

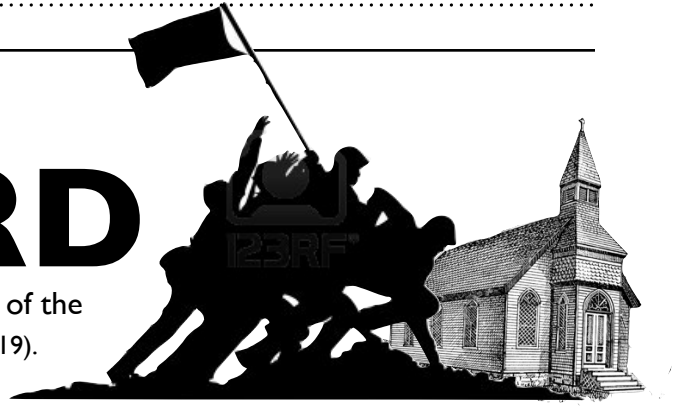
DIVORCE And Remarriage?

What Does The Bible Say?

Lifting Up The

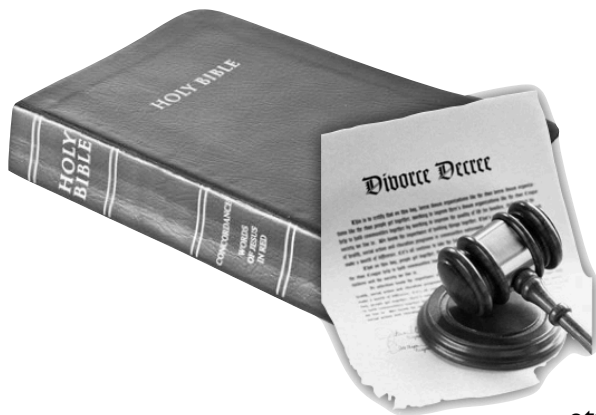
STANDARD

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).



Challenging And Encouraging God's Remnant To Remain Faithful

Issue 24 - June 30, 2014



Except For Fornication?

I received Christ as my Saviour when I was twelve years old. Our family joined a Baptist Church and soon after, I heard that someone in the church was getting a divorce. As a young Christian I felt that was wrong. I set out to see what the Bible says about this subject and have been attempting to figure it out ever since.

A Renewed Effort

We recently have experienced the tragedy of divorce within our own family, and this has renewed my efforts in attempting to determine what the Bible says about this subject. I put away all my Bible commentaries and determined only to compare Scripture with Scripture. I will share some thoughts that I have arrived at after a very, very, lengthy and exhaustive study of the subject of divorce and remarriage.

Jumping To Conclusions

It has been said that the only exercise some people get is jumping to conclusions. Please do not jump to any conclusions about what I believe about divorce and remarriage. What I believe is not important and therefore it is not my purpose to present what I believe in this material, because I might be wrong. My purpose is to simply share some things I have found by studying the subject and hope that it might be of help.

I Determined To Beware of Proof Texting

For much of my Christian life I had been guilty of proof-texting. It is very easy to take Scriptures out of context to support what we want to believe. I want to believe there is absolutely no Scripture for divorce and remarriage. God hates divorce and so do I. However, regardless of any issue we are dealing with, we need to be sure we are not guilty of proof-texting.

As I Began My Study I Asked Myself Several Questions

1. What do I believe about divorce and remarriage?
2. Is there any possibility that I might be wrong?
3. Am I teachable?
4. Will I allow the Holy Spirit to guide me into "all truth" (John 16:13).

Once again, my conclusions concerning this subject are not the purpose of this material. My purpose is simply to help readers to determine what is "acceptable unto the Lord."

Four Positions That Are Promoted

1. No Divorce And No Remarriage.

Matthew 19:6,

*"What therefore God hath joined together, **let not man put asunder.**"*

I wish that was the only verse in the Bible about divorce; however, it is not.

2. Divorce But No Remarriage.

Deuteronomy 24:1,

*"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.**"*

3. Divorce And Remarriage But Only In Certain Situations.

Matthew 5:32,

*"That whosoever shall put away his wife, **saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery.**"*

4. Divorce And Remarriage Because Repentance Means Forgiveness.

Psalms 103:12,

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Marriage Is of God

The Word of God refers to...

- **Marriage**, 19 times.
- **Married**, 30 times.
- **Husband**, 120 times.
- **Husbands**, 19 times.
- **Wife**, 396 times.
- **Wives**, 132 times.
- **Home**, 51 times.

First Samuel 2:20,

"Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife...And they went unto their own home."

Seven Times The Lord Said, "It Was Good"

When God created the world we read, seven times that the Lord said, "**it was good**" (See Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31).

One Time The Lord Said, "It Was Not Good"

Genesis 2:18,

*"And the LORD God said, **It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.**"*

**What Do You Believe About Divorce And Remarriage?
Is There A Possibility You Might Be Wrong?**

Happiness Is Not The Foundation For Marriage

Most brides are never happier than on their wedding day; however, the divorce rate is up 700% in the last 100 years. Part of the problem may rest in the fact that we think marriage is a foundation for happiness. The truth is, happiness is only going to be maintained in a marriage if love is the foundation. Happiness is a byproduct of love.

People who are having marital problems are obviously unhappy. Unhappy husbands or wives may have the misguided thought that divorce will solve the problem. The fact is, divorce creates far more problems than it solves. **Far More!!!**

The Truth Is, Every Marriage Has Marital Problems. The dictionary says a problem is simply “a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome.” God’s program for solving problems between any family members is forgiveness and reconciliation. Divorce is **NEVER** God’s solution for marital problems.

“One Flesh”

Genesis 2:24,

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

When the Pharisees attempted to trap Christ in His words concerning divorce and remarriage we read Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24.

Matthew 19:5,

*“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and **they twain shall be one flesh?**”*

Matthew 19:6,

*“Wherefore **they are no more twain, but one flesh.** What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

Mark’s account of this situation occurs in Mark chapter ten, and Jesus again quoted Genesis 2:24.

Mark 10:8,

*“And they twain shall be one flesh: so then **they are no more twain, but one flesh.**”*

When dealing with the carnal immoral Corinthians at Corinth Paul also quoted Genesis 2:24.

First Corinthians 6:16,

*What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? **for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.**”*

At the church at Ephesus in the context of the home we read,

Ephesians 5:31,

*“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.**”*

Paul went on to make a comparison when talking to the Ephesians of Christ and His church. he said, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31).

One Flesh?

If a person has a mosquito bite on his or her arm would that person actually think that it would make the situation better by cutting off their arm?

In Matthew 19:6, Jesus answered the Pharisees saying,

*“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**”*

What About The Exception Clause?

Matthew 5:32,

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

Divorce Is Not A Solution To Martial Problems Anymore Than Cutting Your Arm Off Would Be A Solution For A Mosquito Bite

Matthew 19:9,

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

In This Discussion We Will Consider...

1. What Moses Said About Divorce.
2. What The Pharisees Said About Divorce.
3. What Paul Said About Divorce.
4. What Jesus Said About Divorce.

What Moses Said About Divorce

During the time of Moses, divorce was very common. At that time a man would divorce his wife for any reason and as a result Moses had to deal with the situation, as do we. We will consider here what Moses wrote.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4,

“When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

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

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

4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”

Deuteronomy 24:1, “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her.”

Why the two references, “taken a wife,” and “married her.” To us this is one and the same; however, a Jewish wedding involved a covenant. Malachi warned his listeners that, “The LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant” (Malachi 2:14).

When this covenant was established between the father of the bride and the man who would marry his daughter, the man and woman were regarded as husband and wife, even though no physical union had taken place. We have an example of this in Matthew 1:18, 19, where we read, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused (Thayers Lexicon- “to be promised in marriage”) to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost... Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away (divorce) privily.”

Joseph was considered Mary’s “husband” once the “covenant” was made with her father. At that point Joseph began taking the responsibilities of a husband. It is significant that when it was assumed that Mary was having a child out of wedlock, neither of her parents are mentioned. God did not direct her father to take care of the situation, but rather He directed Joseph to take care of it.

A Covenant Is Not A Contract

A contract is based on mistrust; therefore it has become acceptable to have a pre-nuptial agreement.

A covenant is based on trust.

A contract establishes liability. It prepares for an unfavourable outcome, with the focus on self.

A covenant establishes a new responsibility. This responsibility fell on the one who initiated the covenant. It has a focus on the one he will marry rather than a focus on himself (See Ephesians 5:23-33).

A contract can be broken by mutual consent of both parties.

A covenant cannot be broken without continuing consequences. (Note: The phrase, “The wife of thy covenant,” is referring to the covenant made with the father of the bride. The couple getting married had not as yet made a covenant with each other.) Therefore, the Bible says, “Joseph was minded to put her away” (Matthew 1:19).

After The Covenant Was Made

The groom returned to his father’s house to build a home for his bride. When it was finished he would return with a torchlight procession to the bride’s home. The bride would be expecting the bridegroom to come, however, as she would not know the exact time of his arrival, it was preceded by a shout and the sounding of a trumpet.

A Picture of Christ Returning For His Bride. In John 14:1-6 we read Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” This is followed by, “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb.”

Back To What Moses Said

Deuteronomy 24:1, “And it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her.”

The word uncleanness has been translated “nakedness” fifty times. It has also been translated “shame” in Isaiah 20:4. Deuteronomy 24:4 refers to her as being “defiled.” The Jewish School of Shammai, interprets this to mean *unchastity* or engaging in sexual activity.

The word “defiled” is used four times in Genesis 34 concerning illicit sexual activity.

- **Genesis 34:2**,
“And when Shechem...took her, and lay with her, and **defiled** her.”
- **Genesis 34:5**,

“And Jacob heard that he had **defiled** Dinah his daughter.”

- **Genesis 34:13**,
“And the sons of Jacob answered...because he had **defiled** Dinah their sister.”
- **Genesis 34:27**,
“The sons of Jacob...spoiled the city, because they had **defiled** their sister.”

The Pharisees Completely Changed The Teaching of Moses **Matthew 19:3**,

“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?”

Deuteronomy 24:1, “Then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.”

Moses said “then,” if she be guilty of sexual activity outside of marriage she could be given a bill of divorcement and sent out of his house; however, let us keep in mind that God hates divorce. **God’s will is always forgiveness and reconciliation** but because of the “hardness of their hearts” there was no forgiveness and therefore, there could be no reconciliation. Therefore we read, “And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he (Moses) wrote you this precept.”

Deuteronomy 24:2, “She may go and be another man’s wife.”

In keeping with the context Moses was not giving permission for her to remarry, he was saying “she may (expressing the possibility) go and be another man’s wife.”

Deuteronomy 24:3,4, “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.**”

No Concern For The Truth

Notice again, the Pharisees came “tempting him.” They were not interested in the truth. We read in verse one this attempt to trap Christ in His words took place in “the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan.” This was Herod’s territory. Herod was guilty of violating Leviticus 18:16 and 20:21, concerning marrying a divorced woman named Herodias.

John the Baptist openly said this was wrong and Herod ordered John to be arrested and imprisoned and he wanted him to be put to death. The Pharisees were simply trying to trap Christ with the hope that He would suffer the same fate as did John the Baptist.

The Account of John The Baptist’s Rebuke of Herod

Matthew 14:1-5,

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife.

4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

Notice also their question was, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife **for every cause?**” (Matthew 19:3). Contrary to what Moses taught, the Pharisees had taught that a man could divorce his wife “for every cause.” They could simply get rid of her if she burned the toast or whatever bothered the man. Jesus said, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, **except it be for fornication**, and shall marry another, committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:6).

Considering Again The Subject As Presented In Matthew Nineteen Matthew Chapter 19:1-12,

Verse 1,

“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan.”

Again, we repeat this because it is important, they were not interested in the truth. They were in Herod’s territory and the Pharisees set out to trap the Lord in His words in hopes He would get arrested by Herod.

Verses 2,3,

“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?”

Notice again, their question concerning divorce was “for every cause.” The Pharisees had completely reversed the teaching of Moses, and taught that a man could divorce his wife for “every cause.”

Verses 4-6,

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The Lord is very clear here. He said, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The Next Question From The Pharisees

Verse 7,

“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”

Notice their misinterpretation of what Moses said. Moses *commanded* nothing about divorce. He did not say they could get a divorce “for any cause.” Moses said, if he found some “uncleanness” in her and she was thereby “defiled” they could “write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.”

Verse 8,

“He saith unto them, Moses **because of the hardness of your hearts** suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”

Jesus said Moses, “suffered” them to divorce because of “the hardness of their hearts.” He never *commanded* it and he never *promoted* it. It was not for “every cause” it was only if the woman had *defiled* herself through illicit sexual activity.

Jesus Continued,

Verse 9,

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

Considering The Subject of Divorce During The Sermon On The Mount

Matthew Chapter 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.”

“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.”
(Jeremiah 3:8)

Looking At The Context of Matthew Chapter Five

Matthew 5:1,

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them.”

Matthew 8:1,

“When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.”

Lessons They Needed To Learn

The Lord took His little group of disciples away from the multitudes to teach them some very important things they needed to know before they began their three year ministry with Him. In order to understand this portion of Scripture we should understand that the entire message on the mount starts in chapter five and ends at the beginning of chapter eight.

The word “and” in verse one connects us with what has been said in the previous verses where we read the Lord had just recruited His disciples. We then read, “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them.”

In verses three through eleven Christ used the term “**blessed**” nine times. In Matthew 16:17 we read, “And Jesus answered and said unto him, (Peter) **Blessed** art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” The term blessed as used here refers to having a correct understanding of spiritual things.

“Poor In Spirit”

Jesus said they would need to be “*poor in spirit*.” The word poor here means to be bankrupt. They needed to realize that they had nothing to offer anyone. If we want the truth about any of the issues of our day we need to start with the attitude that we have nothing to offer.

We need to forget what we think we know and simply search the Scriptures for the truth.

He said they would need to learn to “mourn.” They would need to learn to have their hearts broken by the things that breaks the heart of Christ. Divorce is one thing that breaks the heart of the Lord. The Lord said they would need to be “meek.” Meekness is not weakness, meekness is power under control. They would need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. They would need to “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” and they would need to be “merciful.” They would also need to be “pure in heart,” and they would need to learn to be “peacemakers.”

Before we get anxious about defending our positions on any of the issues of the day we need to be sure these Christ-like traits are foundational in our lives.

They Would Need To Unlearn And Relearn

At the beginning of the ministry of the disciples with the Lord, He instructed them concerning some false information they had received. In twelve verses in Matthew Jesus said, “But I say unto you.” When instructing His disciples at the beginning of their ministry with Him, six times Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it hath been said...But I say unto you.”

The First Doctrinal Subject Christ Dealt With

It is very interesting that the first doctrinal error Christ dealt with at the beginning of their ministry together had to do with the subject of divorce and remarriage.

In Matthew 5:31,32 Christ said,

*“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.”

First On The Agenda?

Why would Christ begin this important part of their training with the subject of divorce and remarriage? Was He concerned that the disciples were thinking of getting divorced? I doubt that was the reason. More likely, it was because of the importance of the subject, and the fact that the Pharisees would be challenging them concerning this issue.

In their day, like today, divorce and remarriage was running rampant. This was a serious issue and when the Pharisees confronted the Lord with this issue it was very obvious the Pharisees, as well as Christ’s disciples had been taught the opposite of the truth, as it is written in Deuteronomy.

If, and I say if, this exception clause applies to today, we need to keep the focus on the fact that God hates divorce. Divorce is never God’s way to a solution of marital problems. Never! God’s solution to marital problems is forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Lesson From Hosea

Hosea and his wife had three children together and she became a harlot. “For their mother hath played the harlot: she...hath done shamefully” (Hosea 2:5). She was an “adulteress” (Hosea 3:1). She ended up in a slave market where she would have been paraded naked before everyone and put up for auction.

Hosea’s Response?

Hosea 3:2,3,

“So I bought her to me...And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me.” According to the Levitical law he could have had her stoned to death, or according to Deuteronomy, he could have divorced her.

Hosea's Unconditional Love

Hosea must have been a brokenhearted man as he stood in that crowd bidding for his naked wife on the auction block. The Lord would certainly be brokenhearted about Hosea's wife, and Hosea had learned to let God break his heart with this situation that obviously broke the heart of God. Again, God's solution to our problems in the home is always forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Difference Between Fornication And Adultery

The dictionary says adultery is "voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not his or her spouse;" however, the meaning of words have changed over time,

Fornication

We consider adultery as after marriage and fornication as before marriage; however, the word used by the Lord is a much stronger word than adultery. He said "**except it be for fornication.**" The Greek word is *porneia*. It includes, illicit sexual intercourse including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc. (Strong's Concordance). The term "*fornication*" is used in reference to Sodomites in Jude 1:7.

The Greek Word *porneia* Is Translated Fornication In The Following Places

The term fornication as it occurs in the verses below must be examined in the light of the context in which they occur. For example, the seven references in Revelation are not given in the context of a marriage; however, Matthew refers to fornication twice and both are in the context of a marriage.

Matthew 5:32,

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

Matthew 15:19,

*"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, **fornication**, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."*

Matthew 19:9,

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

John 8:41,

*"Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of **fornication**; we have one Father, even God."*

Acts 15:20,

*"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from **fornication**, and from things strangled, and from blood."*

Acts 15:29,

*"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."*

Acts 21:25,

*"As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from **fornication**."*

Romans 1:29,

*"Being filled with all unrighteousness, **fornication**, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,*

First Corinthians 1:5,

*"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."*

First Corinthians 6:13,

*“Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for **fornication**, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.”*

First Corinthians 6:18,

*“Flee **fornication**. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”*

First Corinthians 7:2,

*“Nevertheless, to avoid **fornication**, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”*

Second Corinthians 12:21,

*“And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and **fornication** and lasciviousness which they have committed.”*

Galatians 5:19,

*“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, **fornication**, uncleanness, lasciviousness.”*

Ephesians 5:3,

*“But **fornication** and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”*

Colossians 3:5,

*“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; **fornication**, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”*

First Thessalonians 4:3,

*“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from **fornication**.”*

Revelation 2:21,

*“And I gave her space to repent of her **fornication**; and she repented not..”*

Revelation 9:21,

*“Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their **fornication**, nor of their thefts.”*

Revelation 14:8,

*“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her **fornication**.”*

Revelation 17:2,

*“With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her **fornication**.”*

Revelation 17:4,

*“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her **fornication**.”*

Revelation 18:3,

*“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her **fornication**, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”*

Revelation 19:2,

*“For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her **fornication**, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”*

What Paul Said About Divorce And The Local Church

It is always important to consider the context when determining what is being dealt with in any portion of the Scriptures. In the age in which we live today divorce and remarriage has an effect on the local church. When Moses was in the wilderness there was no local church, and there were no deacons.

When Christ was talking to His little band of disciples on the mountain in Matthew chapters five through eight, He didn't mention pastors or deacons. If He had, the disciples would not have known what He was talking about.

After Paul was saved he spent the rest of his life dealing with things pertaining to the local church which included divorce.

The Corinthian Church

Paul spent some time dealing with the subject of divorce and remarriage in the carnal, immoral Corinthian church. He said, “let not the husband put away his wife” (First Corinthians 7:11). And he said, “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” (First Corinthians 7:12).

Concerning Church Leadership

At Corinth Paul dealt with the subject at a church **member** level and then in First and Second Timothy and Titus he dealt with the subject at a local church **leadership** level.

First Timothy 3:2,

“A bishop (pastor) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.”

First Timothy 3:12,

“Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.”

Titus 1:6,

“If any (pastors) be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.”

Pastors and deacons will be responsible to deal with church discipline when necessary. First Corinthians chapter five reveals the situation at Corinth.

Verse 1,

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you.”

Verse 2,

“He that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.”

Verse 9,

“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators.”

Verse 11,

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother

be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” (Referring to the Lord’s table).

Verse 13,

“Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

A man who is divorced and remarried is going to have a difficult time with handling this responsibility.

First Timothy 3:5,

“For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?”

Protecting The Hurting Person

Another reason for this requirement might be to protect the divorced person from further hurt. Except for the Lord, only those who have gone through the tragedy of divorce know the hurt that they have experienced, and continue to experience. Whenever God comes up with rules it is to protect us from harm.

Considering Church Membership

In First and Second Timothy God gave clear instruction that a man who is divorced and remarried can not be a pastor or a deacon; however, no instructions are given here concerning divorced and remarried people not being a part of the assembly.

We Can’t Have It Both Ways

If as pastors, we hold to the position that there are no grounds for divorce and remarriage and that they are living in adultery we will need to discipline them out of the church.

Some Concluding Thoughts

1. Satan’s plan is to destroy our homes. He is doing it.
2. Marriages may be made in Heaven; however, they must be lived out on earth.

3. There is no such thing as a home without marital problems.
4. Divorce is never God's solution to marital problems.
5. When it comes to our decisions we need to determine to prove "what is acceptable unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10). This Scripture is found in the context of the home.
6. Like the disciples we may have received some false information and we need to approach the subject of divorce and remarriage with an attitude that we have nothing to offer and learn what the Lord would have us learn.
7. The word "cleave" in Genesis means to glue together. If we glue two pieces of plywood together and then attempt to separate them there will be splinters on both sides. Divorce is a very painful thing and actually creates more problems than it solves.
8. The Book of Hosea shows us that unconditional love is all about, forgiveness and reconciliation.

There Can Be No Reconciliation Without Repentance

God's way is forgiveness and reconciliation; however, if there is no repentance there can be no reconciliation. The reason for no reconciliation is because of the hardness of the heart. Jesus said, "For the hardness of your heart he (Moses) wrote you this precept" (Mark 10:5).

Concerning Repentance And Reconciliation

There can be no forgiveness and reconciliation if there is only a manifestation of a "hardness of the heart." Jesus said,

*"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and **if he repent**, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him"* (Luke 17:3,4).

Is There An Exception Clause?

Moses said, in the case of illicit sexual activity a man could "write her a bill of divorcement" (Deuteronomy 24:1). Jesus quoted this portion of Scripture twice.

Matthew 5:32,

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

Matthew 19:9,

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

I wish the only verse on the subject was "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). However, it is not the only verse. Like it or not, Jesus did say, "except it be for fornication." However, we better apply the principles taught in the Book of Hosea before we think divorce is a solution. Divorce is not a solution. Divorce brings far more problems than it solves. Far More!!!

I have recorded here a only a few of my thoughts on the subject. I have always taken a very hard line stand of no divorce and remarriage. Is there an exception that would allow the so-called innocent party to remarry? You decide and then answer to God for your decision.

I will conclude with what I said at the beginning of this material.

"I was saved when I was twelve years old. Our family joined a Baptist Church and soon after, I heard that someone in the church was getting a divorce. As a young Christian I felt that was wrong. I set out to see what the Bible says about this subject and have been attempting to figure it out ever since."

I'm still working on it!