimes made to serve as a rationale to permit divorce is **I Corinthians 7:27-28:**

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife, seek not a wife. but and if thou marry, thou has not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

It is apparent and certainly Biblical to understand the phrase "seek not to be loosed," as a command not to seek divorce. That conclusion agrees with everything we have seen in the Bible concerning marriage. But verses 27 and 28 go on to say, "Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned."

With this statement in mind, the argument is often presented that if the first word "loosed" in verse 27 refers to divorce, then the second word "loosed" must also refer to divorce. This interpretation makes the verse seem to teach that someone who is divorced can remarry. However, that conclusion, when tested by all the passages of the Bible that speak of divorce and remarriage, is shown to be wrong. Nowhere else in the Bible does God permit remarriage after divorce if the wife or husband still lives. Therefore, we should know that we have arrived at a wrong conclusion concerning the meaning of this verse.

First, we assumed that the word "loosed" refers only to divorce. Actually, there are two ways a husband could be loosed from a wife; she could have been divorced or she could have died. Therefore, verse 27 is simply saying, "Art thou bound" [Greek deo which means shackled to], unto a wife? seek not to [desire to] be loosed." That is, do not desire that God would take her in death, the Biblical means of ending the marriage; and do not desire to be divorced from her, the unbiblical way to end the marriage. If you are loosed from a wife, verse 28 declares you can remarry. Since there is clear evidence in the Bible that you cannot remarry if you have been divorced, we can be sure that in the second usage of the word "loosed," God cannot have divorce in mind. If He did, this verse would contradict everything else in the Bible that concerns marriage and divorce

The only possible meaning in regards to the second usage of the word "loosed" is that the shackle that has bound the wife to the husband has been broken by her death. That conclusion is in total agreement with passages like Romans 7:1-4.

As a matter of fact, even the first usage of the word "loosed" in I Corinthians 7:27 cannot refer to divorce because Romans 7:2 stipulates that only if her husband is dead is a wife loosed from the law of her husband. In other words, even if a husband divorces his wife, she is still bound to him insofar as God's law is concerned. Therefore, when God speaks of a man being loosed from his wife, He can be referring only to the loosing caused by the death of his wife.

Thus, I Corinthians 7:27-28, like all of the other passages we have examined, gives no assent whatsoever to the idea of divorce or remarriage after divorce.

THE UNSAVED SPOUSE BREAKS THE MARRIAGE

In this chapter we will look at the marriage union itself. Is it just a partnership between two people who stand on the same ground? Is it merely a contract that is analogous to any other contract with which we might be familiar?

We have begun to discover that marriage is not a contract; it is not a partnership. It is a union – a union of such consequence that two people, as it were, have become fused into one being. The Bible uses the language: **"they are no more twain, but one flesh"** (Matthew 19:6). The intensity and reality of this fusion are described in

I Corinthians 7:3-5:

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 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. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may

give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

In this statement God establishes the principle that the two who are married are to live in the greatest possible intimacy. Their bodies belong to each other. Except for brief spiritual activity, they are not to deny their bodies from each other. No other physical relationship exists in the world like this relationship. They are to live as one body because God has ordained that they are one flesh. God emphasizes that this union is not made by man but by God (Mark 10:9). Does this refer only to a Christian marriage? If that were true, then all non-Christian marriages would not be marriages; they would simply be a man and woman living together in an adulterous relationship.

God is speaking of every marriage in the human race. We know that God has all marriages throughout the history of the world in view because Mark 10:6-8 takes us all the way back to our first parents who were created to be husband and wife.

Mark 10:6-8:

But from the beginning of the creation of God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

When two people are joined in marriage and consummate that relationship in the marriage bed, it is a union made by God. This is indeed a remarkable truth. It is hard to find any other physical human experience wherein we can say conclusively, "This is God's action."

Even the marriage that was consummated as an act of rebellion against God is still a marriage which God has made into an indissoluble union. This does not make God guilty of sin, because God cannot sin. Rather, in accomplishing His divine purposes, God utilizes the sinful desires of man.

For example, God allowed the brothers of Joseph to commit the dastardly crime of selling their younger brother into slavery so that later, Joseph, as Prime Minister of Egypt, would be able to save them from starvation. Likewise, God can utilize a sinfully contracted marriage for His own purposes. God informs us that once a marriage is consummated, a union has come into being by the action of God.

For that reason, God speaks of the wife being bound to the husband (Romans 7:2; I Corinthians 7:39). If the wife is bound to the husband, then it logically follows that the husband is bound to the wife. Earlier in our study, we saw that the word "bound," which God uses in these verses, means to be "tied to" or "shackled together." Remember that God declared that only He could break the marriage union. He does this by claiming one spouse in death.

THE MARRIAGE UNION MAY NOT BE BROKEN BY MAN

Counselors who encourage quarreling spouses to try a trial separation are in violation of God's Word. Divorce, which is so much in vogue in our day, is a terrible violation of God's edict concerning marriage.

Rather than encouraging separation, the Bible insists that the bodies of those who are married belong to each other (I Corinthians 7:3-5). No matter how badly the marriage is going, that principle is to be observed. Woe unto us when we take these matters into our own hands

God underscores the sacredness of the marriage union in **Mark 10:11-12:**

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Romans 7:2-3:

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. 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.

Jesus restates the principle in Luke

16:18: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." Surely the Bible could not be any clearer! There is not to be separation! There is not to be divorce!

Why has God put such emphasis on the sanctity of marriage? God in His mercy has placed great protection around the family. These laws protect the husband and fathers so that he is included in the family as long as any of the other family members are living. The wife and children are protected in the same way.

In our day, divorce has become so rampant in our land that we know of wives who are trying to get along without husbands, husbands who have rejected their wives, and bewildered, broken children who hardly know who their parents are. Indeed, when the church first began to rewrite the rules of the Bible to permit divorce, it was the beginning of the end for families. The wind was sown, but the whirlwind is being reaped. There is a staggering amount of evidence in the lives of those from broken families to indicate that the church committed drastic sin when it tampered with God's marriage laws. It is like the mythical Pandora's box, the lid of which could not be closed when sin began to pour forth. We have begun to see the reality of the magnification and terrible consequences of tampering with **God's sacred laws.**

There is another reason why God enters into every marriage and claims responsibility for fusing two people into one flesh. God uses the human marriage as a picture of Christ and the believers; God fuses the husband and wife into one flesh, and through the Lord Jesus Christ, He makes Himself one with the

believers. This unique oneness is spoken of in many different ways in the Bible. The believer is "in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1); Christ is in the believer (Romans 8:10); God the Holy Spirit dwells within the believer (Romans 8:11); and sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." The believers are called the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2, 9). God develops the human marriage as a type or figure of Christ's relationship to the believer in the beautiful language of

Ephesians 5:28-32:

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

In this passage, God carefully declares that the joining of the husband to the wife as one flesh points directly to Christ and the eternal church. Thus, God has placed His divine hand on the marriage union because He has made it a type or figure of the intimate and eternally-binding relationship that exists between Christ and the true believers, His eternal church. Even as the husband and wife live together in the greatest intimacy, so Christ lives in similar intimacy with the believer. Even as God has fused the husband and wife together into one flesh, so God has fused Christ and the believer together in such a way that God can use the same phrase, "one flesh," when speaking of this spiritual union.

Death is the only way the physical union of husband and wife can be broken, but the believer in Christ has eternal life. That is, he can never die spiritually. Since Christ is eternal God, who died once at the cross and will never die again, there is no possibility of breaking the union between Christ and the believer. Neither the bride (the believer), nor the husband (Christ) can ever die. Therefore, no sinful action on the part of the believer can threaten his marriage with Christ. Even as in human marriage there cannot be divorce for fornication, the spiritual marriage between Christ and the believer cannot be broken by the spiritual fornication of the believer. What tremendous comfort and assurance we should receive from this glad truth!

THE HUSBAND'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

The Bible commands in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives." Does this command apply when the wife does not love the husband? Does it apply when the wife indicates she hates her husband, when she is on drugs, or is a drunkard, or is living in fornication? Would God expect the husband to love this kind of wife?

God's command to the husband to love his wife is unconditional. He must have no reservations insofar as his love for his wife is concerned. No matter what she might be or become, he is to love her.

How do we know this? We know because the Bible offers no advice concerning conditions for a cessation of this love. Even in the verses that seem to suggest but actually do not allow the possibility of divorce, there is no suggestion of a cessation of love. In fact, God teaches that forgiveness is to be normative in a Christian's life. **Matthew 18:21-22:**

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Since there is to be no end of forgiveness toward the one who has sinned against us, surely the principle of forgiveness will apply to the husband-wife relationship. Therefore, no matter what the wife does or says that displeases her husband, he is to forgive her. The principle, "Husbands, love your wives," still stands.

AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH

There is a second dynamic reason why a husband's love for his wife is to be without reservation. Ephesians 5:25 informs us: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." God gives us an example of the kind of love the husband is to have for his wife: as Christ loved the eternal church. How did Christ love the church? The church that God has in view is the body of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal church.

What is the character of Christ's love towards those whom He plans to save? He loves them when they are still entirely rebellious against Him. He loves them without any conditions or reservations of any kind. He draws them to Himself when they are in rebellion against Him. He inclines their hearts to love Him. He pays for their sins. He forgives every sin they will ever commit.

To accomplish their salvation Christ denied Himself entirely. He was stripped of the glory He had eternally with the Father. He humbled Himself to the lowest possible degree, becoming one with the sinful human race which arrogantly had rebelled against Almighty God. Jesus Himself was without sin but He became laden with our sins. He bore the punishment demanded by God for those sins. That punishment was the worst that will ever be endured by anyone, for it was the equivalent of eternal damnation on behalf of everyone who would come to be His bride.

God has given us an awesome example of the way husbands are to love their wives and the kind of sacrifices they are to make as they seek the very best for their wives. What about after we are saved? Does Christ's relationship to His bride change? Again we stand amazed at the compassion, the patience, the forgiveness of Christ. No matter how often the true believer sins, Christ always forgives him. Christ promises that He will never leave him nor forsake him. God's love is tender and everlasting. Nothing His bride can say or do can separate her from Christ's love.

Regardless of what the wife does or becomes, the husband is to love her, cherish her, and patiently forgive. Christ, in His love for the eternal church, wanted the very best for the church, so husbands are to always want the very best for their wives. In his love for his wife, a husband will find that many times he has to deny himself. For the good of his family, he may have to give up his cherished hobby. He may find that he cannot spend the time he would like to spend with his special friends.

It may mean that he will have to reconsider his own personal thinking concerning the vocation he would like to follow or the place where he would like to live. Always he must have a loving concern for the feelings and needs of his wife and children.

As head of the house, he is not to consider himself "the big boss." While he never loses sight of his responsibility as the head of the family, he always tries to think of what is best for what is best for his wife and family. He lovingly guides his family. He has the final authority under God, but he exercises that authority with great love, tenderness, and empathy for his family.

Under no circumstances is he to be resentful toward his wife. Whatever she is or does, he is to patiently continue to love her. He is never to think about others he could have married or wish his wife could be like someone else. He is never to countenance the idea that he wishes he were married to someone else. The full focus of his attention and concern should be toward his wife and family. No matter how difficult the situation may be, he is never to think of divorce.

He is to accept with no reservations the fact that his wife is an integral part of his life as long as she lives. Because God has fused her to him so that they are one flesh, he knows that he cannot take any action that disregards his wife. His wife should be at least as important to him as anything else in his life. Only his love for his Savior should be greater than his love for his wife. In his love for his Savior, he knows he is to love and care for his wife the same way and to the same degree that he loves and cares for himself. The greatest blessing a man could desire for his wife is eternal life. Therefore, a husband is not only to provide for the physical needs of his wife, he is, above all, to provide for her spiritual needs. He has the responsibility of providing a godly home, and he has the responsibility of leading his family in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

The God-fearing husband has realized the highest possible good for himself, which is salvation. Furthermore, he will do whatever is necessary to care for and satisfy the needs of his own body. This comes naturally to him. In these verses he is exhorted to love his wife as he loves his own body. If his body becomes ill, wounded, or troubled, he still loves it; he is to love his wife the same way. No matter what moral, mental, or physical difficulties his wife may experience, he is to love her. Because he is saved, he knows that finally his body will be changed into a glorious spiritual body, and he is to desire the highest blessing, a glorified spiritual body, for his wife. He is to honor and respect his wife. **I Thessalonians 4:4: "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."**

The vessel God has in view in this verse is the wife. The husband is to regard his wife as a holy vessel. She is not a convenient place to discharge his sexual lusts. In the marriage bed, as well as in all of his relationships with her, he is to treat her with honor and respect. To use a secular phrase, he is always to be a gentleman. In all things lawful he is to have a first concern for his wife.

No husband can of himself love his wife in the measure asked for by God. By God's grace and in His strength, as the husband trusts more in Christ, these ideals become possible. Instead of ideals, they become living facts in the life of the husband.

As we ponder these truths, we begin to sense the awesome responsibility of the husband to love his wife – to love her without condition or reservation – to love her as long as she lives. With this mandate set before the husband, how could he ever think of divorce? The word "divorce" should not even be in his vocabulary. No wonder the old marriage forms declared: (non biblical)

I, John, take thee, Jane, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

THE WIFE'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

What about the wife's relationship to the husband? Because of the problem of unsaved husbands being married to Christian wives appears to be more serious and prevalent problem today than Christian husbands being married to unsaved wives, we will spend considerably more time with this question. The Bible tells us in **Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands."** Is this submission to be without condition or reservation? Surely, if she respects him and he is worthy of her respect, she would be submissive to him. But what if he turns out to be a scoundrel, a drunkard, a philandering adulterer, or a wife beater? Is she still to be submissive to him? Does she have to live like a doormat for him to walk all over? The Bible speaks about what she is to do while married to such a husband.

Matthew 18:21-22 applies to her in the same way it applies to her husband:

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

If she is a Christian, this passage leaves her no alternative but to forgive again and again as her husband sins against her.

A TYRANT OF A HUSBAND

God deals more specifically with this problem in I Peter 2 and 3. In **I Peter 2:18-24** God deals with the matter of the servant who works for a cruel, ruthless, despotic master:

Servants, be subjected to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

In these verses God indicates that it is our mission in life to bear patiently the injustices, the revilings, and the abuse of those who rule over us. We are not to revile in return. We are to realize that God has called us to walk in the footsteps of our Lord. We are to look to Him as our example, and the abuse He endured included His death on the cross. In the opening verses of I Peter 3 God ties the admonishments of I Peter 2 to the wife who is married to an unsaved husband. The Bible exhorts in I Peter 3:1-5:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.

The important word "likewise" in verse 1 ties these verses of Chapter 3 to the instruction given in Chapter 2. Effectively, God is exhorting: "Even as the servant of a cruel master is to patiently endure abuse, so, too, the wife who is married to a cruel husband is to patiently ensure abuse." Verse 1 of Chapter 3 emphasizes that the husband in this case does not obey the Word. That is, he is in rebellion against God. He pays no attention to God's rules which declare that the husband is to love his wife and forgive her repeatedly.

The word "likewise" also implies that he, like the master of I Peter 2, may be unjust, cruel, and a tyrant in the home. Human reason might conclude that with this condition in the home, the wife has every right to separate from her husband because no one should have to live under such unhappy, difficult conditions.

God has a different answer. The word "divorce" is not to be a part of the wife's vocabulary. She must make it her business to love her husband as God commands. Because God always wants the best for the human race, God's laws are the only trustworthy rules to follow. God declares she is to be quietly submissive to her difficult husband.

Two principles are established in I Peter 3:1. The first is that she is not to nag, accuse, or preach to her husband. The second is that she is to be submissive to him.

The God-honoring inclination of the God-fearing wife of an unsaved husband is to desire his salvation. She earnestly desires his salvation because she knows that he is headed for hell; he is under the wrath of God because of his sins. She desires his salvation because in the human sense she is embarrassed before her friends and relatives to be married to such a godless husband. Oh, how happy she would be if he would be a believer like the other christian husbands.

She desires his salvation because she knows that it would mean her trauma of being married to a difficult tyrant of a husband would come to an end. She knows that if saved, her husband would desire the best for her and show his love to her because a believing husband wants to obey God's commands to love his wife as Christ loves the eternal church.

Thus, there is much at stake as she prays for the salvation of her husband. She knows that salvation comes by the Word of God and that she is commanded by God to be a witness. She seeks every possible occasion to share the Gospel with her husband. Certainly, she reasons, her activity is in accord with the will of God.

WITHOUT A WORD

God says, "No!" If her husband is to be saved, he is to be won without the Word. Why would God teach this apparently impossible program? Does God have one means by which He saves normal unbelievers and another program whereby He saves husbands? That cannot be true. Then why this curious admonition that the wife is to be silent?

We can begin to understand when we see the special conditions that prevails in the husband-wife relationship. When we bring the Gospel to others, normally they know little about our personal lives. Therefore, all that the unbeliever usually sees is the Gospel itself.

If a minister preaches from the pulpit, "Thus saith the Lord," while it is a well-known fact that he is living in sin, his preaching will have little power. Those who hear him speak look upon him as a hypocrite. In such a case the elders ought to deal with the pastor, and even seek to remove him from his role of pastor, if necessary.

Likewise, if we know someone who seems to be an ardent witness of the Gospel, and yet does not live the Gospel, we will not take him seriously. He, too, will be looked upon as a hypocrite. An unsaved person may know something about the life of the one witnessing to him, but not everything.

But a husband knows more than anyone else about his wife's thinking and actions. He has lived, and may still be living with her, in the most intimate relationship. He is with her when she goes to bed and all through the night. He is with her in the morning before she has had her first cup of coffee. He is with her when she is tense, tired, depressed, or angry. Because of the intimacy of marriage, he knows by the way she walks, by the way she looks at him, by the way she greets him when he comes home from work, by the way she puts food on the table, and by countless other mannerisms, whether she is thinking lovingly or resentfully towards him. Therefore, even though she claims to be such a fine Christian, fellowship with other Christians and insisting that her husband repent from his sins and trust Christ as Savior, her husband knows at often she lives quite differently from the way she preaches to him. He may be convinced that whatever Christianity his wife has, he does not want it. He senses hypocrisy in his wife.

He may not know that the Bible declares that a saved wife should have an earnest desire to forgive her husband again and again. He may not know that the Bible declares that a saved wife is not to nurse resentful feelings against her husband. He may not know that the Bible exhorts believers to walk patiently. He may not know that the Bible states that the wife's body belongs to the husband and, therefore, in the bedroom she is to give herself willingly, warmly, and lovingly to him. He may not know that the Bible says that the wife is to submit to her husband in all things lawful. He may not know that his wife is to accept him as her husband without reservation of any kind.

He senses that his wife's actions do not measure up to her words. She tells her husband to read the bible, obey God, and be a better husband, but he thinks about the times his wife has reacted to situations just like an unbeliever, and he becomes convinced she is hypocritical. His defenses against the Gospel increase when he senses negative feelings from his wife toward him. He thinks about his wife's attitude toward him, her resentment, her coldness in the intimacy of the bedroom, her mannerisms and words that suggest strongly that she would be happier without him, and he knows one thing very well: If this is what being saved is all about, he wants no part of it.

If the husband is doing negative things against the wife, her christian friends will look upon her as a loving child of God who unfortunately is married to a beast of a husband. When she is with her friends, when she talks to other believers, when she attends a fellowship, she appears to be a lovely, devoted wife who dearly loves to do the will of God. None of the dear people in the congregation know her as her husband does. They cannot know how cold and resisting she may be in the marriage bed. They cannot know about the resentment she shows toward her husband. Neither can they know the intense frustration of a husband living with a wife who in the most intimate relationship of the marriage does not practice what she preaches.

Therefore in I Peter 3:1 God admonishes the wife to reach her husband's heart by silent submission. Let her quietly obey God's rules without preaching to her husband. Because of the tremendous intimacy that exists between husband and wife, her actions will speak far louder than words. The same admonition applies to the saved husband who is married to an unsaved wife. If the saved husband's intimate lifestyle does not clearly show the fragrance of Christ, his wife will look upon him as a hypocrite. In the intimacy of marriage, the old adage "actions speak louder than words" certainly applies.

GOD GIVES THE RULES

The believing wife earnestly seeks to practice the principles set forth in Philippians 4:8: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

She asks for God's forgiveness when she thinks resentfully of her husband. When her husband sins against her, no matter how often, she gladly forgives him. No matter how her husband treats her, she tries to convey to him that she is glad she is married to him. She can do this honestly because she realizes that God has fused them into one flesh. She realizes that since they are married, her life will remain intimately involved with her husband until God takes on of them in death. The impact of this kind of godly behavior on an unsaved husband is bound to be enormous. Even though he is unsaved, he knows that he is wrong when he mistreats his wife. He sees her continuing faithfulness to him, her quiet submission, her continuing forgiveness, and he will slowly realize that his wife is special. By God's grace, God may use this awareness to open his spiritual eyes. This is the essence of the teaching of I Peter 3:1. Her patient, submissive conduct toward a tyrant of a husband may not be understood by friends and relatives. If they do not understand God's laws, they might tempt this dear wife by accusing her of being a "doormat" or a "patsy."

Because she is truly saved, she has within her an earnest desire to do the will of God, which is an integral part of her life. I John 2:3-6 teaches:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

The only time she is to disobey her husband is if he asks her to break God's laws. If he asks her to lie, steal, or engage in sexual activity with someone other than himself, she, of course, must disobey. Such disobedience may bring the husband's wrath on her; however, if she has been the God-fearing, quietly submissive wife God command her to be, without question her husband's wrath will be reduced from what

it might have been had she not been faithfully obeying God's rules.

THE WIFE'S SECRET WEAPON

One area of special concern may arise if her husband forbids her to engage in spiritual activities. God commands in [Hebrews 10:25](#):

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Should she disobey her husband if he makes such an unreasonable request? Should she disobey him if he forbids her to teach the children the ways of Christ? God commands in Ephesians 6 that children are to be brought up in the ear and nurture of the Lord.

A direct answer to these questions cannot be given until other factors are considered because actions in the wife's life sometimes bring about distressing confrontations about fellowship. One big factor concerns the fact that the wife has a weapon she can use against her husband for which he has no defense whatsoever. The confrontation concerning fellowship may be his way of getting even with his wife for using this weapon him. What is this powerful weapon? It is a weapon that the wife may wield without any deliberate malice towards her husband, and she might even employ it consciously to put him in his place. It is not a weapon of physical strength. Ordinarily the wife is physically much weaker than her husband in some way. It is the weapon of a lack of submission in the intimacy of the bedroom.

Suppose a husband is very thoughtless toward his wife. He may be quite cruel toward her. She can show her resentment toward him by reacting with cutting remarks, giving him the silent treatment, or similar treatment accorded to her by her husband. If she truly is saved, she realizes this kind of conduct is altogether rebellious against God. Nevertheless, the husband can deal with these types of conduct. He can be more threatening. He can be more vicious in his verbal attacks on his wife. He might even resort to beating her. Since everyone who starts a fight wants to win the fight, the husband, too, wants to win. Nothing is resolved by such exchanges between a husband and wife; the marriage is grievously threatened by them, and the husband feels equal to such challenges, insults, and treatment from his wife. Because he normally is physically the stronger of the two, he can feel that in some way he has won. In the bedroom the wife has a weapon that can drive the husband wild. Even though he may be a cruel, thoughtless husband, he knows that the greatest joy he has ever experienced is when his wife lovingly gave herself to him in the intimacy of the bedroom. This intimacy is far more important to him than he realizes for God has fused him into one flesh with his wife. Therefore, anything that destroys the joy of that intimacy is a blow to the center of his manhood.

The problem is that in order to experience the joy and wonder of the marriage bed, his wife needs to have warm and loving thoughts towards her husband, and she finds herself incapable of reacting with loving submission to his advances in the marriage bed. She may try to avoid the marriage bed altogether; or if it looks like it cannot be avoided, she may be cold and unresponsive to his advances.

Soon she learns that nothing bewilders, hurts, and frustrates her husband more than her lack of loving submission to his advances. Because she cannot win the shouting match nor the test of physical strength, she may opt for miserable pleasure in the fact that in the bedroom she can be the winner because nothing negative her husband does can force her to change. He can threaten, bully, or beat her, but this only makes his wife even more unresponsive to his advances, and as a result, deepens his frustrations and anger. Without realizing it, the wife is laying the groundwork for another day of estrangement, quarreling, silent treatment, or cruelty which the husband uses to try to get even for the tremendous battle he lost in the bedroom. The husband and wife are not rationally thinking about what is happening. They are reacting with the intuition of the sinful tendencies that dwell within them. The husband might strike back to even the score. What can he take from his wife that she loves the most? Aha! She is a Christian and always makes a big point of worshipping on the sabbath, or listening to Family Radio, or reading the children Bible stories. He knows how he can really hurt her. He will forbid her to do these things.

All her christian friends can see is an unregenerate tyrant of a husband who is in rebellion against God. They, of course, do not have the slightest idea of what is going on in the marriage bed. Meanwhile, the wife goes about appearing to be a martyr and receiving the sympathies of her friends. She may not realize that her conduct in the marriage bed (as legitimate and logical as it may seem to her), is reprehensible to God. She is violating God's rule that she is to be in quiet submission to her husband. She is violating God's rule that she is to continuously forgive her husband. She is violating God's rule that her body belongs to her husband.

The weapon of unresponsiveness in the marriage bed should never be used. It will drive the husband into the arms of another woman quicker than anything else. It will serve to destroy the marriage more quickly than anything else because it is tampering with God's design that makes the two one flesh.

On the other hand, consider the wife who loves the Lord and lives by God's rules Her unsaved husband may begin to wonder, "How can I be married to such a wonderful, forgiving, thoughtful woman?" He may become increasingly embarrassed by his own thoughtlessness and cruelty. So, when she asks if she can attend a worship service on Sunday, he has no reason to deny her. He does not need to get even with her.

One could ask at this point, "Are you saying that all the problems of marriage begin in the marriage bed?" The answer is that they may not necessarily begin there, but it is there that they can be greatly advanced, and it is there they can to a very high degree be solved. The idea of becoming one flesh with

one's spouse embraces much more than the marriage bed, but it is there that it is the most obvious that the two become one flesh. That is why it is one of the most sensitive areas in the marriage relationship. When the lady married her husband, she was quite sure she loved him. After the honeymoon was over, and after living with him in the confines and intimacy of the marriage relationship, she found that he had many qualities that she did not like. He made unwise decisions. He was self-centered. He squandered the money that should have been used to buy groceries. He was lazy. He could not hold a job. She found that all her dreams about a pretty white house with a white picket fence around it would never be realized. Worse than that, he began to run after other women. He even became a drunkard.

Must she remain married to this man? Is she not entitled to something better than this? Is her entire life to be enslaved to this man who has turned out to be so miserable in many ways?

The Bible's answer comes back clear and strong: "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." The Bible insists that she has been fused into one flesh with this man. He is her husband. He is not just any man. His life is her life and her life is his life. She is to live out her life in quiet submission to him. She is to skillfully and lovingly encourage him. She is to try to help him see his potential. She cannot nag him. She cannot boss him. She cannot threaten him. The ideas of separation or divorce must never even enter her thoughts.

Again we are reminded of the old marriage form:

I, Jane, take thee, John, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

The violation in thought of the basic principle that marriage cannot be broken is the major root of many divorces today. As long as a husband or a wife thinks, "I will love you as long as you are worthy of my love," the disaster of divorce hovers over that marriage. It is the husband's responsibility to love his wife without reservation. It is the wife's to love her husband without reservation. Oh, if only husbands and wives could realize the importance of this principle. The husband must make it his business to love his wife and want the very best for her. The wife must make it her business to lovingly live in quiet submission to her husband. Each must accept the other totally and fully as part of their life as long as they live.

As illogical, irrational, and foolish as these principles may appear to the secular mind, they are the principles laid down by God. If we disobey them, it is to our own hurt. If we obey them as a child of God, we can know that we have God's blessings, and that is everything!

WHEN CHILDREN COME

When two people become married, a wonderful joy is experienced by both the husband and the wife. Often, the husband relates most intensively to this because he feels that his "number one." The wife, in her love for her husband, gladly bestows her attention and her affection on him. He in turn responds by showing great consideration and affection for his wife. Of course, the beginning of a marriage will not be without problems. The wife at times will have great difficulty in submitting her will to that of her husband. The transition from being a single, independent person to being bound to a husband requires great adjustments in any woman's life. Nevertheless, she has her husband and she wants to be the very best wife.

Likewise, the husband at times may feel burdened by the new responsibilities of having a wife. He, too, has left the freedoms of the single state. Now he feels fettered to his wife. He knows he should always care for her and always want the best for her. Consciously or subconsciously, he may have moments when he wishes he did not have the responsibility of a wife. Thus, there will be times of misunderstanding and quarreling, but they have each other, and each one is still number one in the eyes of the other. Then the first baby comes. The husband is so proud. Just think – He is the father. And the wife is radiant with the joy of being a mother. Along with the beautiful baby comes another problem. The wife is "oh, so happy" in her motherhood, but a great amount of her time, energy, and affection must be given to this precious infant. She feels tremendously fulfilled as she showers her love and affection on her baby.

The husband, too, loves his new baby. But soon, he begins to realize he is no longer number one. The baby has become number one in his wife's love and affection. If he is mature and responsible, he will understand that there is much more to marriage than just having a loving, submissive wife. One of the most important aspects of marriage is the bringing forth of children, which is God's method of continuing the human race so that God's purposes can be worked out on this earth. In other words, two people who marry each other should understand that a major obligation of marriage is the matter of children. Married couples avoid or delay the responsibility of children by the use of birth control devices, but the sinful practice of birth control is not the subject of this study.

If the husband is immature in the matter of children (and most husbands are, to some degree), the problem can have devastating results in the marriage. He is no longer the center of his wife's attention. While his wife still loves him and submits herself to his attentions, it seems that she always has the baby on her mind. A competitor is in the house, one who seems to compete for his wife's affections, and she gladly shares her affections with the little competitor. Then the second baby comes. Now the wife's attention is even further diverted from her husband. The demands of caring for the children, in addition to all of the other domestic responsibilities, leave little energy and concern for the marriage bed. The husband feels more left out than ever. His manhood is being terribly threatened. His wife seems to have become much less responsive to his needs. It seems there is nothing he can do about it.

Wonderfully, in many marriages the husband recognizes his own selfishness and realizes that he must focus his eyes upon his own responsibilities as a parent rather than on his selfish desires with his wife. In these cases the family ties are strengthened by the arrival of children.

Unfortunately, in some marriages the husband does not see his selfishness. All he knows is that he has a wife who does not submit to him the way she did when they were first married. He, therefore, begins to withdraw from his wife. He begins to spurn the intimacies of the marriage bed.

Because his wife is busy loving and caring for the children, she does not always sense the change in her husband. In fact, she may even think that he has grown somewhat tired of the marriage bed and that he actually welcomes the extended periods during which there is little intimacy. She fails to realize her husband's pride is being severely damaged and that he is withdrawing because he cannot stand the frustration of having a wife whom he believes is not entirely submissive to him. The outcome of this situation is frequently alienation between the husband and the wife. The husband may spend long hours away from the home when he has no compelling reason to be away. He may concentrate his attention on business, hobbies, or friends. Perhaps the time comes when separate bedrooms become a way of life for these unhappy parents. In our day, the prevalence of divorce suggests that divorce will be only a little way down the road for such couple. The wife, who loves her children and her husband, does not understand that her child of

a husband feels that he must always be number one in his wife's affections. She does not realize that with the coming of children she needs to demonstrate in a special way that her love and submission to her husband will always come first in her life. If a wife sees her husband pouting or acting selfishly, there is a tremendous temptation on her part to feel offended and withdraw from her husband. This kind of action often intensifies the problem. Instead of one person acting sinfully in the marriage relationship, now both are acting sinfully, and sin is always destructive. The outcome of sin is always negative and detrimental to those involved.

Of course, the husband is no less responsible than the wife to maintain the marriage relationship in a God-glorifying way. Because he is the head of the home, he has a greater responsibility than the wife. Therefore, when he reacts jealously and selfishly in response to his wife's time and affection for the children, his sin is great. He stands altogether guilty before God. What can a wife do who finds that her husband is not as close to her as he was during the early days of their marriage? If she can understand the stress that the coming of children has placed on her immature husband, she can go a long way in correcting the problem.

Because God has ordained that the husband and wife are to live together in the greatest possible intimacy, the wife who discovers that her husband is beginning to withdraw from that special intimacy should be greatly concerned. Her husband may not admit his frustration or his hurt pride; nevertheless, the wife should make sure that her attentions to her children and domestic duties do not help develop the withdrawal in her childish husband.

Because the wife finds great fulfillment in being a mother, the intimacies of the marriage bed are usually not as needful in her life as they are in the life of her husband. Therefore, she must be especially alert to withdrawal signs in her husband. Such action on the part of the husband can signal that difficult times are coming for their marriage.

The wife must realize that it is important for her childish husband to be number one in the marriage relationship. Prayerfully, patiently, tenderly, consistently she should convey to her husband her faithful love for him. Little gestures, loving looks, a touch, all the things that were important during courtship and the honeymoon should remain in evidence.

If the estrangement has greatly advanced, it may take time before the husband will sense again the love and devotion his wife has for him. Moreover, because his ardor has become like ice, the wife will need God's grace to persistently continue her efforts to rekindle desire in his heart. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. It is entirely in agreement with God's Word for a wife to show her love to her husband. Therefore, as God strengthens her, she is to continue her efforts to show her love to him in every way possible.

GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

We have been looking at a marriage where the tensions have developed to the point that divorce is looming on the horizon. When this situation occurs, the unsaved couple has little help them. Their parents' desires, peer pressure from friends, or a feeling of responsibility toward their children may help keep the marriage going for a while, but because neither spouse recognizes the authority of the Bible, and because their world is increasingly condones divorce, the reasonable expectation for this marriage is, unfortunately, divorce.

On the other hand, if one of the spouses is truly a child of God, the expectation for this marriage is much brighter. By God's grace, if the husband is saved, he can do much to protect the continuation of the marriage by following God's rules. Likewise, if the wife is a true child of God, she can be very effective in maintaining the continuation of her marriage. The task that faces the saved spouse of an unsaved partner who is exceedingly disagreeable to live with is formidable. No individual in his or her own strength can face some of the difficulties that can arise. Only God's grace can sustain them through stressful situations.

But God's grace is sufficient. God has given beautiful and certain promises that can be depended upon. God has promised He will never leave us nor forsake us. God has committed Himself to the principle

that all things work together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28). The believer has the assurance that he can bring all his anxieties to his heavenly Father and receive the peace that passes understanding. He knows that God is able to change the situation overnight. He is quite aware that the difficulties being faced are part of God's plan for his life.

In fact, the believing spouse will discover that the continuing problems that arise from being married to an unsaved spouse only cause the believer to trust God more. He will not have the wisdom or the strength in himself to continue in the face of the seemingly mountainous difficulties being faced, but how wonderful to know that all the problems and frustrations can be poured out in prayer to God, who dearly loves His child. With the secure knowledge that God in heaven is still in charge, the child of God can face tomorrow. One of the wonders of God's grace that will grow increasingly clear to the believing spouse is the fact that this earthly life is not "the big picture." We are here for only a few short years. Our time here is like a drop in the ocean compared with the eternity we will spend in the new heavens and new earth. Therefore, whatever the trauma that must be faced, it will have an end, and following that welcome end is a life in which there is no suffering nor sorrow nor unhappiness. The saved spouse needs to be aware that the unsaved is on the way to hell. While he may appear to be "getting away" with his selfishness, he is not. The unsaved spouse is to be pitied to the highest possible degree. If he dies without becoming saved, every one of his sins must be paid for. The payment God demands is eternal damnation. On the other hand, even though the saved spouse may suffer greatly, the spiritual blessings already enjoyed, along with the certainty of eternity with our Lord, emphasize the fact that the saved spouse has everything on his side.

COURTSHIP

The potential awfulness of a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is so great that a word of caution must be directed to those who are thinking about marriage. How careful must a person be who is unmarried and who is becoming romantically inclined toward someone? The answer is that he must be exceedingly careful. It is of absolute importance that each knows as much about the other as possible before marriage. Dating and engagement as we know them in our land are designed to provide time to acquire this knowledge.

TAKE CARE WHOM YOU DATE

Obviously, if a person discovers that the other person is divorced and their spouse is still living, then it is fooling to date that person. Even if the divorced person has become a beautiful child of God, marriage should not take place. Even if the divorce took place before the person became saved, there cannot be remarriage. It would be exceedingly reckless to date such a person. It would place huge temptation before both persons.

Before two people become romantically interested in each other, it is imperative that they pay careful attention to the spiritual condition of the potential partner. How awful it would be if one person seemed to be saved but after the honeymoon, the saved spouse discovered that their mate was unsaved.

If on the first few dates the saved person finds no substantial evidence that the other person is a child of God, then dating should cease. Romantic love has a way of blinding people more than they are willing to admit. Because an unsaved person can seem to be interested in Christian things and can have many attractive qualities, it is easy to focus only on attractive qualities. Many a wife, who has discovered after the wedding that she was married to an unsaved man, had not been careful enough when she dated. She might have realized at first that all was not spiritually well with the handsome man she was dating, but as she became increasingly attracted to him, she began to rationalize about what he could become. Surely, she reasons, her influence is so great in his life that if he is not saved, she will witness to him and pray for him, and he will eventually become saved. Meanwhile, she becomes more and more blinded by romantic love. She has already violated two important rules. First, dating, engagement, and marriage are not missionary endeavors. If she wants to minister to the unsaved, there are thousands of people around her who need her witness. The arena of romance is not the place for missionary work; it is designed to provide, by God's grace, a godly marriage. This must remain the single focus of the dating agreement. There are instances wherein a child of God has had the glad experience of seeing a steady date become saved. These unusual exceptions provide no sound basis for a believer to date an unbeliever because so many emotions are involved for romantic love. Unless there is clear, immediate, and continuing evidence that the one being dated is a child of God, the only wise action is to cease dating right away.

Suppose at the start of dating there is good evidence that he is not a child of God, but the dates continue because many attractive qualities can be seen in him. The Christian knows the importance of salvation and encourages the unsaved person to read the Bible and pray. Because the unsaved person is falling in love with the saved person, he increasingly tries to please her. She, as the saved person, will become increasingly convinced that God's Spirit is working in the heart of her steady date. After all, why does he appear to be so interested in the Bible? At times he says or does things that are quite alien to a saved person, but because she is falling in love with him, she overlooks her fears and tries to see God's grace in his life. When parents and friends express concern, she will not listen. By the time she has fallen in love, she has convinced herself that God's grace is present in his life. She is sure that after they are married, he will grow in the things of the Lord.

So they marry each other. Now he has her as his wife. By the time the honeymoon is over, he knows he does not have to try as hard to please her. Attending a worship service and studying the Bible bore

him, and he soon ceases doing these things. The bride discovers to her utter consternation that she is married to an unsaved husband. She realizes, too, that she is married to him until death parts them. Because her husband does not care about God's rules against divorce, there is a strong likelihood that when he gets tired of living with a wife who puts a high premium on fellowship and reading the Bible, he will seek a divorce. This may come after the family has grown to include several children. So the believing wife becomes divorced. According to the Bible, she may never marry again as long as her husband lives. In his rebellion against God, he marries someone else, and she is left with the heavy responsibility of rearing the children.

Unfortunately, this sad scenario is being repeated again and again in our day. If only those who are free to marry would realize the enormous consequences of marriage! One can never be too careful in deciding whom to date. Some may argue that dating is quite innocent and does not necessarily have to point to marriage. But all dating, however innocuous, superficial, and innocent it may appear to be, is a preliminary step toward marriage. Ordinarily, every marriage begins with a first date. Dating is a ritual that prepares the couple for a successful marriage.

Therefore, during courtship the chief focus should be on spiritual concerns, such as: What is salvation? What does it mean to be born again? What is the true Gospel? What about baptism? What about the education of those children? What kind of school would we try to send them to? What is the wife's chief role in marriage? Is she to be first an assistant breadwinner and then a keeper of the home? Or is she first to be a keeper of the home and assist as a breadwinner only if it does not interfere with her duties at home? What about family devotions? What about the responsibility of giving to God's work? What about the use of birth control measures? etc., etc.

By facing these questions before marriage, at least two goals will be realized. First, it will provide a forum for the examination of the spiritual sensitivities of each person. Two people may be convinced the other person is a child of God, but if agreement cannot be reached on these issues, there are serious doubts as to the advisability of marriage. To enter into the intimate, binding relationship of marriage with disagreements on these issues is exceedingly dangerous. The disagreements are sure to intensify during marriage. On the other hand, by honestly and openly facing these issues before marriage, a solid foundation can be laid for a happy, God-glorifying marriage. If there is honest agreement on these matters, both will enter into marriage secure in the knowledge that harmony will prevail. We will consider some questions that arise in Christian circles. For example, when we become a Christian, old things have passed away and all things have become new. Does this imply that if I was divorced before I was saved, after I am saved I am a new creature and I am free to remarry? What if I become saved after I have married a second time?

DIVORCED AND THE NEWLY SAVED

that saved people have become new creatures in Christ; old things have passed away and all things have become new. Is this teaching Biblical?

This teaching is quite unbiblical. First, it does not recognize that God's laws apply to all mankind. For example, the commandments "thou shalt not kill" and "thou shalt not covet" apply to the unbeliever as well as to the believer. The difference is in the response to these commands. The true believer earnestly desires to be obedient to all of God's commands, while the unbeliever pays little or no attention to these rules.

The true believer knows that all of the commands of the Bible are to be obeyed. There is no statement of the Bible he would disregard. Therefore, if the Bible says he is not to remarry after divorce, then he will remain single. This is true whether he was divorced before or after he was saved.

Second, becoming a new creature in Christ does not necessarily nullify the physical results of our sin. For example, a murderer is sentenced to the electric chair, and while waiting to be executed, he becomes saved. Because he is a child of God, he will never be threatened with hell for murder or for any other sin he committed. He now stands absolutely blameless before God. Does this mean that he can leave death row and avoid execution? No, he must be executed for his crime unless he receives a pardon from the governor.

The same is true of a drunkard. Because of his drunkenness, he is dying of liver disease. Then he becomes saved, and all of his sins, including drunkenness, have been covered by Christ's blood. Does this mean that he will not die of liver disease? Not necessarily. Normally, the effects of his drunkenness continue with him. Likewise, the man who has messed up his life because of divorce can be forgiven of the sin of divorce along with every other sin he has committed. When he becomes saved he can know that he will never have to answer to God for any of his sins. However, much of the impact of his sins remains with him. God's laws concerning marriage and divorce still stand. Even if he becomes saved after he was divorced, God's law prohibits remarriage while his former spouse lives. Therefore, he will remain single as God has commanded.

SOME FINAL QUESTIONS

This leads us into another question. Would our loving, forgiving, heavenly Father, our God, expect those who are divorced to live the single life in total celibacy?

This question can be answered from two vantage points. First, consider a marriage that was broken by God; a widow with five children, one of whom is a child with special needs. God has taken her husband by death.

Biblically she is free to remarry, and if any family needs a husband and a father, it is certainly this one. In actuality, marriage for this widow is highly unlikely. It would be difficult to find a man to be father to five children but almost impossible to find a man willing to take on the additional responsibilities of a child with special needs.

Did God leave this poor widow in an impossible, terrible situation? God is perfect in His actions and His wisdom. When God took this husband by death, God knew that the widow could continue a meaningful and happy life without the presence of a husband and father for her children.

Her life would be different from what the world considers ideal. She would need the help of others, and she would have to constantly cry out to God for wisdom and patience. But she would find that God's grace is sufficient. In fact, she could experience in a dynamic way the reality of such promises as "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). God's grace is sufficient for those whose marriages have been broken by His action, and His grace is sufficient for those whose marriages have been tampered with by man's action of divorce.

Second, in our sinful, finite minds, we think that because the intimacies enjoyed in marriage were a necessary part of our life, it would be nearly impossible to live a celibate life after divorce. "How can I be expected to live the rest of my life without any further intimacies with the opposite sex? Surely a good God does not intend that for me," we might reason. God designed us. God put the body chemistry within us so that we can enjoy the intimacies of marriage. It is God who assures us that it is possible for humans to live happy lives without the benefit of such intimacies. God declares in I Corinthians 7:27, "Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." He says in verses 32-34:

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: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

These verses show that there are special advantages available to the unmarried. In these verses, God is not speaking to a certain group within the company of believers; He is speaking to all who have become children of God. Jesus teaches in Matthew 19:12:

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.

The strict definition of a eunuch is someone who is not physically equipped to perform the sexual act. Jesus is teaching that some people make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He is not implying that they are to have themselves physically altered. Rather, they choose to live without the physical intimacy of the marriage relationship. In denying themselves this intimacy, they gain new and wonderful ways to live to God's glory.

The world in which we live has put an enormous priority on sexual intimacy. Advertisements, novels, TV programs, and psychologists of our day have brainwashed some people into thinking that if we cannot have this kind of intimacy, we are being deprived of the greatest blessing known to man.

This is a lie. God's Word is the truth. While God indicates there are certain blessings within the marriage relationship - particularly in the rearing of godly children - there are greater blessings to be realized in the single state. The single person has the advantage of more time to serve the Lord by doing good works, such as visiting the lonely, caring for children of broken homes, and helping the elderly in nursing homes. He has more time for Bible study and prayer. Married people should also be involved in denying themselves so that their lives might be as fruitful as possible for Christ, but the unmarried can demonstrate these ideals to the highest degree.

The spiritual dimension of doing good works can make a big difference in the lives of widows, widowers, divorced people, and those who have never married. God has given special comfort and promise to all those who are single. When he lives in accordance with God's principles, these blessings become evident. If the single person listens to the advice of the world, he might have the overwhelming feeling that the single state makes a person a deprived, pitiable, second-class citizen. This can set the stage for a fall into fornication. Only when God's rules are followed can the life of the single person become even more victorious than that of the married person.

THE SECOND MARRIAGE

The question we are facing is a serious one, even though it should not be. If the human race, were obeying God's laws concerning marriage and divorce, there would be few second marriages. But because of the wholesale repudiation of God's laws concerning the sanctity of marriage, the problem has become enormous. Everywhere we turn we meet those who have remarried after divorce.

The second marriage is an adulterous marriage because the wife is bound to the husband as long as he lives. Romans 7:3 declares: So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, though she be married to another man.

The wife is an adulteress if she is married to a second husband while her first husband is still living. She is an adulteress because her first marriage has become adulterated by her divorce, as well as because she has married a second husband.

In the Bible, a number of examples are given of men with multiple wives: Jacob had four wives, David

had several wives, and Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, but these were exceptions. The usual example that is given is of one wife. This was true of Adam, Noah, Isaac, and Moses.

We also consider that never does the Bible instruct a man to divorce all but the first wife. This is remarkable when we remember that the principle of one man, one wife, goes all the way back to the beginning. God did not tell Adam that the three or four or several shall become one flesh. He instructed mankind in the beginning that the two shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Although in Genesis 2:24 the number "two" is not used, the verse speaks of a man cleaving to his wife (not wives), "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:8. In both of these verses He declares that the two shall be one flesh. Therefore, we might expect that God would ask those who have violated this command by taking multiple wives to divorce their additional wives. Such an admonition is not given by God.

We must realize that even though God has willed that the proper marriage is one husband, one wife, He has allowed mankind to break this law by having multiple wives. Nowhere in the Bible does He ask believers with multiple wives to divorce the extra wives. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that even the marriage of a second wife is still a marriage. Even though it is altogether wrong, for some reason God still counts it as a marriage. Thus, the second wife becomes bound to the husband even as the first wife has become bound to the husband. Once this binding relationship occurs, it cannot be broken. The marriage to this second, wife adulterates the pristine, ideal character of marriage of one husband, one, but the second marriage is a marriage, and therefore, there can be no divorce.

When a man divorces his first wife, she is still bound to him from God's vantage point. Therefore, when he takes a second wife while his first wife is living, he has two wives bound to him. The act of divorcing his first wife was grievous sin. Likewise, the act of marrying a second wife was grievous sin. But the second marriage is still a marriage, and therefore, there cannot be divorce from the second wife. This is the marriage in which he must continue until death separates him from his wife.

A second or third marriage under these circumstances is far from ideal. From the standpoint of its relationship to the first marriage, it is adulterous. There are still responsibilities towards the first wife. Alimony and child support are the most obvious, but there are moral and spiritual responsibilities and conflicts that many continue to plague the one who has arrogantly violated God's rules. Unfortunately, the children frequently suffer the most because of selfish parents. In spite of the difficulties of a second or third marriage after divorce, it is still a marriage. The spouses involved are to live as if it were their first marriage. Wonderfully, if they have become true believers, they can know that all of the sins connected with the divorce and remarriage are covered by Christ's blood. Christ came for sinners, not righteous people. Regardless of how many dirty, rotten sins we have committed, when Jesus becomes our Savior, we can know that He has paid for all our sins.

This brings us to the last group of questions we shall consider in this study. If a second marriage is to be lived the same as a first marriage, with complete assurance that the sins of divorce and remarriage have been completely forgiven by God, why not just go ahead into a second marriage and then ask for God's forgiveness later? Suppose I am already married to someone, but I want to marry someone else with whom I have fallen in love. Why not go ahead and get an unbiblical divorce and then sinfully marry the other person? If I am divorced, can I marry someone else before I get right with God? That way I can have my second marriage and Christ also, and I do not have to live the rest of my natural life in the single state. These questions and observations may seem logical and attractive. They appear to solve the problem of one having his cake and eating it, too, but this course of action is fraught with danger.

Effectively, the one contemplating this action is taking the role of an adversary of Almighty God. Effectively, he is saying, "I can sin as deeply and as often as I wish, and in my own sweet time I can become saved. And God must save me when I am ready to become saved." Such a one is tempting God like Israel tested God in the wilderness when they complained that God was leading them to destruction. God warns in **I Corinthians 10:9: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."**

The specific sin God had in view in this verse is recorded in Numbers 21:5-6 where we read: And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. The nation of Israel accused God of being too harsh in bringing them out of Egypt and into the wilderness, where they were to live according God's direction. Their complaints against God only brought judgment upon them. So, too, those who insist on having their own way concerning divorce or remarriage after divorce effectively are complaining that God's way is too severe and too harsh. They are insisting on having their own way.

Ancient Israel insisted on having its own way and as a result came under God's wrath. Can we expect God to treat any differently those who insist on having their own way in important matters such as divorce and remarriage? Indeed, it is a very serious matter to contend with Almighty God!

Moreover, the idea that I can sin for as long as I like, and then, sometime in the future I can repent at will and secure God's grace, is entirely faulty and does not recognize nor understand the nature of God's grace. Mankind is not the decision maker in salvation. Only Sovereign God Himself decides who is to be saved. He comes to us commanding us to believe in Christ as Savior, and He warns, "How shall we

escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3)? He exhorts, "make your calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10). He tells us in Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." He warns that He resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (I Peter 5:5).

With such warning and exhortations, how would anyone dare to deliberately rebel against God in something as serious as divorce or remarriage after divorce? These are not sins that one slips into incidentally or accidentally. These are sins that require deliberate planning and consistent action over a period of considerable time. If one's heart is rebellious and hard enough today to commit such a sin, the probability is that this person is not saved. Moreover, it is evidence that God is not even drawing him toward salvation. If God is allowing him to engage in such rebellion today, what assurance can he have that later God will deal kindly with him, and soften his heart, and draw him to salvation?

We may never presume upon the mercies of God. Today is the day of salvation. No one has any guarantee or promise that he will even be alive tomorrow. How then can he know that tomorrow he can make peace with God? To divorce or remarry after divorce, knowing that such action is contrary to God's will, is the most foolish and dangerous action anyone could take. The only fulfilling way to live is in accordance with God's law is right now. May God give wisdom to those who have even played with the idea of sinning now and repenting later.

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

The problem with unbiblical marriage and divorce is so serious and catastrophic that we wonder how the church could have strayed so far from the truth. Fifty years ago, it was only in the more rebellious elements of the secular world that this sin was visible. Because the church would not even countenance this sin, the secular world did not dare to go too deeply into sin because the church is to some degree the conscience of the secular world.

Then, a dear lady comes along who was married to a man who was living adulterously with other women. The church began to wonder: "Must this dear wife continue to live with that kind of horrible husband?" So, in its sympathy and compassion, the church restudied the question of divorce for adultery and finally decided, "Yes, the Bible does allow divorce for adultery." And the door was opened so that not only could this dear lady have her divorce, but many others in the congregation could begin to lawfully seek divorce. Then, the people of the world began to expand their divorce horizons, and divorce began to multiply in the world.

Another dear lady was deserted by her husband and she had to labor all alone in caring for her children, but there was a dear Christian man who loved her and wanted to marry her. Surely, they reasoned, it must be in accordance with God's will for those children to have a Christian father to care for them.

So again the church, in its pity and compassion for this woman, appointed study committees to research the possibilities of Biblical divorce for desertion and Biblical remarriage after divorce. And again victory was assured. Indeed, these theologians successfully convinced themselves that the Bible allows divorce for desertion and remarriage after divorce, and so not only could this dear lady divorce her scoundrel of a husband, but she was free to marry the fine Christian man who had fallen in love with her.

Many in the church now believe they have God's blessing to divorce and remarry. Indeed, even deacons and pastors are now divorcing and remarrying. And the world, taking its cue from the church, becomes a wasteland of broken homes. Simultaneously, the church, taking its cue from the world, tacitly gives assent to the dreadful sin of birth control. This not only encourages the world to go deeper into this particular sin, it also opens the door to increased fornication. Forty years ago it was rightly considered shameful and repugnant for unmarried individuals of the opposite sex to live together; now it is commonplace. Indeed, sexual restraints of any kind have almost disappeared.

Along with all these step-by-step violations of God's laws for the protection of the family unit, have come shattered lives of men, women, and children whose families have been hopelessly broken. The havoc is so widespread and of such magnitude that no words can accurately describe the full extent of the horror story.

It is no wonder that God's judgment is on the church of today. The primary blame for the destruction of the marriage institution and the family unit must be placed at the door of the church which has the Word of God that indicates that divorce is not to be countenanced. The church is the institution that has rewritten God's rules to accommodate the sins of its members.

What can we do? We must do what must always be done when we find sin in our lives. We must repent. We must turn away from the rebellious rules that permit divorce and remarriage. We must cry out to God for His mercy and forgiveness.

Unfortunately, few will repent. The sins that have developed and been accepted, and which have slowly but surely almost destroyed the marriage institution, are so widespread and interwoven into the fabric of churches that there is little hope for repentance. This is particularly so because we are close to the end of the world. These dreadful sins evidence that fulfillment of the prophecy that most men's love will grow cold. May God have mercy on us.

Wonderfully, those who truly want to be obedient to God's Word can still move in the direction of a more holy life. If we discover wrong practices or wrong doctrines in our life, we can repent of them. God is gracious. He does forgive, and today the Bible is just as much a guide for our lives as it has ever been.

Although we cannot turn the massive destruction of the family around, individually we can grow in holiness by becoming more obedient. That is the heart's desire of every child of God.

To Him be all glory and power and praise. Amen.

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