

Back To Basics

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SPECIAL ISSUE:

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, & REMARRIAGE

Johnie Edwards

With so much diverse teaching on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage, it seems to be fitting to do some basic Bible teaching on the subject. The home, as God would have it, has been under attack for a number of years. So, we study.

1) **MARRIAGE.** The Bible teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about marriage, He took them back to the beginning as He answered, "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" (Mt. 19:3-5). Going back to the beginning, it is evident that God "made a woman" for the man (Gen. 2:18-24). Our government has been trying to decide whether marriage is between a man and a woman, or whether same-sex marriage is okay. This is not for the government to decide. God has already made the decision! Same-sex marriage is a sinful relationship not tolerated in the Old or New Testaments (Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:27). From the beginning, marriage was for life. "From the beginning it was not so..." (Mt. 19:8). "Not so" means no

divorce allowed! It is still that way (Rom. 7:1-4), "except it be for fornication" (Mt. 19:9).

2) **DIVORCE.** When more than 50% of marriages end in divorce, we must teach our young people what the Bible teaches about divorce. The Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Mt. 19:3). "To put away" equates with divorce. Malachi reported that "God hateth putting away" (Mal. 2:16). When we learn that marriage is for life (Rom. 7:1-4), we will have learned that one cannot divorce for just any reason. The question of the Pharisees in Matthew 19 was about putting away one's wife. This includes both the man and the woman (Mt. 19:9; Mk. 10:12). His answer is, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt. 19:6). Jesus gave one exception for putting away a mate: "for fornication" (Mt. 19:9).

3) **REMARRIAGE.** Matthew 19 is discussing marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Let the text speak for itself: "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" (Mt. 19:9; 5:32).



THE SOWER'S SEED

Basic Sermon Starters

"HE THAT GOETH FORTH AND WEEPETH, BEARING PRECIOUS SEED, SHALL
DOUBTLESS COME AGAIN WITH REJOICING, BRINGING HIS SHEAVES WITH HIM."

GOD'S LAW CONCERNING MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, & REMARRIAGE

Introduction

1. Many today marry, divorce, and remarry without considering God's law.
2. God's law is simple, and is clearly revealed within His word, the Bible.

Discussion

I. GOD'S LAW CONCERNING MARRIAGE

- A. God's law, from the beginning, involves one man for one woman for life.
- B. Genesis 2:18-24
- C. Matthew 19:3-9
- D. Romans 7:2-3

II. GOD'S LAW CONCERNING DIVORCE

- A. Today, men and women divorce for just about every reason imaginable, and our states allow no-fault divorce.
- B. Malachi 2:16
- C. There is only one Scriptural reason for divorce.
 1. Matthew 5:32

2. Matthew 19:9

3. The Lord allows the party innocent of fornication to put away their fornicating mate.

D. To get a divorce for any reason other than fornication is to get an unscriptural divorce! If you know of another reason for divorce, where is the passage?

III. GOD'S LAW CONCERNING REMARRIAGE

A. The Scriptures only show two groups of people who have a right to take another mate:

1. Those whose mate is dead (Rom. 7:2-3).
2. Those who put away their mate for fornication (Mt. 19:9).

B. For anyone else to remarry is to live in adultery! If you know of others who have a right to take another mate, where is the Scripture?

Conclusion

Since marriage is of God (Gen. 2:18-24), let's learn to respect His laws governing this divine institution.

Back To Basics

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WHAT STANDARD SHALL WE USE?

John Isaac Edwards

We must measure everything by the proper standard, or we'll come out with the wrong answer. This study points out the standard to be used in determining the truth on any subject.

1) **WHAT THE STANDARD IS NOT.** It's not: (A) *What men might say.* Men are often wrong. Paul said, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5). Regardless of how many degrees he may have, how many books he may have written and how much respect you may have for him, he is still a man and men are not the standard! (B) *What the majority believe.* The majority may hold to the theory of evolution, but that does not change the fact that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is" (Ex. 20:11)! The Lord indicated that the majority will not be saved (Mt. 7:13-14). (C) *What someone in my family does.* Some change their views on issues to accommodate family situations. The truth is the truth, whether our relatives measure up to it or not! Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10:37). (D) *What I've always been taught.* It may be that what I've been taught is wrong. (E) *What the Old Testament dictated.* The Old Testament was for "Israel" (Dt. 5:1-3), has served its purpose and been done away (Gal. 3:19, 23-25; 2 Cor. 3:14). We are to "fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). (F) *What seems to me to be fair and right.* Some of God's requirements may not seem fair, but they are fair because God gave them! "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). Let's learn to lay all this aside, and simply go by the standard.

2) **WHAT THE STANDARD IS.** The word of the Lord is the only standard. It is right (Ps. 33:4), it is good (Is. 39:8), it is pure (Prov. 30:5), and it is truth (Jn. 17:17). If what we believe, teach and practice is not according to the word of the Lord, then it is not right (it is wrong), it is not good (it is evil), it is not pure (it is corrupt), and it is not truth (it is error)! May we always let the word of the Lord be the final authority in all matters!

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PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

Melba Edwards

Perhaps many marriages fail because of lack of preparation. Like any great undertaking, if we plan to marry we must prepare for marriage.

1) MARRIAGE IS ORDAINED BY GOD.

In the very beginning, God saw that the man He had made was alone. He created a help meet, or a helper suitable for him (Gen. 2:18). Hebrews 13:4 reads, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” When I realize marriage is ordained or set in order by God, it shows me the seriousness of it and I need to follow His rule.

2) MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE. Many people think if things don’t work out in a marriage, there is always divorce. The Bible nowhere teaches such. If I’m going to marry, I need to realize it is as long as we both shall live (Rom. 7:1-4). If I have divorce in the back of my head, my marriage is already in trouble. This should be a red flag telling me that I’m not prepared for marriage!

3) MARRIAGE HAS A PURPOSE. God ordained marriage for a reason. Marriage is to avoid fornication. 1 Corinthians 7:2 says, “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” Note the word “own.” In marriage, those sexual desires are fulfilled. Marriage is where children are born (Gen. 1:28). God’s plan must be followed, in preparing for marriage.

4) MARRIAGE HAS RESPONSIBILITIES.

God has set forth responsibilities for the man and the woman in marriage. The man is to be the head of the family (Eph. 5:23), while the woman is to submit to her husband (Eph. 5:22) and be obedient to him (Ti. 2:5). The man is to leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife (Gen. 2:24). The husband is to give honor to the wife as the weaker vessel (1 Pet. 3:7), and the wife is to reverence or respect her husband (Eph. 5:33). The man is to provide for his family (1 Tim. 5:8), while the woman is to guide the house (1 Tim. 5:14) and be a keeper at home, or homemaker (Ti. 2:5). They are both to love each other (Eph. 5:25; Ti. 2:4) and render due benevolence or affection (1 Cor. 7:3-5). As children enter the marriage, they both have responsibilities to teach and love them too (Eph. 6:4; Ti. 2:4). If I don’t follow God’s law concerning my responsibilities in marriage, then I’d better not marry!

As mothers and grandmothers, we need to begin when our children and grandchildren are young, teaching them the seriousness of marriage and all that God has set forth concerning marriage. It takes a lot of work to have a successful marriage. We need to be sure we are setting the proper example and doing all we can to help pave the way before them. Although it is hard to be prepared for every situation that may arise in a marriage, if we follow God’s law, it will make those situations easier to handle. May God bless you with a happy, life-long marriage!

DEFINING BIBLE TERMS

Greg Gwin

Many of the misconceptions, disagreements, and false doctrines that surround the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage could be resolved with a correct understanding of the terms used in the inspired Word. Here are some of the most important ones:

1) **MARRIAGE.** This is a covenant made between a man and woman (Gen. 2:21-24). In a proper, God-approved marriage, both the man and the woman will have a) never been previously bound in marriage, b) lost previous Scriptural mate(s) to death, or c) any previous marriage(s) terminated in an authorized divorce (see below). In every culture or society, there is an established protocol that acknowledges the marriage agreement. In other words, there is a means of knowing those who are “married” versus those who are “committing fornication” (Heb. 13:4, see below). Unfortunately, God’s plan has been corrupted and men and women who do not fulfill the divine conditions for marriage proceed to marry anyway. For instance, Herod had “married” Herodius, although she was not free to marry because she was “Philip’s wife.” Note that, even though this relationship was “not lawful” (i.e. not approved by God), they were still considered “married” (Mk. 6:17-18). From this we learn that men and women can enter into marriages that are not acceptable to God – sometimes referred to as “unscriptural” marriages.

2) **BOUND.** When an eligible man and an eligible woman (see conditions stated above) agree to be married, God joins them (Mt. 19:6) and they are “bound” in this relationship (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3). Notice that men marry and

divorce (right or wrong), but God is the one who either obligates or looses the “bond.”

3) **DIVORCE.** This is the termination of a marriage agreement, and every society has an established method for accomplishing this. While God’s plan calls for marriages that last a lifetime, He allows a single exception to the rule. If one’s lawful marriage partner commits “fornication” (see below), the innocent party can “put away” the guilty party and be free to remarry with God’s approval, but the guilty partner may NOT Scripturally remarry (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). Persons who do not meet the stated exception can still divorce their lawful mates, thus terminating the “marriage,” but it is a sin to do so (Mt. 5:32; 1 Cor. 7:10-11) and they remain “bound” by God. It should be stressed that ONLY those who “put away” their mate for “fornication” can Scripturally remarry (God looses them from the “bond”), and NO person who has been “put away” by a lawful spouse – even if innocent of “fornication” and regardless of their spouse’s subsequent actions – can Scripturally remarry (they remain “bound”).

4) **FORNICATION.** This is illicit sexual contact of any kind. It would include sexual intercourse between people who are not married to one another, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.

5) **ADULTERY.** Individuals are guilty of “adultery” when they are “bound” by God’s law but sexually intimate with an unauthorized partner. This is true even if they are “married” (unscripturally) to that partner (Rom. 7:2-3).

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WHO CAN MARRY?

Mike Webb

One critical question in the discussion of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is *Who Can Marry?* The question concerns those who have Scriptural right to marry. How does God's word answer this question?

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Before specifically discussing the answer to this question, we would do well to remind ourselves of some basic Bible principles. Understanding these principles will help to answer this question Scripturally.

1) **WE MUST HAVE AUTHORITY FOR ALL THAT WE DO.** Paul instructed the Colossians to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17). We must be able to provide book, chapter, and verse for everything that we believe and practice. This applies to questions about divorce and remarriage, just like it does to questions about worship. If I cannot put my finger on a book, chapter, and verse that gives one the right to marry, then such a marriage is unscriptural.

2) **THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES IS NOT PERMISSIVE.** Jesus could not serve as a priest on earth because He was from the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses *spoke nothing* concerning priesthood" (Heb. 7:14). A thing does not have to be specifically forbidden to be wrong. It is wrong if it is not authorized.

3) **BOTH PARTIES MUST HAVE THE RIGHT TO MARRY.** If one who has the right to marry marries one who does not have a right, it results in adultery for both parties (Mt. 19:9).

WHO CAN SCRIPTURALLY MARRY?

1) **ONE WHO HAS NEVER BEEN MARRIED.** God created the marriage relationship because it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). Marriage is an honorable relationship (Heb. 13:4). To the unmarried, Paul wrote, "if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry" (1 Cor. 7:8).

2) **ONE WHOSE MATE IS DEAD.** Paul wrote, "but if her husband dies, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man" (Rom. 7:3).

3) **THOSE RECONCILING.** The apostle Paul instructed the Corinthians not to divorce (1 Cor. 7:10, 12-13). After forbidding divorce, Paul said that if they do divorce, "let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband" (1 Cor. 7:11). The fact that they can be reconciled to each other does not mean that they are free to marry someone else.

4) **THOSE WHO PUT AWAY THEIR MATE FOR FORNICATION.** Jesus taught, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery..." (Mt. 19:9). The one who puts away his mate for fornication is the only one given the right to remarry in this passage. This passage does not give the one who puts away his mate for a cause other than fornication the right to remarry. Neither does it give authority for any put away one to remarry.

These are the only ones given the right to marry by God. You cannot find a book, chapter, or verse that gives anyone else the right to marry.

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MATTHEW 19:9

Bob Waldron

1) **CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 19:9.** The context of Matthew 19:9 gives Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question of 19:3: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus' answer to this question is "No." But the Pharisees believed that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 gave them the right to put away their wives, no matter what the cause, so they followed up with another question: "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?" (Mt. 19:7). Jesus replied, "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so" (Mt. 19:8).

2) **DEUTERONOMY 24:1-4.** The primary reason for the necessity of Deuteronomy 24 was that the Israelites had almost completely ignored what God's plan for marriage had been from the beginning. The legislation of Deuteronomy 24 was designed to bring some order to the chaos of marriage and divorce at the time. It was not designed to provide liberty to divorce. That the Jews took it this way displayed the hardness of their hearts.

3) **MATTHEW 19:9.** In Jesus' response, He shows that it was not the Father's intent to say that divorce was all right as long as the one putting away his wife gave her a bill of divorcement. To see the force of Jesus' point, consider the verse without the exception phrase: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery." Without the exception, divorce would be wrong for any reason.

4) **CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXCEPTION PHRASE.** When we regard the exception phrase, we see that there is only one cause in which a

man may divorce his wife and marry another without committing adultery. That is when his wife has committed adultery against him. No other cause is given. When one's wife has committed adultery, and he divorces her, he does not make her an adulteress (as in Matthew 5:32); she has already made herself one. The exception phrase changes the situation only in the case of the one putting away.

5) **CONSEQUENCES REMAIN THE SAME FOR THE ONE PUT AWAY.** If we go back to the verse without the exception and look at the last clause in it, we read, "and he that marrieth her when she is put away commits adultery." Without the exception phrase coming into play we would have to assume that in this case the woman was put away but not for the cause of adultery. Yet, whoever marries her when she is thus put away commits adultery. Would it be any less the case when one has been put away for adultery?

6) **THE ONE WHO PUTS AWAY MUST BE INNOCENT.** Furthermore, it needs to be understood that when one is putting away a partner guilty of adultery, the divorce should be viewed not as a convenience, but as a protest of the immorality that the guilty partner has embraced. If the one doing the putting away is also guilty of immorality, then it is the rankest hypocrisy for him to put away his wife for her immorality. Therefore, according to Matthew 19:9, only the innocent party, who puts away his partner for sexual immorality, has the right to marry again without committing adultery.

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DIVORCE FOR EVERY CAUSE

Raymond E. Harris

In this short treatise on divorce, we do not pretend to address the subject in a “scholarly” or “in depth” fashion. We will just present a few thoughts for our readers consideration.

1) **DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW.** When the question of divorce comes up, the American public approaches the subject from one of two distinctly different points of view. Either they consider divorce from a popular, secular, legal standpoint or from a Scriptural view. When we consider that in a given week, fewer than 50% of Americans will attend church services, it is obvious that a majority in this country will not be much concerned as to what the Bible says on any subject. Even among those who profess to be “religious,” many have the attitude that “God wants me to be happy” and if that involves divorce and remarriage – so be it!

2) **FROM A LEGAL STANDPOINT.** In this country, Caesar has been very accommodating. Up until the middle of the last century, the courts would grant a divorce only on grounds of *adultery*. This was a serious charge that either had to be admitted or proven. In some states, adultery was a felony that could involve jail time! The pressure of evolving social pressure was such that the law was changed and one party could “file suit” on the grounds of *cruel and inhuman treatment*. But still, one party was presented to the court as the innocent and the other was the defendant, the “guilty one.” As time went on, there was a strong move to take innocence or guilt out of the divorce proceedings and it became law that a party could petition the courts for a divorce on the grounds of *irreconcilable differences*. That was the foundation upon which our current *no fault* divorce laws were laid. Hence, we see that in this country over the past 50 years, Caesar has changed the cause for divorce at least three times.

3) **FROM A SCRIPTURAL VIEW.** We have considered how the secularist mentality and laws have evolved in this country. But what about God and His law? The New Testament has not changed in 2,000 years, so we would have to conclude that God’s law has not changed. It is not the will of God that any should divorce. In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus said, “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.” In Matthew 19:9, Jesus gave the *only* just cause for divorce. 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.” In Mark 6:17-18, we find a case where two people were intent upon setting God’s law aside and turned to Caesar’s law in order to fulfill their own lust. In that passage, we find John the baptizer rebuking Herod and Herodias for their unlawful relationship. Let’s look at the passage. “For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.” Evidently Roman law had granted Herodias a divorce from Philip and she had married Herod. Yet, her actions had been for nought. John said as far as God was concerned she was still Philip’s wife!

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MARRIAGE AND THE BOND

Donnie V. Rader

The issues of divorce and remarriage can be clarified when we see a distinction in the *marriage* and the *bond*. Much of the confusion comes when people equate the *marriage* to the *bond*.

1) **CONFUSION.** Some think that if one is no longer married, they are no longer bound. A lot is said today about being married “in the eyes of men” and married “in the eyes of God.” The same is said of divorce. Thus, to these people, one could be married “in the eyes of men” but not married “in the eyes of God.” A distinction is made between marriage (or divorce) that is “real” and “legal.” If God approves, we are told that it is “real;” but if God does not approve, it is not “real.”

2) **THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.** This is obvious from the fact that in Romans 7:2-3 the woman is *bound* to her first husband even though she is *married* to her second husband. When a couple Scripturally marry, God “joins” (yokes) them together (Mt. 19:6). God does the joining and only God can do the loosing. In a Scriptural marriage, there is a covenant that involves three (God, husband, and wife: Mal. 2:14). The “law of her husband” (Rom. 7:2) refers to the bond or the “law which binds the wife to her husband” (*G. Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, IV, 1070*). God binds those that are Scripturally married (Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39). Notice that we are *bound* “by the law” to our mate.

3) **IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE BOUND TO ONE AND MARRIED TO ANOTHER.** In Romans 7, the woman is “bound by the law to her husband” even though she is “married to another man.” That is what makes the second marriage adultery. It is possible for one to be released from the yoke and the other party not. When Jack married Jill, God yoked (joined) them together

(Mt. 19:6). However, when Jack put Jill away for fornication, God released him from the yoke, while Jill is still yoked (bound, Mt. 19:9).

4) **THUS MARRIAGE IS MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE IS DIVORCE.** If the marriage is Scriptural and approved of God, it is a marriage. If the marriage is unscriptural and not approved of God, it is still a marriage. Let’s consider some cases in the Bible where the marriage was unscriptural (thus adultery) and yet God still said that it was a *marriage* (really). Herod “had married” Herodias (Mk. 6:17). However, John told him that it was unlawful for him to have her. Nevertheless, God said he had *married* her. In Matthew 19:9, we read that a man who puts away his wife and marries another commits *adultery*. Scriptural? No! Married? Yes. Then, in Romans 7:3, the woman is called an *adulteress* because she is *married* to another man. To further emphasize how we cannot jump back and forth on the term “married,” let us consider Matthew 19:9. From the statement, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall *marry* another, committeth adultery (emphasis mine, DVR), we learn two things: (1) The man who puts away his wife (for a cause other than fornication) and *marries* another commits adultery. (2) The man who puts away his wife (for fornication) and *marries* another does not commit adultery. When Jesus said, “marries another” did He mean “really married” or “married only in the eyes of men”? Remember, that in the text Jesus only used the term “marries” *one* time. Thus, if He meant “really married” then *both* of the above men are really married, whether God approved or not. If Jesus meant that they were not really married, but only “in the eyes of men,” then *both* of the above men are married “only in the eyes of men.” The same is true of “put away” (divorce) in both cases. We can’t have it both ways in this text!

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DOES THE MARRIAGE LAW APPLY TO NON-CHRISTIANS?

David Eldridge

Jesus clearly teaches that divorce, save it be for fornication, is a sin. Furthermore, He states that the one who is divorced, either sinfully without cause, or the guilty party put away because of fornication, and marries another is guilty of adultery (Mt. 5; 19; Mk. 10; Lk. 16).

However, it is amazing the lengths some will go to in order to justify sin and soothe consciences as they attempt to explain away this simple teaching. One such example is some who claim that only Christians are amenable, or answerable, to the law of Christ (including the marriage laws). They teach that those who are not Christians are not subject to the law of Christ until they become Christians. This teaching stands in conflict with plain Bible teaching. Notice the consequences if the law of Christ, including the marriage law, does not apply to the non-Christian.

1) **THE LORD LIED WHEN HE SAID HE HAD ALL AUTHORITY.** Jesus stated in Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” However, if those who believe the laws given by Jesus only apply to Christians, then Jesus doesn’t have “all authority,” He would only have authority over “all Christians.” To teach such foolishness would attempt to make the Lord a liar, which He is not (1 Jn. 1:9), as they try to divest Jesus of His authority over all men which He clearly claimed to have. If the marriage law does not apply to the non-Christian, then Jesus is found to be a liar.

2) **EVERY KNEE SHOULD NOT BOW AT THE NAME OF JESUS.** Paul writes, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the

earth” (Phil. 2:10). We are told that at the name of Jesus (the authority of Jesus) every knee should bow in submission. Why? Because every person is answerable to the law of Jesus – not simply Christians. If one teaches that those who are not Christians are not amenable to the law of Christ, then should the text not read, “At the name of Jesus only the Christian’s knee should bow?” Jesus has authority universally over all men in every place!

3) **A PERSON CANNOT SIN UNTIL THEY BECOME A CHRISTIAN.** John wrote, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn. 3:4). Since sin is a transgression of the law, if one is not amenable to the law, they cannot sin. Paul teaches “for where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). If it were true that a non-Christian is not bound by the law of Christ, I would be better off not being a Christian for I could not sin as one not having a law. Yet, the Bible has declared all under sin (Rom. 3:23). Why? Because all are bound by the law of the Lord which they have violated.

Friend, you see that the Lord reigns over all, all are bound by His commands be they a Christian or a non-Christian. If one disobeys the Lord’s commands on marriage before baptism, they must still live with the consequences (not the guilt) of their sins after baptism.

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MUST ADULTERERS SEPARATE?

Leon Mauldin

Biblical teaching on God's marriage law, including divorce and remarriage, is clear. God's plan is one man and one woman making a lifetime commitment to each other. "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mt. 19:6). There is only one reason for divorce and remarriage; that is the cause of fornication (Mt. 19:9). Jesus said, "whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Mk. 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18).

1) THE ADULTERERS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

Do you see from these passages that adultery is biblically defined, not only as the "extra-marital affair" where one is unfaithful to his spouse, but also adultery is committed when one divorces his spouse and marries another (except for the cause of fornication), and further, when one marries one who has been divorced?

2) ADULTERY CONTINUES AS LONG AS THE UNAUTHORIZED MARRIAGE CONTINUES. The wording of the texts, such as Matthew 19:9, is "commits adultery" or "committeth adultery," showing that this is an ongoing sin. Paul wrote, "For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man" (Rom. 7:2-3, NASB). To illustrate, it was not lawful for Herod to *keep on having* his brother's wife (Mk. 6:18). In the adulterous marriage, one is in fact "living in fornication" (Col. 3:5-7).

3) THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE. The question arises, "If one is in a marriage relationship which Jesus condemns as adulterous, what should one do?" The answer is that God commands all to repent (Acts 17:30). Repentance requires that one must cease the practice of sin, whatever it is. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 states, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." Note that the Corinthians *were* guilty (in the past) of these sins. But they had obeyed the gospel (Acts 18:8) with the result that they were "washed," "sanctified," and "justified" (1 Cor. 6:11). But when they repented, it is *unthinkable* that they would continue the practice of idolatry, homosexuality, thievery, drunkenness, etc. Likewise, one cannot continue in the adulterous relationship and have God's approval. See Romans 6:1-2; also the principle of Ezra 9 & 10.

4) OBJECTIONS. Sometimes this argument is made: "No one in the Bible was ever told to leave an unscriptural marriage." In response we would ask, if the Bible gave a specific instance of repentance from every individual sin, how big a book would the Bible be? There is no specific record of leaving a homosexual or polygamous relationship. Further, Acts 2:38 says "Repent." That is inclusive of every sin. When the people of Nineveh "repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Mt. 12:41), "they turned from their evil way" (Jonah 3:10). When one repents, he turns from that which is sinful. That includes adulterous marriages. Repentance of an adulterous marriage necessitates that one sever that sinful relationship.

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CAN THE GUILTY PARTY REMARRY?

Frank Himmel

When asked whether divorce is lawful, Jesus answered, “What God has joined together, let no man separate” (Mt. 19:6). In other words, forget about divorce, it is not God’s plan. He then added, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (v. 9).

Despite the straightforwardness of Jesus’ instruction, questions abound. One of them is, What about the guilty party; can he remarry? The expression “guilty party” refers to the fornicator, the one whose mate has divorced him for that reason. Jesus’ instruction implies that the innocent mate in this case may remarry. Does that mean the guilty party can, too?

Jesus did not say the guilty party can remarry. Neither did any other New Testament writer. Nevertheless, despite the Bible’s silence, some assert that remarriage is lawful for such people. Their position is based on various assumptions. Consider a few.

1) FORNICATION BREAKS THE MARRIAGE BOND. Where does the Bible say that? All this text says is that one whose wife is guilty of fornication may put her away and remarry without sinning. But he is not under obligation to do so. He may decide instead to forgive her and continue the marriage. If fornication breaks the marriage bond, this couple would have to be “re-bound” in order to stay together. How would they do that? Remember, it is God who joined them together. He does the binding.

2) IF ONE IS LOOSED, THE OTHER IS LOOSED. The argument is that since the marriage

bond is broken, one is as free to remarry as the other. At first that may seem logical, but it is merely an assumption, one that is at variance with what the Bible says about marriage. Marriage is not a simple two-party agreement. God joins a husband and wife. They are bound or obligated, both to each other and to His law governing marriage (read carefully Romans 7:2-3). Neither fornication nor divorce releases one from his obligations. What does? Only God can release what He has bound (Mt. 19:6). And He has revealed only two people whom He releases: one whose mate has died (Rom. 7:2-3) and one who divorces a mate for fornication (Mt. 19:9). To marry one while still bound to another is adultery (Rom. 7:3).

3) THE PHRASE “EXCEPT FOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY” MODIFIES BOTH CLAUSES IN MATTHEW 19:9. This argument says the end of the verse should read, “...and whoever marries her who is divorced, except for sexual immorality, commits adultery.” That implies it would not be adultery to marry the guilty party. But Jesus did not say that, and there is no grammatical justification for it. In fact, note that the phrase “except for sexual immorality” describes action, not people. More simply, look at the consequences of this argument, indeed of this entire position. If it were so, one put away for fornication has more privileges than one put away unjustly! If my wife divorces me just because she doesn’t like me any more, I may not remarry. But if I go out and commit fornication and she divorces me, then I can remarry. In effect, my fornication sanctifies my second marriage. Nonsense!

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MENTAL DIVORCE

Connie W. Adams

“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” (Mt. 5:31-32).

Sound simple enough? Not to hear some folks tell it! In every society, there are accepted norms for when a marriage begins and for when one ends. We can know when folks are married and when they are divorced. Every marriage is not approved by God. Neither is every divorce. Only marriages between those who have a right to marriage are approved by God. In these cases, God creates the bond (what “God has joined together,” Mt. 19:6). The only approved divorce is when an innocent mate divorces a mate guilty of fornication (Mt. 19:9). This rule applies to both men and women (Mk. 10:11-12). If one divorces a companion for any other reason than fornication, he/she sins in so doing. Jesus made it plain that to do so contributes to sin in one thus put away (“Causeth her to commit adultery”). He also clearly taught that it is sinful to marry one who is “put away.”

1) **CONFUSING THE ISSUE.** But some are not content with this. The water has been muddied by raising side issues about the role of government in divorce, or doubts about what constitutes marriage, or when it begins, or ends. Emotional arguments have been made which arouse sympathy but settle nothing. “What about the person who is divorced unjustly and under protest?” “What about a soldier who returns from duty to find his wife has divorced him and married another?” “Do you mean to tell me that a person is stuck for life?” “It’s not fair.” Let’s be clear. Of course, there are cases where the innocent are made to suffer because of the sinful action of others. It happens every day. Life is not always fair, is it? How many children are suffering every day from the sinful choices of their irresponsible parents?

2) **A FALSE SOLUTION.** Some have struck on a plan to solve the problem. They tell us that after there has been a divorce (which should not have taken place), even after the space of many years, that when one of the mates commits adultery, then the other partner, who has been abstinent during this time, may then, in purpose of heart, resolve to put the now guilty party away and be free to marry again. But there are several things wrong with that. (1) The divorce, which has already taken place, was not for fornication. The Lord said the divorce must be for that cause. (2) Whether just or unjust, divorce has already taken place. It is a fact, a reality. (3) According to what Jesus said, it matters who divorces whom. He said that one who marries a person who “is put away” commits adultery. (4) If divorce can occur only by a mental choice, then can marriage begin that way? While two people must consent to marry, is that all there is to it? Or must we comply with laws, or social customs which determine exactly at what point two people are married? Can two young people decide that since they are very much in love and have decided to marry, then cohabit in the back seat of a car, or a motel room? After all, they have purposed in their hearts. I know some brethren who believe that. What about you? I can tell you I don’t believe it!

Let’s teach our children to be cautious in choosing a companion. Once that choice is made, it is for life. It is only (God forbid) when one becomes unfaithful that the innocent has a right to divorce the guilty and marry another. Marriage, under any other circumstance may be legal and accepted, but it is sinful according to what Jesus said. Is that so hard to understand?

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Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

Baby Moses

(Exodus 1:22-2:10)

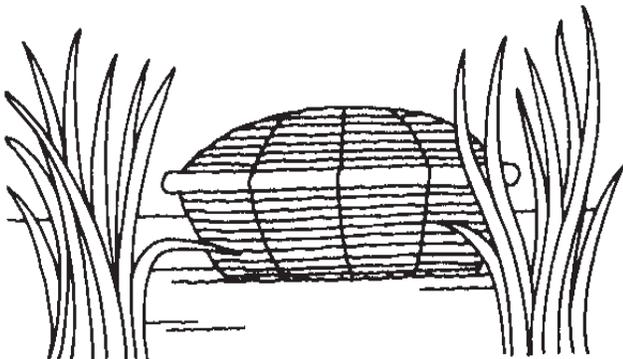
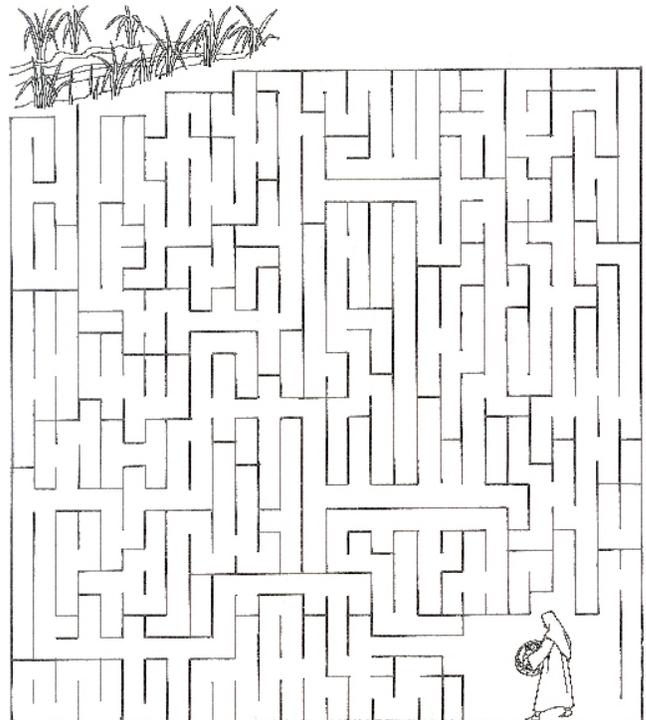
Circle the Right Word

1. Pharaoh charged all his people saying, "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the (fire, river)" - Ex. 1:22.
2. One mother put her baby in an/a (ark of bulrushes, box) - Ex. 2:3.
3. Pharaoh's (daughter, son) found a baby in the river - Ex. 2:5-6.
4. She called his name (Samuel, Moses) - Ex. 2:10.
5. "Moses" means drawn out of (water, a cave) - Ex. 2:10.

True or False

1. ___ Pharaoh wanted to kill all the baby Hebrew boys.
2. ___ The baby's mother put him in a basket.
3. ___ The baby's brother watched him in the river.
4. ___ Pharaoh found the baby.
5. ___ Pharaoh's daughter named the baby Moses.

Help Moses' mother find the right path to the river.



"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

Question: “My husband and I have been searching the Scriptures, and we don’t believe we have a right to be married. What are we to do?”

Answer:

We commend you for searching the Scriptures with the determination of doing what the Scriptures teach. Jesus said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (Jn. 5:39).

1) **REMEMBER WHAT THE STANDARD IS.** You might want to go back and read the article on page 3 of this issue, *What Standard Shall We Use?* Remember that our questions can only be answered by the word of the Lord. What men might say, what the majority believe, what someone in our family does, and emotional arguments will not settle this. We must ask, “What saith the Scripture?” (Rom. 4:3), and be determined to do what the Scripture saith, regardless of the consequences.

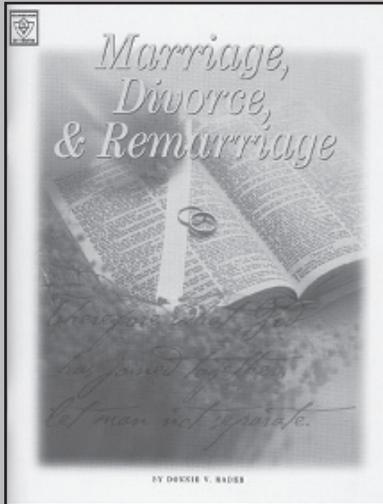
2) **REALIZE WHO HAS A RIGHT TO BE MARRIED AND WHO DOESN’T.** Not everyone has a right to marry, according to the Scriptures. Some, because of sin, have lost their right to marry. The Scriptures only show three people who have a right to be married: (1) One who has never been married (1 Cor. 7:2). (2) One whose spouse has died (Rom. 7:2-3). (3) One who divorced his/her wife/husband for fornication (Mt. 19:9). The simple truth is that if two people do not fit one of these three categories, then they do not have a Scriptural right to marry or be married! If you or your husband have been married before and the prior marriage(s) did not end by the death of your spouse, then you do not have a right to be married, unless you divorced them for fornication (Mt. 19:9). That may be a bitter pill to swallow, but that is what the word of God teaches and the word is truth (Jn. 17:17).

3) **I REALIZE I DO NOT HAVE A RIGHT TO BE MARRIED, NOW WHAT?** We read of some in the Bible who were married and even had children who did not have a right to be married. We relate the occasion in answer to the question. The setting is Ezra 10, when the Lord’s people had “taken strange wives” (v. 2), foreign wives they did not have a right to. What was to be done? Read verse 10. “And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves...from the strange wives.” May God bless you in doing what is right, even though it may not be easy.

Have A Bible Question? Send to: Back To Basics, P.O. Box 251, Ellettsville, IN 47429

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- Appendix

“An excellent work for class study. We believe brother Rader has rendered a valuable service in the production of this work and commend it to all into whose hands it might fall.” (Connie W. Adams)

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