

The Home and God's Law Concerning Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Issues Facing the Church: Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

One of the most important issues facing the church today and the entire world is regarding the home and the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We need to study this subject in light of what the Bible, God's inspired Word, says about it. However, we realize this touches the heartstrings of our emotions, but people must be taught to obey the will of the Lord to be eternally saved (Hebrews 5:9). There is no problem that we face that is as dangerous as this problem, especially among the young people. Nearly every church has people in its membership who have been divorced and have been married a second time.

Home and Marriage as Defined by the Lord

The home is of Divine origin, dear to the heart, and one of the sweetest words in the human language. God created the home in the beginning of time. "***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth***" (Genesis 1:1). Then on the sixth day of the week of creation, when all else had been created, Jehovah God created "***man in His own image... male and female created He them***" (Genesis 1:27). Further, it is stated in the Scripture,

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed... And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helper comparable [help meet, KJV]to him (Genesis 2:8,18).

In the beautiful Garden of Eden, the Paradise on earth, there was not found a help meet for Adam (Genesis 2:20). The word *meet*, sometimes erroneously called mate, means a helper, a suitable companion, the kind of help the man needed. The animals had their mates but not man. None of the animals were suited for Adam. Then God put Adam, the first man, to sleep and took a rib from him side and created Eve, the first woman, and gave her to him as his companion. (Genesis 2:15-23). This completed Adam's happiness.

Then later God gave the law of the marriage relationship, saying:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh(Genesis 2:24).

Home, A Rich Gift

The home is one of the rich gifts from our Creator. Deep in the human soul is that of home affections. When many of us speak of home, we are borne on the wings of imagination to that place made sacred by the remembrances of a father's care, a mother's love, and the cherished associations of brothers and sisters. How often we hear persons speak of the home of their childhood. Their minds seem to delight in dwelling upon their home of former days.

The home should be the sacred refuge of our lives, whether rich or poor. The affection and love of a good home is wonderful and bears the stamp of heaven, which is worth many special ties. It has often been said, "He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home."

A happy home is the one single spot of rest which man upon this earth has for the cultivation of his noblest Christian character. In a real sense, home makes the man. As the home goes, so goes the nation. The strength of any nation is the well-ordered homes of people. To Adam, Paradise was home. To the good among his descendants, home is Paradise. The home is the base unit of society.

The spirit and tone of our homes will have a great influence on our children. The home is the chief school of human virtues. From our homes are born children, and they go out with the stamp of these homes upon them. Only as these homes are what they should be, will children be what they should be. Solomon wrote, "***Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it***" (Proverbs 22:6).

The Christian home is a great power for good. We should always be grateful for our good Christian homes! In the present age, the crying needs are homes built on Christian values. Building good homes is one of the greatest works in which people can engage.

God expects the home to be the religious training ground for the children. Moses told the people of Israel exactly that in Deuteronomy 6:5-9. Note especially verse 7:

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shalt talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Paul reminded fathers, in Ephesians 6:4, that they are to bring up their children "***in the training and admonition of the Lord.***" God gave children to the parents, not to the church or to the state, per se. Therefore, it is the parent who must realize and set the right example before their children. Of course, the church is to help in this teaching also.

Home: God's Protection

God, in His teaching in the Bible gives dignity to marriage and the home. Yet, in many respects, the teaching of the Word of God regarding the home, as God planned it, is being banished from our way of life. As a result, the nations of the world are in serious moral and spiritual crisis. Fornication has become a national pastime. Many are making a mockery of the social institute of marriage between a man and a woman. Many have wrong ideas about the marriage laws. Often, what is being preached and taught with the label of Christianity has little resemblance to real Christianity as taught in the New Testament regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. How sad!

The relationship of a husband and wife, the tender love of children and of brothers and sisters, is a human family, a home. This is what God would have each to be. There is nothing on earth so beautiful as the household where the teaching of Christianity dwells in the hearts of the inhabitants. In many homes, on the wall in some room, is the plaque that reads:

"Christ is the head of this house."

How wonderful it is in the family if this is true! A good home should be the object of every family. The great joy of a happy marriage and a happy family is nothing short of heaven on earth! But in every home the will of the Lord should always be first (cf. Matthew 6:33; Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 14:26-27). God's blessing alone can make the home what it should be, but home is nothing but a name if true love, affection, and obedience to the Lord are not there. Home is not as dear to everybody as it should be. A cottage will not hold the bulky, expensive furniture of a man, but if God is there, a cottage will hold as much happiness as might be stacked in a sumptuous mansion.

Much of man's success and happiness depends upon the character of his home. If he has no one to care for him at home, if there is neglect or coldness, then, even if he prospers without, it is dark indeed within. He may despair of life's best blessings. The great evil of divorce, which threatens the stability of our society, can be corrected by making the home a Christian one. As a rule, "the family that prays together stays together."

Home: God's Law of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

God planned marriage for all human beings if they choose to be married. However, God has given laws to protect the sacredness of the home. Jesus, in the sermon on the Mount, speaking of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, stated:

But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman that is divorced commits adultery(Matthew 5:32).

Later in Christ's ministry, the Pharisees tempted Him, asking Him about divorce and remarriage. Christ answered by referring to what God did at the beginning. He made one man and one woman, not two or more wives for one man, or two or more husbands for the one woman (Matthew 19:3-8). He also stated: "***Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate***" (Matthew 19:6). God joins the woman and the man in marriage. Man does not join them. Marriage is more than a civil contract, a legal ceremony. It is a Divine institution. It is much to be regretted that in our nation, and in most all countries of the world, the civil authorities have

practically set aside the law of Christ by allowing divorces and remarriage for a variety of causes. When a couple, a man and a woman, take the marriage vows, it should be with the intent to dwell together as a husband and wife until they are separated by death. God, in the beginning, intended it to be that way: one man, one wife, for life. However, the increasing rate of divorces in America is alarming. Current statistics tell us that marriages are failing in large numbers today. In some areas of our nation, upward to forty-three percent of first marriages fail within the first five years. Within recent years, divorces and remarriages have become socially acceptable. Our nation has now over one million divorces per year. Many are living together not married, and abortions are on the increase. Eighty-five percent of teenage marriages now end in divorce. It is no wonder there is a moral crisis in the land.

We do not hear much preaching from our pulpits against divorce and remarriage. The Old Testament prophet, Malachi, said that God hates "**divorce**" (Malachi 2:16). The divorce rate is at an all time high because homes are being built without regard for the Law of the Lord.

We need to guide our young people and help them to fall in love with the right persons, and to be the right persons, so they can bring an end to easy divorce. From such broken homes are coming the juvenile and adult delinquents of our times. In the minds of some people, there is nothing sacred about marriage and the home. But there can be no divorce without a sin against God that jeopardizes the soul of someone. When a marriage is broken, a soul is usually lost.

When God said a man is to "**be joined**" unto his wife, He used a strong word which literally means "to be glued to a thing." People who marry are subject to God's laws concerning marriage. Immorality is an effort to destroy marriage as it is ordained by God.

One of the purposes of marriage and the home in the beginning was the replenishing of the earth, under godly rules and regulations (Genesis 1:28). Paul teaches also that another purpose of marriage is the comfort and pleasure of the married persons (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). A nation cannot endure when there is no regard for the sacredness of the marriage vows.

In the United States, it is often quoted that fifty percent of marriages end in divorce. All fifty states offer some form of no-fault divorce. The divorce rate for the year 2000 was 47.6%.

Any teaching or legislation by any church or state on the subject that is contrary to the teaching of the Lord as herein recorded in the Holy Scriptures is rebellion against the authority of God. The couple cannot be separated but by the authority of the Lord. When God has joined together, man cannot put asunder. Fornication on the part of a married partner gives the innocent partner the right to divorce and remarry. If a person's spouse commits fornication, then the innocent party can put away (divorce) their wife/husband and marry another, who is free to marry, without committing adultery.

All faithful teachers of God's Word today, preachers and others, will teach exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ said concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Only one offense, fornication, makes a divorce and remarriage lawful. Hence all remarriages after the divorce where fornication is not the cause of the divorce, are adulterous. When King Herod had taken his brother Philip's wife as his own wife, John the Baptist said, "**It is not lawful for you to have her**" (Matthew 14:3-4). For saying this, John lost his head (cf. Matthew 14:9-12; Mark 6:18).

Jesus did not say the guilty party is free again to enter a lawful marriage contract. The Lord plans for one man and one woman to be joined together in wedlock, never to be separated until death.

The Lord's teaching on this subject is plain and easy to understand. Adam could not have divorced his wife and taken another because there was no other one to take. A marriage between one man and one woman, for their lifetime, was the original home as Jehovah created it. No earthly laws can trample down the law of God or make right that which He has made wrong. God "ties the knot" and He "unties" it. The state has nothing to do with the spiritual union, even though marriages can easily be dissolved under our legal system. This is a very serious matter that concerns many of the homes in the church and the nation. Modern society sorely needs some teaching on this subject. Our TV programs, daily newspapers, videos, magazines, and many books are all tools filled with suggestions to violate God's moral laws in sexual activities. God help us to teach the truth "**in love**" (Ephesians 4:15) that souls may not be lost eternally in hell.

"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Adultery: A Work of the Flesh

The Bible teaches that those who live in the sin of adultery – or practice adultery – and die in that condition, without genuine repentance and the Lord's forgiveness, cannot enter into Heaven, the eternal kingdom of God. Paul wrote to the saints in Corinth (Corinth was known for its gross immorality):

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(1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Paul went on to say that many of these people had made a change in their lives by obeying the Gospel and had been forgiven and had become Christians:

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God(1 Corinthians 6:11).

Luke records in Acts 18:8 that in Paul's preaching in this wicked city "***many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.***" People can turn from their sins in genuine repentance and be forgiven and then live the Christian life and go to Heaven by the grace of God (cf. Acts 2:37-38). But the Bible also teaches that any sin persisted in and unrepented of, will damn the soul; so forgiveness is not unconditional. Divorced people can live in celibacy the rest of their lives. When one repents, he does not continue in sin. This includes unscriptural marriages. This is God's law, and we cannot change it. So when one believes and repents and confesses his faith in Christ and is baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16), he does not continue in a sinful relationship. How can one repent and continue in a sinful relationship where the sin is still practiced? Repentance must be entire (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30). If there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness. Those that live in an adulterous relationship are living in adultery (Colossians 3:5-8). Baptism does not forgive a state of adultery when one continues to live in the adultery. It is true that men and women can be legally married but not Scripturally married. The state did not create man in the beginning or make the marriage law. The Lord, who did create man and gave him the law governing marriage, gives only one reason for divorce and remarriage: fornication. The innocent party may put away the guilty party on the grounds of fornication. The innocent part has the right to remarry; the guilty party does not. Hence, if fornication is committed, the guilty party may be divorced or put away, and the innocent party may marry another and not be guilty of adultery, but no divorce is Scriptural for both sides. The guilty party does not have the Scriptural permission that the innocent party has (Matthew 19:9). However, the guilty party may repent of his/her sin, live right and go to Heaven. If one repents of the adultery, he is forgiven (cf. Matthew 19:12), but the guilty party has no right to remarry. The divorce on grounds other than fornication does not allow either party to remarry; in that case either marriage would begin a state of adultery (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Again, Paul in writing to the Galatians mentions the works of the flesh which include adultery and fornication and says "***that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***"

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are; adultery, fornication... of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God(Galatians 5:19-20).

Some today want to accept homosexuality and other forms of fornication as "alternate lifestyles." Such are condemned in the Word of God. We must heed the warnings as given in the Bible that homosexuality is sinful. Furthermore, God never did intend for a man to be married to another man or a woman to be married to another woman, or for a man to have more than one wife. With mankind, as with womankind: it is "abomination." "***You shalt not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination***" (Leviticus 18:22; cf. Leviticus 20:10-16; Romans 1:24-32). Individuals practicing homosexuality are commonly referred to as "gays" or "lesbians" (cf. Genesis 19), but such relationships have always been wrong in God's sight. Homosexuality is sinful. Same-sex "marriages" are wrong. Homosexuality is not God's plan for marriage.

The Lord's marriage law is universal; it applies to all people everywhere. Jesus said:

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except it be for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorces commits adultery(Matthew 19:9).

Paul mentioned adultery also in Romans 13:9 as a sin, and John closed the book of Revelation by saying that those who practice certain sexual sins [as whoremongers and fornicators, ASV] shall not go to Heaven (Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15). Pre-martial and extra-martial sex is wrong. God's law still reads, "**You shall not commit adultery**" (Exodus 20:14; Romans 13:9). And just as Paul wrote, "**For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality**" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). We must do everything we can to teach God's Word on this important subject.

Christ and Paul

Twice Paul says that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives:

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he live. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.(Romans 7:2-3).

A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband be dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord(1 Corinthians 7:39)

Some have, therefore, assumed that Paul allows no exception, that nothing but death can dissolve the marriage bond. If this conclusion is correct, then we have Christ teaching one thing and Paul teaching another. Christ taught what had been God's law from the beginning, and surely Paul by inspiration would not teach something different. But what is the answer? Why did not Paul mention the exception that Christ gave? The answer is: in giving a law or a rule is it not necessary to always mention the exception or the exceptions. Paul in Romans 7:2-3 was not discussing marriage but the freedom of the Jews now from the Law of Moses, and gave the marriage bond as an illustration. A woman whose husband was dead is free to be married to another man, as the Jew who were once under the Law of Moses were now free by death to be married to Christ. It is not God's will that fornication should be committed. Paul only mentioned what is contained in the law.

In 1 Corinthians 7th chapter, he says a wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives; he mentions no exceptions (1 Corinthians 7:39). Also, Mark, in chapter 10:11-2 and Luke in chapter 16:18, do not mention the exception as does Matthew. Paul also gave inspired advice under certain conditions (1 Corinthians 7:1-14, 25-26, 40), but he never did contradict Christ. He only mentions some things Christ had not taught about. But, definitely, Paul spoke by the Spirit of God.

The innocent part can extend forgiveness to the guilty party when the sin of fornication has been committed, and so a divorce is avoided and the marriage continues. This does not usually happen. The conclusion is that divorce and remarriage, except it be for fornication, is wrong in God's sight. Even the innocent partner, unjustly put away, has no right to a remarriage without committing adultery. We cannot change God's law. If fornication is not the grounds for divorce and both of the parties of the marriage remarry, then all four of these persons are living in an adulterous relationship.

Sometimes, Paul's language in 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 is used as a second cause for a believer's divorce and remarriage.

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him divorce him. And woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart, a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.

Paul says Christ said nothing about a mixed marriage in his personal ministry. The word *bondage* means slavery. No believer is under obligation to give up faithfulness to Christ in

order to keep the unbeliever, or pagan, in the marriage relationship. Let him depart if he desires, but you remain faithful. Of course, if he leaves and commits the sin of fornication, which he possibly will, then the believer may on this ground obtain a divorce and remarry if she so desires. She is not to give up Christ just to maintain the relationship. Let him go (cf. 1 Peter 3:1-4).

The Judgment Day

We should always remember that we cannot hide anything from God. He knows and sees those who are doing wrong and practicing the works of the flesh. No darkness can hide anything from Him (Psalm 139:7-12; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Hebrews 4:13). How long can America continue to disregard God's laws concerning morality? How long can we continue to disregard the laws of marriage, divorce, and remarriage? Many today are living in "legalized adultery." They are not Scripturally married but living in sin. Judgment day is coming (Matthew 7:21-27). Eternity is before us.

Too, some think that if they divorce not for fornication, they both can wait, hoping the other one will remarry. Then they believe the first one that has remarried has committed adultery, and that this gives them now a Scriptural right to remarry. This, too, is not what Jesus said. It is often called "the waiting game." It was not a divorce for fornication. Jesus said that fornication gives one the right to break the bond and remarry, but divorce on grounds other than for fornication does not allow either party to remarry.

Many Good Homes

There are many good homes today, and these provide an influence for good in our nation and in the world. This is how God intended for all homes to be. A husband should always love his wife and remember that a good wife is Heaven's last, best gift to man. Her voice is the sweetest music and her prayers the ablest advocates of Heaven's blessing on his head (cf. Proverbs 31:10-31). This will help to avoid the sin of adultery. Paul wrote:

Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband(1 Corinthians 7:2).

The same applies to the wife who has a good husband (cf. Ephesians 5:22-33). She should love him as her only companion in life and a true "help meet." The many good Christian homes in the land today are the "**salt of the earth**" (Matthew 5:13). God bless all such homes!

Marriages Worthy of Honor

In Hebrews 13:4, the Bible says:

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Marriage should be held honorable in all respects. The doctrine that celibacy is a superior state of purity is false (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3). Marriage is honorable, for God, knowing that it was not good for man to be alone, instituted it for him in Paradise. Jehovah married and blessed the first couple. Christ honored marriage with his presence at the first miracle in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). God has placed sexual intercourse within the boundaries of marriage, and only there.

Marriage is honorable when the husband and wife respect each other. Sarah respected Abraham by calling him "**lord**" (1 Peter 3:6). Marriage is honored when husbands like Elkanah, who was better to his wife than "**ten sons**" (1 Samuel 1:8). Ruth showed "**kindness**" and virtue to Boaz (Ruth 3:10-11). Aquila and Pricilla had an honorable marriage because they worked together in the cause of Christ by teaching others, hosting the church in their home, and even risking their lives for Paul (cf. Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16-19; 2 Timothy 4:19). Their names are always mentioned together. The willingness of Aquila and Pricilla to risk "**their own necks**" for Paul, earned the gratitude of all the churches. They were well known as faithful workers in the Lord's kingdom. Finally, let us remember the greatest example of love in a marriage is the sacrifice, the nurture, and the cherishing that Christ has for His church.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25).

Selfishness is the root of most of the trouble between married people. Let us, therefore, be Christians and love each other and live faithfully the Christian life until the end of life's journey.

Heaven – The Home of the Soul

A sweet type of heaven is home (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:5). It is the home that awaits us beyond the grave, a place of eternal bliss. There the friendships on earth, which cruel death has severed, will never more be broken. In Heaven, parted loved ones and friends shall meet again, never to be separated.

It is inspiring hope that when we become separated here on earth by death, and when a few more years have rolled over the heads of some of us remaining, that we, if we have been faithful Christians "**until death**" (Revelations 2:10), shall meet again in Heaven. This will be our eternal home. There we will dwell in the presence of our heavenly Father forever. In that land there will not be a single grave or a funeral service.

Aged parents rejoice very much when on special days, like birthdays or holidays, they have their children back home for visits. There is almost always a son or a daughter absent, absent from the country, or perhaps absent from the world. But how our Heavenly Father, who created the earthly home, will rejoice in that day in Heaven, the eternal home, of the soul, when He and all His faithful children are with Him in glory! How glad parents, brothers and sisters, husband and wives and cousins will be to meet again after a long separation. That will really be a great family reunion. Perhaps a score or two years ago they parted at the grave. Now they meet again, never to be separated. May the circle be unbroken.

Jesus is now preparing a place for us. He said to His disciples,

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:2-3).

Home! "O, think of the home over there." No sorrow, no crying, no tears, no death (cf. Revelation 21:4-5). Home sweet home! Beautiful home! Glorious home! Home with each other! Home with the angels! Home with God and Christ, our dear Savior: Home! Home! Through the rich grace of our Lord and by our obedience to His will, may we all reach our heavenly home (Revelation 22:14).

Home sweet home will always be
The dearest shrine of memory.
When Daytime brings with tender cheer
A smile of hearts, true and sincere.
Where sweetest dreams of Nighttime keep
A peaceful watch when we're asleep;
There welcome waits at all the doors
And love walks softly o'er its floors.
For Home sweet Home will always be
The dearest shrine of Memory.

-Anonymous