

## God's Law For Marriage And Divorce

God created marriage as a beautiful, honorable institution between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4). But sadly the beautiful inception sometimes does not last long. Divorce is a national and international ill.

In 2002, Texas had a 44% divorce rate. We know the mind of God toward divorce. Matthew 19:6 says, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" Malachi 2:16 says, "*For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away ...*" Let's consider some of God's law for marriage and divorce.

In Matthew 19, the Pharisees asked a question of Jesus. They wanted to know if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause. Jesus responded, "*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 Pharisees responded by then asking, "*Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*" which referred to Moses' instruction in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. These instructions allowed that if a man marry and find "some unclean thing" (not adultery), he may then give his wife a writing of divorcement and the wife may go and be another man's wife. But she can never be married to the first husband again.

Effectively, Jesus taught that there was only reason for divorce, and that was adultery. Many brethren believe that a couple can get a divorce for any reason and it be acceptable to God as long as they do not remarry, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. But Jesus contradicted this erroneous belief. Along with only one reason for divorce, in vs. 9 Jesus also gave only one reason for remarriage. He said, "*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.*" Jesus taught the same doctrine in other passages (Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18).

As one might imagine, there are several different erroneous doctrines regarding divorce and remarriage. Because of space, we can only consider a few along with a brief refutation. The first doctrine states that there is no cause for remarriage after a divorce. People will argue that Jesus was only explaining the Law of Moses and originally no remarriage was intended. They will furthermore claim that Romans 7:1-4 provides no exception clause therefore remarriage is not possible. But Jesus was contrasting His new law

with the Law of Moses. Remember that "some unclean thing" of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was not speaking of fornication or adultery. Jesus does indeed plainly give an exception in Matthew 19:9. The second doctrine states that divorce and remarriage can only occur if the wife or husband had not been a virgin when entered into marriage. This argument based upon an unnatural distinction in the definition of "fornication" and "adultery." They claim that because the Matthew 19 text says "fornication," then it must have occurred prior to the marriage; not during it. But "fornication" is a broad term which includes adultery, bestiality, and even homosexuality (Jude 7).

The third doctrine states that adultery is an act in time, not a state in which one can live. This doctrine says that the first sex act between divorced people who marry a second time is adultery, and after that first act they are joined to the second partner and if they repent, they can remain married to the second spouse. But notice in Romans 7:4 that when "*she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress.*" Furthermore, in Colossians 3:5-7, Paul mentions the sin of "*fornication*" and that it is possible to "*live in it.*" The fourth doctrine says that alien sinners are not amenable to God's marriage law. If this were possible, how then could one be judged a sinner? In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, there were "*fornicators*" among the Corinthians before they became Christians. If this doctrine were true, how could you call them a "*fornicator*?" Furthermore, marriage is not a "church ordinance;" it is God's law for man.

The fifth doctrine is related to the previous one. It claims that baptism washes away unlawful marriages. Some brethren appeal to 1 Corinthians 7:20 as a proof text. But baptism does not change the nature of sin. Whatever was sin before baptism is still sin after baptism. We saw in the previous point that it is possible to "*live*" in adultery. Repentance requires the cessation of sin. "*And such were some of you*" in 1 Corinthians 6:11 indicates that they no longer were guilty of practicing the things which they formerly practiced. The seventh doctrine involves 1 Corinthians 7:15. Some say when a Christian and a non-Christian are married, if the non-Christian leaves, the Christian is not bound to them any longer and they are free to remarry. However, the word "bondage" in vs. 15 is not the same word as "bound" in vs. 37 which is the common word for marriage. Vs. 15 is simply saying that if the unbeliever departs, you are no longer obligated to him. You are not responsible to serve him or be in service to him.

The eighth doctrine is referred to as mental adultery. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus says that the one who looks upon a woman commits adultery with her in his heart. Many brethren contend that looking at pornography is a basis for divorce and remarriage. However, Jesus was speaking of a physical act, not

a mental thought. The ninth doctrine is mental divorce which states that a put away mate has the right to remarry when their first mate subsequently commits adultery after the divorce. But this position requires two divorces: a legal or civil divorce and a mental act within the heart at some later point. The scriptures are not this ambiguous and wherever the terms "divorce" or "put away" are used in reference to a marriage they have a singular meaning. A person is either the one being divorced or the one doing the divorcing, they cannot be both at the same time.

The disciples said, "*this is a hard saying ...*" The teaching of Jesus is clear, but the practice of it is hard. This is why that all people should think soberly about marriage before they enter into it for marriage is for life!

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