

December 7, 1998

Dear Brethren,

Please forgive me and bear with me concerning the manner in which this paper is done and presented to you.

I remember full well hearing our Brother Bean mention the "scholarly" presentation of these topics before this group. And I concur that they "should" be done in a scholarly manner.

But this topic is too close to my heart. I confess that I cannot simply take a "scholarly" approach to the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

I am, as you are, confronted each day with the heart break of divorce. I see, as you do, the awful results from this American tragedy. The paper as you will see, is not scholarly, but a "preachy" emotional plea to take responsibility in our homes and churches. It is a plea to you, to hear, to heed, and to convince men everywhere of its truth.

Can we not be counted on by our God, to be faithful and courageous in proclaiming the truth everywhere?

May our God make us men of conviction! Thanks so much for this great privilege.

In the love that only Christ can put in our hearts.

Pastor Roger D. Lyaon

### **God's Basis for Marriage**

Genesis 2:18-25

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.

19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

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

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

In our Biblical view of marriage, we must first understand God's view and reason for marriage. **God said, It is not good that the man should be alone;** Marriage then comes into view with God determining that "It is not good that man should be alone." First, the context indicates that Adam was to set the names for all the creatures God had created and to understand that they were to multiply and fill the earth. All had both male and female except man. The purpose then of marriage was to procreate and fill the earth as well. **"It is not good that man should be alone,"** because he alone could not produce his offspring and fill the earth as God commanded. The woman that God created for man was not just to be a partner but was to complete man's existence. Marriage then is the perfect completion of man's life. To the Hebrew, this was to be taken as perhaps the greatest event in the course of life itself. *"With the Hebrews married life was the normal life. Any exception called for apology and explanation. "Any Jew who has not a wife is no man" (Talmud). It was regarded as awaiting everyone on reaching maturity; and sexual maturity comes much earlier indeed in the East than with us in the West-- in what we call childhood. The ancient Hebrews, in common with all Orientals, regarded the family as the social unit. In this, their view of it, coincides with that, of modern sociologists. Of the three great events in the family life, birth, marriage and death, marriage was regarded as the most important."* (from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright (C) 1996 by BibleSoft)

Only the abnormal were to be left alone. **(Leviticus 13:45-46) And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.** All others were to be enjoined in the family. They became, and remained part of the family. Today, we view marriage as an option available because of desire, affordability, enhancement of career, practicality, financial advantage, and perhaps other diminishing reasons that fit our society. God takes marriage seriously.

**"I will make him an help meet for him."** God's concern was that man would not only have an aide but one that is of the same caliber that he is. *I will make him [(heb 5048) `ezer (heb 5828)], a help of his like: "i. e., a helping being, in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognize himself" (Delitzsch).* His solution is the women, designed by God, taken from man, and given to man as the perfect solution. There would no longer be, loneliness, and he would always have one that was ideally suited to his needs. He did not need to search among all the creatures of the earth, but rather accept the work of God on his behalf.

Adam's response was immediate and correct. **“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”** He indeed recognized her as the divine answer to his entire search. She was not the *"woman of his dreams"*, but his flesh and bone made perfectly suitable to him.

One more statement of the Word of God must be taken into account as we consider God's view of marriage. **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”** Adam had no father or mother, but the declaration of God's intent for his son's and the son's of all men, is that [1] **a man leave his father and his mother**, and [2] **and shall cleave unto his wife**: There is no hint that this arrangement should ever become one of the whim or will of man. He was to **cleave** (*dabaq*) (*daw-bak'*); *a primitive root; properly, to impinge, i.e. cling or adhere*; they were *"stuck together"* without any possibility of change. They quite literally became **"one flesh."** It is interesting to note, that the DNA of a married couple joined together and is uniquely found in the children of the couple and is identified as the offspring of the father and mother without duplication by any other.

Most of us go to great lengths to care for and protect our flesh. Separation usually causes a great deal of pain, especially to us. It is a natural thing to exert all of our abilities to protect our "flesh." God expects the same in our marriage. **(Ephesians 5:28-31) “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.”**

### **God's Restrictions on Marriage**

#### **Exodus 34:10-17**

10 And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

12 *Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:*

13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

16 *And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.*

17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

#### **Deuteronomy 7:2-4**

2 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:

3 *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.*

4 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.

#### **Leviticus 18:6-8**

6 *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD.*

7 The nakedness of thy *father*, or the nakedness of thy *mother*, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

8 The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.

#### **Leviticus 20:19-21**

19 *And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister: for he uncovereth his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity.*

20 And if a man shall lie with *his uncle's wife*, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless.

21 And if a man shall take *his brother's wife*, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.

#### **Leviticus 21:7-14 7**

*They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God.*

8 Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the LORD, which sanctify you, am holy.

9 And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.

10 And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;

11 Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother;

12 Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD.

13 *And he shall take a wife in her virginity.*

14 *A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.*

God restricted marriage by setting out the position that the children of Israel must have toward the heathen of the land. There was to be absolutely no covenant made with "**the inhabitants of the land.**" They were to destroy their places of worship. They were in other words, there was to be no tolerance toward those who would destroy the families that God had given them. They were to protect their families from *marriage with heathens*.

The second restriction God put on marriage was disallowing to any who are "**near of kin**". The outcome of such marriages was that "**they shall be childless.**" The expectation of marriage was the children that God would give them as a blessing in their union. (**Psalm 127:3-5**) "**Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his**

reward. **As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.**" To be childless in marriage was looked upon as lacking the blessing of God in their lives.

The priests were further restricted in that they were not to **"take a wife that is a whore or profane"** or a **"woman put away from her husband."** He was to only take a **"wife in her virginity."** He could not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a harlot. To do so was to remove himself from the service of the Lord.

With these restrictions, God was protecting those who would yield to His commands. It was not a guarantee of marriage bliss, but taking away many of the outside influences designed to destroy the home and the marriage. He was assuring that the marriage would be one that He could bless, and that would honor His name. Marriage has never been nor ever will be easy. Some people by their very nature are hard to get along with and are not easily satisfied. While the virtuous woman adorns her husband, some women bring shame to their husbands. **(Proverbs 12:4) "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones."** Proverbs also warns the prospective husband, or confirms to the man who already has a wife of unsuitable nature, **(Proverbs 21:9) "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house."** Many husbands *and wives* have found that a contentious mate has made life less than pleasant for many years of their lives. The protection that God offers has nothing to do with the nature of a mate, but rather with the character of the mate.

### ***The Process of the Marriage.***

Today, many parents have been surprised to varying degrees by the announcement of their children, "I'm getting married." The plans for the future often laid aside or in some cases totally disregarded. Mom or Dad wonder what has happen to their sensible son or daughter that would have caused them to throw aside all of the plans that were so carefully laid out. The answer is usually something like, "I'm in love!!!" This same event may have happened to the Moms and Dads of the Hebrew culture, and certainly in the early Christian church. But not near as often as it does now. There was most often a definite pattern that was followed. Many times the marriage was "arranged" by parents without the consent or knowledge of their children. The reaction to this by most today is one of horror. To think that someone would be expected to marry without being "in love."

The process of marriage began with the betrothal. This was dealt with first as a matter to be bargained over. The families involved, and always through the fathers or the oldest male to succeed the father in the family, would set the "price" involved. This was and is a dominant characteristic among oriental families. The "father" or the one that replaced him in the family affairs was considered to be God's representative in the family. His decision was the carrying out God's purpose for the young people involved. It was to be accepted as if God Himself had directly intervened and ordered the marriage. **(Genesis 24:50) "Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good."** This bargaining was the only "legal" contract involved in the marriage. The records were maintained by the families involved. The betrothal was more formal and far more binding than the "engagement" of our present day. After careful hearing of the "bargain", Rebekah's father asked if she would go. **(Genesis**

**24:58-59** “And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.” Although, the question was put to Rebekah, it was as if saying, "Will you bow yourself to the will of God?"

The next step was the payment of the dowry or bargained price. Jacob's price was seven years of labor for Rachel plus the seven additional years after he was deceived by Laban. **(Genesis 29:18-19)** “And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, “It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.” **(Genesis 29:26-28)** “And Laban said, “It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.” Somehow, the lack of commitment on behalf of many married couples makes this seem like impossibility in our society today. In the case of those that were able, the dowry could be paid when the commitment of marriage was made. This placed the couple "legally" in the position of a married couple. There was to be absolute faithfulness on behalf of both parties. If for some reason the marriage did not take place, either through unfaithfulness, (adultery) or the breaking of the betrothal agreement by the groom, the bride had to receive a paper of divorcement before she could marry another. **(Deuteronomy 24:1-2)** “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. **(Matthew 1:18-19)** “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused 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 privily.” The betrothal was to last for a short time, usually no more than a year, before the consummation of the marriage.

### ***The Marriage Ceremony***

There is very little mentioned in the Word of God concerning the wedding ceremony. In some cases there seems to be no ceremony at all. **(Genesis 24:64-67)** **And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”**

There is the wedding procession. **(Psalm 45:14-15 14)** “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.” **(Jeremiah 7:34)** “Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.” This procession and the following celebration is illustrated in some detail with

the parable of the ten virgins. **Matthew 25:1-13** “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

The bride was escorted by her attendants as she is brought to the home of the groom's parents for the marriage supper. Those in the procession are supplied with candles, torches and lamps. The families and friends of both the bride and the groom proceed to celebrate the marriage. At the home of the groom the invited guests would enter the home and the door closed. Those who were not invited would disperse. Hospitality is to many in the Orient a sacred duty. The preparation for the celebration would often tax the family resources to their limit or beyond. Thus the marriage at Cana may illustrate by the "running-out" of the wine. **John 2:1-10** “And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, “They have no wine.” Jesus saith unto her, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, “Fill the water pots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, “Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.” And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.” There is nothing mentioned about a formal ceremony during this time. It was a time of hospitality and joy for all involved.

The involvement by the Lord Jesus Christ in the marriage at Cana, and His teaching concerning God's view of marriage, should alert the Christian world today concerning their view of marriage. **Matthew 19:5-6** “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.” But somehow we have looked for excuses to not "see" Scriptural truth concerning these things. Our emphasis today is nearly always on the romantic "love" of the bride and groom. Sometimes we get a little more practical and talk about their preparation for the future [How well are they prepared to make a good financial living] rather than the teaching and emphasis of total commitment for life, in spite of

conditions that arise through the course of time. The life commitment of love and marriage can nowhere be better illustrated than that of Paul's letter the Ephesians. **Ephesians 5:21-33** "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 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. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

### ***A Summary Concerning Marriage***

Most of us have used words similar to these. *"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God and before these witnesses, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony; which is an honorable estate, instituted by God in the time of man's innocence, and signifies to us the mystical union of Christ and His Church.* And then, many turn off the button that allows the Holy Spirit to speak in their hearts and minds concerning the spiritual aspects of marriage and they become very secular. If we are to deal with marriage from a secular stand point, and use the "reasonableness" of our minds to dictate the doctrine of marriage as we deal with the church, we should become magistrates, judges, or ship's captains rather than pastors and ministers of the Gospel.

Marriage is a spiritual union of a man and woman not a contract or agreement between two persons, not necessarily man and women. If it is indeed spiritual, then all that is secular and social concerning marriage must be put out of our thinking.

There must be first a spiritual agreement between the man and woman. Many have opted out of any real commitment of faith in Jesus Christ by saying, "Well, he made a profession." I believe that it is impossible for a pastor to perform a marriage ceremony that evokes the blessing of the Sovereign God of the Universe when there is so little evidence of Christ in the life of a man or woman that we have to say, "He made a profession." There should be a maturity in the life of both the man and woman that convinces us and those around us of the spiritual vigor and growth of both. It is safe to assume that the basis of leadership of the church guide us as a minimum. **(1 Timothy 3:6-7) "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."** **(1 Timothy 3:11) Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.**" This means that they should be doctrinally aware and taught so that there would not be a mixing of truth with error at the beginning of the marriage. We must ask ourselves this question concerning these candidates for

marriage. "Would either this man or this woman be in full agreement with the basic tenets of the faith, to such an extent that they could articulate to their children the truth about God, His Son Jesus Christ, the extent of the atonement, and salvation by the grace of God alone?" Or, is it our hope when we marry some who are "free-willers" that they will come around sometime in the future? *We cannot expect the Church to become serious about marriage, and certainly not the world, until we become serious about it.* Whom will you marry? What has been the result of the marriages that you officiated in the time of your ministry? We must be accountable!! *Marriage is a spiritual union of a man and woman not a contract or agreement between two persons, not necessarily man and women.*

Marriage that is entered into by two Christians involves all the elements of a covenant. A covenant is "*an agreement between two people or two groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other.*" (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) (Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

The application of the term covenant is when properly used "*a compact between man and man; either between tribes or nations (1 Samuel 11:1; Joshua 9:6,15) or between individuals (Genesis 21:27), in which each party bound himself to fulfill certain conditions and was promised certain advantages.* (from New Unger's Bible Dictionary) (originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (C) 1988.)

Marriage is referred to as a covenant in the Book of Proverbs. (**Proverbs 2:16-17**) "**To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, Who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.**" (NKJ) The covenant of marriage is also mentioned in the Book of Malachi. (**Malachi 2:14**) "**Yet ye say, "Wherefore?" Because 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.**" In other words, it is a covenant or agreement between a man and a woman, for the rest of their lives. "*A covenant, in the biblical sense, implies much more than a contract or simple agreement. A contract always has an end date, while a covenant is a permanent arrangement.*" (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) (Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

The Christian Church today has the responsibility of setting the standards for marriage for the entire world. We must return to the Biblical standard, first in our own lives, then among those that we shepherd. Perhaps there are some who will stray if we preach the truth, but is that our concern?

### ***What Does God Say About Divorce?***

I find that many good men who are great scholars of the Word of God seem to run afoul of the truth when it comes to the matter of divorce. It should be enough for men of God to understand that God hates the putting away or divorce of a man's wife. (**Malachi 2:15-16**) **And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.**" The New King James version rightly translates verse 16 when it says "**For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with**

violence," says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, which you do not deal treacherously." It is not enough for most "ministers" today to know God hates divorce. We have been guilty of looking for "exceptions" so that many people in the church will not be offended by the truth. It is not our "job" to make the truth acceptable. It is our holy calling to proclaim it. Tremendous violence has been done to society today because we as preachers of the gospel have let down the standards concerning divorce in the church today. It is multiplying with every divorce and then the re-marriage that often follows.

### ***What Possible Reason Can There Be For DIVORCE????***

The Westminster Confession of Faith states in Chapter 24, paragraph 5 that, "*Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve the contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.*" Although many believers do not look to the Confession for their guide in faith, many accept this position in the matter of divorce and marriage. Most pastors that I have talked to, have accepted this or a similar position, but few have much in the way of a solid Biblical foundation for this accepted position. Many have come to it out of convenience, or because it was passed onto them by their school, or respected men that they are acquainted with. They may also have arrived at their position because it is expected by the Church that they serve. But, is this what the Bible teaches about the matter?

There are at least two questions that must be considered before we "buy in" to the excuses of today.

The first is the matter of the vow. *A vow is a solemn promise or pledge that binds a person to perform a specified act or to behave in a certain manner. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) (Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)* Every Christian marriage ceremony includes the "vows" of both the husband and the wife. They usually include words such as, "as long as you both shall live," or "until death." Webster defines a vow as "*a solemn promise or pledge; especially one made to God dedicating oneself to an act, service, or way of life.*" Are these Biblically lawful vows?

#### **Numbers 30:1-2**

1 And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded.

2 If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

#### **Ecclesiastes 5:4-5**

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

Unless we seek to explain away Scripture, we must understand that God does hold accountable the "voluntary" vows of men and women such as those uttered during the marriage ceremony. Do we not invoke those present to "witness" these vows before God? How then can we treat so lightly those who take these vows and then "fall out of love?" It is the fault of the Christian church that we have gone so far from God in the matter of keeping our word. No one is "disciplined" for breaking their word before God and the very

congregation that they remain in, as members in good standing. Because of this license is given to multiply the crime and to repeat it over and over again and remain in good standing as church members.

The Larger Catechism has this question. "**What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?**" The answer in part is, "**breach of lawful promises;**" Yet, we have allowed, condoned, and in some cases urged folks to break their vow before God. How can we be guiltless?

I would urge each minister regardless of the reason or exception involved, to urge men and women to be faithful to God in the giving of their word in marriage. There may be many cases which, naturally speaking, we can sympathize with and understand the difficulties of the marriage, but in which we have no right to offer the solution of divorce. (**Malachi 2:16**) "**For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence,**" says the LORD of hosts. "**Therefore take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.**" (NKJ) Is it not interesting that the subject of marriage and vows are coupled together in the Word of God?

#### **Matthew 5:31-37**

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

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.

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

The second reason, if another is needed, is the matter of forgiveness. Many have stated when they have been betrayed by their wife or husband that they cannot forgive the offending party. In our day, with the increase in sexually transmitted disease, it seems to be more valid than ever. Certainly, the reasoning goes, a husband or wife would not be expected to endanger themselves with one who has been unfaithful in their sex lives, would they?

The Scripture is very clear concerning the forgiveness of others, with no exception made for offended husbands and wives. (**Luke 11:4**) "**And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.**" (**Matthew 6:14-15**) "**For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**" Does this mean to you that those who do not forgive their mates for the awful sin of adultery or fornication have become "un-saved" by their failure to forgive? Or does it just mean that they are too hard-

hearted to have really been Christians at any time. I believe that we as ministers of the Gospel have perverted the doctrine of forgiveness and have taught others to do so by allowing and condoning divorce in the case of unfaithfulness.

Consider the following often quoted Scripture. **(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?** We would of course in great Spiritual pride answer the Pharisees of the past with an emphatic NO!! Then we could quote, **(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."** Certainly that should satisfy anyone who would question the validity of this "break-up" of marriage and the home, and you and I would be without fault in the matter. We would even be thought of as being "spiritual" in our answer to this hideous problem. Could we then not receive this "offended one" into the congregation with much love and sympathy? Isn't it right to encourage and comfort those that have been through these "messy" divorces? I think not!! Jesus answered those who were seeking to entrap Him with these words, **(Matthew 19:4-6) 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? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."** Does it seem to you that maybe Jesus was too caught up in the Old Testament application of the Scripture? He seems here to really believe that God NEVER intended nor condoned the "break-up" of the marriage once they were come together. In light of today's casual attitude toward divorce it does seem a little radical, UNLESS we remember, **"For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously."** Mal 2:16 (NAS)

But, there is one and only one reason clearly stated for divorce. The Pharisees again brought this to the Lord's attention. **(Matthew 19:7) "They say unto him, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?"** Here it is. We now can expect an out for those that "deserve" a divorce. **(Matthew 19:8) "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."**

We do have a reason for divorce then. It is not because of adultery that we are allowed to break our vows, to violate the will of God, and to act against that which God has stated He hates, but it is because of the "hardness of our hearts" that this terrible deed is allowed. Jesus was grieved over the hardness of the heart. **(Mark 3:5) "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."** Again He upbraided the disciples for being hard hearted. **(Mark 16:14) "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."** Even though it grieves the heart of our Savior, and is cause for Him to scold His own disciples, being "hard-hearted"

seems to be a way out for those bent on divorce. We must however, keep in mind Paul's view of the hard-hearted. (Romans 2:5-6) **“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds:”** I feel certain that there are a few genuine believers who in spite of all will plow ahead. Let us therefore consider the following Scriptures:

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

**Romans 7:2-3**

**2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.**

**3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.**

The state of North Carolina and many others, have made it easy. The cost, if you avoid the lawyers' fee and file your own paper work, is fifty dollars. The requirements are [1] that either yourself or your spouse live in North Carolina for six months prior to filing for divorce, and [2] that you assert under oath (there goes that vow again) without any further proof, that you have been living separate for one year. You are now free to collect all that the state has to offer.

### ***How about "remarriage" after divorce?***

It is because of repeated marriages on the part of individuals that the family violence is escalating to unbelievable proportion in this day in which we live. "Strangers" inhabit the family homes and cannot be expected to love and care for the family members as the real mother and father should. Often, we hear of the multiplied children problem, his, mine and ours. How are these children to react to intimate living conditions with many "strangers" in their homes? How are these parents to react to children in intimate conditions in their homes? Can they be expected to think of them always as "their" own children? We would react with *horror* over young people being herded together and spending many nights and days in un-chaperoned conditions. But, it's happening everyday in church families across America, and many pastors have little or no concern for them until it's too late.

The "right" to re-marry, comes from the teaching of **Deuteronomy 24:1,2**. **“When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor 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.** But we fail to keep in mind the form and practice of the Jewish marriage. At the espousal, they were legally married or promised to each other. The word given concerning the impending marriage was of such great force that it was only broken by a "writing of divorcement." The sacredness of virginity was so important that the parents kept the "tokens" of her virginity until after the consummation of the marriage. (**Deuteronomy 22:13-19**) **If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, and give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I**

found her not a maid: Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days." When the marriage was completely consummated by the physical union of the husband and wife it could no longer be terminated, and no re-marriage is in view except in the case of the death of the husband or wife.

Look with me at the New Testament. Jesus own words speak to this topic of re-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."** And again Jesus Himself asserts that the remarriage results not in marriageable bliss but 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.)"**

Paul likewise makes it clear that it is a lifelong obligation on behalf of those that are married, and may re-marry only at the death of their spouse, and only to a true believer. **(1 Corinthians 7:39) "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."**

If these then are adulterous marriages what are we to do with the thousands of remarried individuals that are in our churches? What would we do with those that are in adultery with another man's wife? Can it be any less with these? The force and weight of church discipline is designed by God to restore the brethren. **(Matthew 18:15-17) "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."** Notice in verse 15, the goal of "going" is not to prove one right and the other wrong, but to "gain thy brother." How much would be accomplished in the church if the sin that seeks to destroy the fellowship and unity of the home was treated the same way?

The Church that does not chastise demonstrates the lack of love and concern for its membership. The Pastor that ignores the obvious will reap the result. Look to the Word! **(1 Corinthians 5:1-5) "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. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he**

that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Who among us would have wanted to be in Paul's position or in that of the local pastor? But yet look at the result. (2 Corinthians 2:4-8) “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.”

Is not the love of Christ for His own worth demonstrating through the church? Do we not have a responsibility to turn around the growing lack of Biblical concern for the family in America? (Hebrews 12:6-8) “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

### **WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY?**

God instituted marriage as a permanent change in a man and women's life. They were to become "one flesh" for as long as they lived on the earth. There was to be no divorce, except in the case of the "hard hearted" individual that acted out his unchristian response without forgiving his own flesh.

Re-marriage is always considered adultery, except when the husband or wife has died, then the survivor is free to marry again but only in the Lord.

**This all seems simply enough. What do we do with it?????????????????????????**

All Scripture quoted is from The King James Version except where noted.