

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE INTRODUCTION

(By Jerry Fite)

Disciples of the Lord, while in contact with the world, are never to be "of the world" (John 17: 14,15). Manifesting this distinction allows one to be salt and light in a decaying, unsavory and dark world (Matthew 5: 13-16). However, all too often we see the world, with its vain philosophies and attractions wield its corrupting influence upon the thinking and lives of professing Christians (Colossians 2:8, I John 2:15-16).

Such is the case regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage. The world has regarded marriage as a convenience for man, instead of a holy relationship instituted by God. As easy divorce continues to be apparent in our society, leading to multiple marriages over ones life time, we must ground ourselves and lead our children in the way of the Lord regarding marriage , divorce and remarriage.

We must start by asking the essential question, "What standard will we appeal to in governing our thinking on marriage, divorce and remarriage?"

I. CHOOSING THE CORRECT STANDARD - GOD'S LAW

A. One reason for confusion on this issue - the unscriptural standards used .

1. Family situations. I know of no professing Christians who would admit they are using the situations of their loved ones as a standard, but when the final conclusion from their "objective" study of the Scriptures is formed, it is odd to see how the particular situation of their beloved family member is ALWAYS SCRIPTURAL . A constant danger exists in making Scripture harmonize with our loved ones' marital situation, instead of their marital situation harmonizing with the Scriptures.

- a) Appeal: "You mean to tell me that if you had a son or a daughter in that situation, you wouldn't think they could divorce and remarry?" (Luke 14:26).
- b) If your children decide not to be baptized for the remission of sins, does this mean baptism is not essential to salvation? (Mark 16:15-16, I Peter 3: 20- 21).

2. EMOTIONAL APPEALS

- a) "It is not fair."
 - (1) Is it fair to bear the CONSEQUENCES of others' sins? (Exodus 34:7, Joshua 7:5, 11, 16-21).
 - (2) Is it fair for a Christian slave to serve an unjust master? (I Peter 2:18).
 - (3) It is a matter of what God demands, not what seems fair to us (Jeremiah 10:23, Isaiah 55:8-9, Proverbs 3:5-6, 16:25).

- (4) Remember, we can believe a lie and be lost (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, Matthew 7:21-23).

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- b) "God would never demand we dissolve our unscriptural marriage which he has blessed with children." (Ezra 10: 10-11, 44).

3. WHAT THE BROTHERHOOD BELIEVES ON THE ISSUE .

- a) "It must be right if brother _____ says so."
b) "This is what a number of our brethren believe."
c) Brethren are not infallible standards (Galatians 2: 11-14).
d) The multitude may be doing evil (Exodus 23:2, Matthew 7:13-14).
e) Our goal should not be pleasing men, but be "accepted of Him (God) (John 12: 42-43, 2 Corinthians 5:9).

B. THE WORD OF GOD IS THE ONLY STANDARD THAT PLEASES GOD

1. Powerful (Hebrews 4:12, Romans 1:16).
2. Profitable - makes man sufficient in all good things (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
3. Perfect (Psalms 19:7)
4. Unchangeable (Galatians 1:7-9).
5. Must be obeyed - (James 1:25)
6. Abide forever (Matthew 24:35).
7. Standard for judging (James 2:12, John 12:48).
8. Those who wrest the scriptures will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:16).

II. VARIOUS POSITIONS REGARDING DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A. Death is the only cause for remarriage.

1. Only death severs the bond, and the passages that reveal an exception (Matthew 5:32, 19:9) are explanations of the Law of Moses, and the exception is never revealed after Pentecost.

B. Divorce and remarriage for any cause.

1. Husband and wife cannot get along - they can divorce , but must remain unmarried.
2. Divorce for any legal cause, then remarriage is allowed.

C. Guilty partner (committed fornication) can remarry.

1. One is loosed from bond (he who puts mate away for fornication) then the other mate (who commits fornication) must be loosed from same marriage bond.

D. A believer who is forsaken by an unbelieving mate is free to remarry.

1. He or she is not bound in this case, therefore free to marry.

E. Sinners who have never come to Christ for salvation are not subject to God's law on marriage.

1. Matthew 19:9 and other related passages only apply to Christians.

F. Mental divorce.

1. One whose marriage ends because of unscriptural causes can remain married "in his mind", and when his mate remarries, he can put her away "in his mind" for adultery and be free to marry another.

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- G. Adulterous marriages are washed away at baptism without separation.
 1. Baptism makes unscriptural marriages scriptural.
 2. Adulterating the first marriage by "marrying" another is forgiven but "marriage" with the second wife is honorable.

III. ORDER OF STUDY

- A. Introduction: Establishing the right standard.
- B. Lesson one - Defining the terms
- C. Lesson two - Study of Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:32
- D. Lesson three - Study of I Corinthians 7
- E. Lesson four - Is the alien sinner amenable to Matthew 19:9?
- F. Lesson five - Mental divorce
- G. Lesson six - Are adulterous marriages washed away at baptism?