

Marriage
Divorce
And
Remarriage

What Does the Bible Really Teach?

Burley W. Moore

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All scripture references are taken from the King James Version
of the Holy Bible.

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Marriage Divorce And Remarriage

Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18, 21-25

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Matthew 5:31-32

Matthew 19:3-12

First Corinthians 7:1-40

Ephesians 5:21-33

First Timothy 3:2, 4-5, 11-12

Titus 1:6

Contents

Dedication ...page 5

Preface ... page 6

A Panoramic View of Scripture On The Subject ... page 9

Introduction ... page 10

Chapter 1

God's Institution of Marriage ... page 14

Chapter 2

The Authorization of Divorce ... page 22

Chapter 3

A Mistranslated Confusion ... page 33

Chapter 4

Jesus Dealt With The Subject of Putting Away ... page 43

Chapter 5

Paul Wrote About

Celibacy, Marriage, and Remarriage ... page 51

Chapter 6

Christian Marriage, An Analogy
Of Christ And His Church ... page 64

Chapter 7

Christian Service,

Marriage, And The Family ... page 74

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my loving and faithful wife, Ann. As a young person, I began praying that God would lead me to the wife of His choosing. On August 25, 1968, we entered into the state of holy matrimony and now, after forty-six years of marriage, I love her more than ever. She is not only the mother of our three children, but my best friend, strongest supporter, confidant, and encourager.

The most important step that I ever took in life was when I trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior at the age of ten. The second most important step that I took was in my marriage at the age of twenty-two. My personal relationship with Christ has been enriched and better understood from my own marriage and the rearing of our children.

Let me suggest to all who read this book, to look unto the Lord when considering marriage and allow Christ to build your relationship upon His foundation and principles. Only by letting Him nurture your love one for the other, will it ever be all that He intends for it to be. May God help you to place your spouse and children in proper priority, striving always to put Christ first in all that you do.

Preface

Satan delights in keeping people lost in their sins. He specializes in holding people in darkness and spiritual ignorance. If he can't take a soul to Hell with him, then he'll do everything possible to get that person off balance doctrinally.

Anyone, who is the least bit familiar with the Holy Scriptures, knows about the two basic divisions classified as the Old and New Testaments. From both the Hebrew and Greek the word "testament" can also be translated to mean "covenant." It's impossible to read far into the Bible without discovering that God delights in entering into covenant with His people.

Never should any "vow" be made unto the Lord haphazardly. Ecclesiastes reminds us in chapter five and verses four and five, "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. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."

The New Covenant has been made by God and sealed with the "blood" (Matt. 26:28) of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. From the cross, we can learn something about the seriousness of God's covenants. Never should any covenant between God and man, man and God, man and man, or man and woman be taken lightly. The covenant of marriage is a sacred promise in the sight of God made between a man and a woman in holy matrimony. Unfortunately, far too many couples do not consider the sacredness of their marriage vows and society as a result is suffering the consequences.

In no way whatsoever do I want to diminish from the sacred covenant of marriage; however, why is it that we often ignore the breaking of other covenants and fail to extend mercy unto those who falter in their marriage covenant? In most Baptist churches, we have adopted a **Church Covenant** that forbids such things as tattling, backbiting, excessive anger, the sale of, and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage. It is a covenant that promises before God to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of the church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort;

to promote its prosperity and spirituality, to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations; to maintain family and secret devotions; to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealing, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment.

To enter into such a covenant with God is just as serious as the marriage covenant, or any other covenant. How many times have we ever promised God something and failed to live up to our promise? I'm not trying to make excuses, but simply asking why one condemns his neighbor for breaking a marriage covenant when the one doing the condemning is just as guilty of breaking some other covenant with God. The truth of the matter is that we have all failed at some point and time to keep promises made to God and must learn from our mistakes.

Let us be reminded of our Lord's admonition when He said, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceives not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Lk. 6:41-42). Pride and self-righteousness are just two of the many problems that plague the modern day institutionalized church.

It's strange how we like to twist the Scriptures to make them suit our own fancy rather than letting God's Word speak for itself. Many churches have been taught what I call, "hand me down theology" which is something without a true biblical basis. It may sound good and be drilled into generation after generation, but is not sound teaching according to God's Word. Instead of helping souls discover spiritual liberty in Christ, they only descend deeper into bondage and legalism.

Learning how to walk the straight and narrow path pleasing to God and "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15) is not

easy. However, we can know the “truth” as the “Holy Spirit” (Jh. 16:13) teaches it to us. If the Devil can’t take a person to Hell with him, then he’ll try to either make him a flaming fanatic or a lying liberal. Both extremes are damaging to the cause of Christ. May our prayer be that God will keep us balanced in how we interpret and apply His Word so that we’ll not be stumbling blocks, but stepping stones in helping others to discover the joy of God’s forgiveness and grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

A Panoramic View of Scripture On The Subject Marriage – Divorce – Remarriage

Gen. 1:26-28, 2:18, 21-25

“God created man ... male and female created he them ... it is not good that the man should be alone ... leave father and mother ... cleave unto his wife ... they shall be one flesh”

Deut. 24:1-4

Jer. 3:1-11 “put away”, Isa. 50:1, Hosea 1:2, 2:2, 3:1-5, Ez. 10:1-5, 10-11, 17-19, 44 “send her out ... bill of divorcement ... uncleanness”, Rom. 5:20

Matt. 5:31-32

“looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery”, Matt. 5:27
“put away ... fornication ... adultery”
DIVORCED?
“PUT AWAY”

Matt. 19:3-12

“tempting him ... writing of divorcement ... hardness of ... hearts ... suffered ... all ... cannot receive this saying ... eunuchs”

I Cor. 7:1-40

“to avoid fornication let every man have his own wife ... every man hath his proper gift ... better to marry than to burn ... depart”

UNEQUALLY YOKED

Amos 3:3, II Cor. 6:14

“sanctified ... not under bondage ... peace ... bound ... loosed ... but and if ... not sinned ... only in the Lord”

Eph. 5:21-33

“submitting yourselves ... husband is the head of the wife ... husbands love your wives ... as their own bodies ... love his wife as himself ... wife ... reverence her husband”

I Tim. 3:2, 4, 12, Titus 1:6

“husband of one wife” LITERALLY “a one woman man”

“having his children in subjection ... rule his own house ... ruling their children and their own houses well ... even so must their wives ... faithful in all things”

Introduction

The subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is one of the most difficult topics to deal with in the entire Bible. It's difficult because there are a limited number of passages that pertain to the subject and those we have are not very easily interpreted. As a result, many differing opinions are held on this issue. Besides, this subject is extremely complex and no one simple answer solves all the problems that arise in a troubled marriage relationship.

Not only is this subject a highly emotional one, but it is most controversial even among conservative Bible believing circles. There is no issue that can divide fundamentalist any quicker than this matter of divorce and remarriage. Therefore, we need to treat one another in brotherly "love" (I Jh. 3:14) as we study this subject and be open to the leading of the "Holy Spirit" (Jh. 14:26). The problem with a long held typical belief pertaining to this subject is that most of the difficult problems have been avoided by well-meaning believers for the sake of personal acceptance among their conservative peers.

After studying this matter for over 40 years and reading a great deal of material, I've only discovered just how much people differ and neglect the hard to deal with passages, such as the passage on "eunuchs" (Matt. 19:11-12), the one that says it's "better to marry than to burn" (I Cor. 7:9), and that "if" a "loosed" person marries, he has "not sinned" (I Cor. 7:27-28). In my study, I've tried to take the general teachings of Scripture on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage and fit this complicated puzzle together. It's my personal conviction that God's Word never contradicts itself; therefore, once we learn how the Old Testament and New Testament agree on this subject, then hopefully, we'll be able to find some answers to this long debated problem.

There is no question what God thinks of marriage and divorce because His ideal is clearly stated in Scripture. God instituted marriage and if you want what God wants, then you'll never want divorce to touch your home. When God created Adam and Eve, neither was sin a part of His ideal plan for the human race. But, the fact is, sin did enter the human heart and a problem which

confronts us today as a result, is how to deal with people who have suffered a crumbled marriage where divorce has been finalized and in most cases remarriage has occurred. Must people who have experienced such trauma be considered outcast the rest of their lives without hope of being forgiven and ever used by the Lord?

Salvation means that a person begins a new life in Christ and from the time of his conversion he is expected to strive in living up to his responsibilities as a Christian which includes what God has revealed about marriage. Becoming a “new creature” (II Cor. 5:17) doesn’t mean we forget all the sins of the past, but it does mean that we can rejoice in God’s forgiveness as the “Holy Spirit” begins His process of sanctification in us. Whatever happened to a person before getting “saved” (Rom. 10:13) is under the “blood” (I Jh. 1:7) and we should not hold such a person accountable for what he did in his lost condition if we consider him for service in the church. He, like all other believers, needs to discover his spiritual “gifts” (I Cor. 12:12-14) and use them to “glorify” (I Cor. 6:20) the God of his salvation.

For the most part, everything that I’ve said about a lost person who gets “saved” can also apply to a Christian who backslides, repents, and is restored to fellowship with the Lord. Whenever a believer “sins,” God is willing to “forgive” if we’ll only come to Him in genuine repentance and “confess” (I Jh. 1:8-10). However, just because we get things right with God, either as a lost person or a backslidden Christian, doesn’t mean that the consequences of our past sins will not haunt us anymore in this life. The spiritual law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7-8) remains in effect and those things that we sowed in our sinful past can only be dealt with in the future by the help of the Lord.

Having to deal with an increasing number of divorces in our society has caused Christians to question many typical beliefs about the subject of divorce and remarriage to see if they are actually in keeping with the revealed teaching of God’s Word. Most of us are victims of some hand-me-down theology that’s not really based on Scripture. We need to know what we believe and why we believe it and have our doctrine based upon the infallible inerrant “Word of Truth” (II Tim. 2:15). The Bible teaches that the

“truth shall make you free” (Jh. 8:32) and that Jesus is the divine embodiment of “Truth” (Jh. 14:6).

For many years I accepted the typical teachings on divorce handed down to me from other pastors who had it handed down to them by their pastors. But, when I began asking questions about how they reconciled their actions toward divorcees, no suitable answer was ever given. I ask, “why is it that pastors will not perform wedding ceremonies for divorcees, but turn around and accept them as church members, scold them for being absent from church services, often give them positions of service, making many Sunday School teachers, taking their money, and tell them they’re stealing from God if they don’t give their tithes and offerings?” If such people are acceptable for church membership and even given a job in the church, then why not be consistent in what we believe and be a part of their marriage ceremony and if we can’t sanction their marriage then why should we accept them as working members of the church? Many preachers will have no problem performing the wedding for someone who has been convicted of murder, served time in prison, shackled up, born illegitimate children, been guilty of rape, drunkards, and drug addicts, but refuse across the board to perform the ceremony for a divorcee.

Before talking about divorce and remarriage, we need to lay a proper foundation by seeking to understand the Biblical teaching on marriage. Today, the traditional family is under attack as never before. We’re being told by the media that the family is on its way out because so many are choosing to live together out of wedlock and some of the same sex are taking up with one another. I find it rather strange that many conservative churches that feel so strongly about divorce, do so very little to actually promote traditional family values.

Churches need to be extremely careful to help families properly balance their time between responsibilities in the home and the assembly. Churches need to help couples stay married and encourage family togetherness, rather than planning so many unnecessary meetings and activities to keep them apart. What ever happened to families sitting together in a corporate worship service? What happened to parents teaching their children the

importance of family time and how to behave in church or any other public setting? It is at this point that I have problems with “children’s church.” There may be a place for it up to about age two, but after that, children need to be sitting with their parents or an adult in church service. The modern day church needs to STOP dividing up the family unit every time we turn around. The church needs to promote the family in all that it does.

To weaken the home is to weaken the church which is comprised of individuals from within those families. Many years ago, congregations didn’t have to deal with the issue of so many divorcees in the church. But today, we can’t stick our heads in the sand like an ostrich and pretend like the problem doesn’t exist or hope that it will go away.

It’s been said that the nearest thing to heaven on earth is a happy Christian home. Unfortunately, some households are more like a hell on earth than a heaven on earth. Spiritual rebellion has turned our homes into battlefields. There is an ever widening gap between “children” and their “parents” (Eph. 6:1-4). In most homes, “children” lack godly discipline, Christian training, and spiritual example. The pressures of our day are causing widespread marital dissatisfaction. The divorce courts of our land are filled to capacity. Many husbands and wives simply tolerate one another and in many cases remain together only for the sake of the children. Some couples jump from one extra-marital affair to another failing to realize that genuine happiness can never be achieved in such a manner of living.

Couples don’t have to merely exist together under the same roof. They don’t have to terminate their marriage through divorce. As husbands and wives submit themselves to the teaching of God’s Word, they can discover the biblical view of marriage along with the warmth, beauty, and tenderness of this God ordained relationship. Christian couples need to learn how to stay married and have a home built upon God’s principles. Couples who are struggling to recover from a divorce situation need to learn how God can put their lives back together and experience a healing that only He can bring.

Chapter 1

God's Institution of Marriage

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen.1:26-28 KJV)

"And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." (Gen. 2:18 KJV)

"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; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 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. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen. 2:21-25 KJV)

Marriage isn't something that was concocted in the mind of man, but it was an INSTITUTION between a MAN and a WOMAN created by the Creator himself. The first two chapters of Genesis teaches us not only about the creation of the world, but the establishment of marriage. In the first chapter, we are told that man was created by God and then in chapter two, we are told more detail as to how God did it. On the first, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth days of creation, God said that what He had created was "good" (Gen. 1:4,10,18,21,25). After creating man and looking back over "every thing that He had made," He declared that "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Perhaps the reason why "good" is omitted from the "second day" (Gen. 1:8) is because the "firmament"

became the domain of "Satan" (Lk. 10:18). Scripture teaches that he is the "prince of this world" (Jh. 14:30) and the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph.2:2). He is not only the one responsible for the breakdown of our families and the breakup of marriages, but for introducing "sin" (Rom. 3:23, 6:23) to the human race through the downfall of Adam.

Everything about God's creation was "good" except for the loneliness of man. When God created the animal kingdom, it's very apparent that He created them in pairs of male and female because He gave them the command to reproduce "after their kind" (Gen. 1:21,24). But, Adam had no one with whom to share his life and God didn't want man to be lonely. John Milton said, "loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named not good." God designed "Eve" as an answer to Adam's loneliness and gave her to him as a "help meet."

Men of today who expect their wives to work outside the home, need to understand that this means more than simply helping to pay the bills. Most husbands want their wives to so work in order to help the family maintain a more lavish lifestyle. "Help meet" literally means to help or helper. In the Hebrew, "help meet" refers to someone who helps another find fulfillment. In other words, God gave "woman" to man to rescue him from his loneliness. Charles Swindoll calls this, in reference to Adam, "the missing link in the puzzle of his life." Sometimes women will jokingly declare that the reason God made man first is because He saved the best for last!

When God said that it wasn't "good" for man to be "alone," He was stating a general rule for the majority of people. Later, we'll see where there are a minority of people who are gifted with singleness and they are the exception to this general rule (Matt. 19:11-12, I Cor. 7:7-9). Overall, God says that for most people, the single life is "not good" because man was made with the need for companionship and a helper who corresponds to him. Most people have been programed by God from the very beginning of creation for marriage. Unless you have been gifted with SINGLENES, then you need to get married. Looking at other passages of scripture, we can conclude that God states this fact based upon the physical makeup by which He created man.

Instilled within man is the desire for procreation and sexual fulfillment. The two strongest instincts within man is the drive for self-preservation and the sex drive. Let me say at this point, that just because a person becomes a Christian or just because a person experiences a divorce doesn't necessarily lessen either one of these instincts. Just because people get saved or experience the trauma of divorce, doesn't make them any less of a human being. There is nothing wrong with having a sexual appetite because God is the One who gave it to us. It's true that we are living in a sex crazed world and the belt has flown off the wheel of sexual permissiveness.

As we concentrate on the purity and wholesomeness of sex, it must be kept within God's limitations. The problem with SEX is the same problem in all other areas of disobedience. Unless sinful man brings himself under the discipline of the "Holy Spirit," his appetites will be controlled by the "flesh" and be found displeasing to God. SEX is not sinful, but it is a SIN to have it outside God's boundary line of "marriage" (Heb. 13:4). "God created male and female" so uniquely different whereas they might complement one another even to the point of actually fitting together sexually. Keep in mind that is God's doings, God's design, God's creation. Marriage and mating are not the same thing, although mating is the consummation of the marriage contract. In other words, having sex is not to be equated with the marriage union. Just because two people have sex doesn't in and of itself make them married. If marriage and sexual relations were the same thing, then why would the Bible speak about illicit sexual intercourse ("fornication") and marital unfaithfulness ("adultery")?

Marriage authorizes sexual relations and sex outside of marriage IS, ALWAYS HAS BEEN, and ALWAYS WILL BE SIN in the sight of God. Don't let anyone tell you that an occasional act of "fornication" or infidelity is harmless. It's sinful in the sight of God and it will leave scars that can never be erased from your memory as long as you live. Sex, the way God designed it, is more than a biological function between a man and woman. It is looked upon by God as the ultimate consummation of the marriage relationship. Even when a person buys the services of a prostitute, he desecrates the bond of marriage intended by God (I

Cor. 6:16). Anytime a marriage relationship loses its sacredness, then ones sexual expression is likely to become marred.

Out of the side of Adam, God took a "rib" and formed Eve and presented her to him thus constituting the first marriage ceremony. Although, a public wedding ceremony has a place, it's not the words that are said, the vows exchanged, or the signed court house license that make a marriage work, but the commitment of the two involved. God's IDEAL is for one man and one woman to be united in "one flesh" for life. Christian marriage should be seen as a permanent contract between two persons in the sight of God. God's formula of addition in the home is "one" man plus "one" woman equals "one" union. Bigamy and polygamy were common in primitive societies, but God made it clear from the very beginning of creation that He didn't intend for His people to "multiply wives" (Deut. 17:17).

From the Garden of Eden, we find three elements that should be a part of every marriage. FIRST, married couples are to "leave father and mother." As a general rule in today's culture, it's good if they move out of their parent's home and be on their own. When a new household is formed through the marriage relationship, children are no longer dependent upon their parents to provide and care for them. Not only do the children have to let go of their parents, but parents have to let go of their children. This leaving involves leaving mentally, emotionally, and financially. If couples are not ready to assume responsibility for their well-being, then they're simply not ready for marriage. There simply comes a time when children must leave the nest and both parents and children need to recognize that fact.

SECONDLY, the "man" is to "cleave unto his wife." This Hebrew word "cleave" literally means to be bonded or glued together. With families today being so fragmented, husbands going one way and wives another, no wonder husbands and wives have become strangers to each other. A husband and wife should see their relationship as a permanent bonding, gluing, and blending together. It must be recognized as a lifelong commitment between the two in the sight of God to stay joined together. Remember, as I speak about this permanent bonding, that I'm referring to marriage in regards to this life only, because in the

afterlife, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Mk 12:25).

THIRDLY, they become "one flesh." Leaving and cleaving makes possible this "one flesh" relationship. This means that a married couple must recognize themselves as "one" and not TWO. The first thing that comes to our minds when we think of the two joining into "one flesh" is the sexual part of marriage. Sexual consummation is certainly a big and beautiful part of this "one flesh" relationship, but it is not the only part. It also means that a married couple will no longer recognize themselves as two but "one" in the eyes of God. Decisions will have to be made with the other person in mind, no longer thinking independently and selfishly.

We've all heard people talk about "a marriage made in heaven." The truth about the matter is that NOT some, but all marriages are made in heaven. I say this in the sense that marriage is a DIVINE INSTITUTION ordained by God Himself between a MAN and a WOMAN and not between two people of the same sex. Marriage is not for Christians only, but for the entire human race. However, only in the bonds of a Christian marriage, can marriage reach its highest achievements. Some people don't believe that it matters "if you marry the right person," but that one's attitude in marriage is all that counts. I personally believe that your attitude has a great deal to do with your commitment in the marriage relationship. But, I for one, believe that God has a life's partner picked out for a believer and all we need to do is seek His will, "wait upon the Lord" (Isa. 40:31), and allow His timetable to come into focus for our lives.

Couples need to learn how to always put as much into their marriage as they did their courtship. Successful marriages demand commitment, risks, and unselfishness. The answers for a successful marriage are not found in psychology books, but in the revealed "Word of God" (Acts 13:7). Good marriages, even Christian marriages, just don't happen, they require a lot of hard work and as you work at it you'll discover your "love" for one another growing deeper with every passing year.

The Bible calls for total fidelity in marriage and "adultery" is strictly forbidden (Ex. 20:14, Prov. 5:15-19, 6:27-29). This means

being loyal to your spouse, avoid flirtations with anyone else, flee from temptation, and control your fantasies. The sharing of intimate affection should be kept inside one's own home. Sexual intimacy is to be reserved strictly between husbands and wives where God intends for them to find fulfillment in each other. Since God is the One who has established marriage, He is the only One who has the right to properly regulate it. Mankind must learn to live by God's guidelines for marriage or else suffer the consequences. If you want a Christian marriage, then you must bring your marriage into conformity with God's "Word."

In the beginning, there was no problem with divorce and remarriage because Adam and Eve were the only humans on earth until the birth of their children. We all know where Adam got his wife, but frequently it's asked where Cain got his wife? Actually, it's best not to ask questions about other men's wives, but to try and satisfy inquisitive minds concerning this question, we can only assume that he married one of his sisters in order to populate the human race. Later, God strictly forbade such a practice which has become known today as INCEST (Lev. 18, 20:17, Deut. 22:30, 27:20).

It wasn't long after the human race began to expand that marriage became tarnished by the lust of man. "Lamech" (Gen. 4:19) is the first man recorded in Scripture who became a bigamist which was in direct violation of God's will for the "one flesh" relationship of marriage. By the time we get to the sixth chapter of Genesis, "men were taking wives of all which they chose" (Gen. 6:2). Eventually, God's judgment wiped out mankind except for Noah's family whom He used to repopulate the earth following the flood. From Noah's son, "Shem" (Gen. 11:10-32), came "Abraham" whom God called out of "Ur of the Chaldees" to become the father of the Hebrew people.

After becoming impatient on God's promise for a son, "Abraham" took "Hagar," his wife's handmaid as a concubine, to bear him a son (Gen. 16-17). Nothing but problems resulted from this union which continues to plague our world today through the Israeli and Arab conflicts. God never approved the system of CONCUBINAGE, but He did not allow the sins of His chosen

people to keep Him from exercising Grace in the sending of "His only begotten Son" (Jh. 3:16).

God dealt with polygamy, concubinage, and divorce in the Old Testament, but just because He allowed it doesn't mean that He approved of it (Ex. 21:7-9, Deut. 21:10-14, Judges 8:30-31). When God created Adam and Eve, His IDEAL was for them not to sin, but they did. Likewise, God's IDEAL in marriage is for divorce not to touch a husband and wife, but unfortunately such will not always be the case. What happens when mankind falls short of God's IDEAL standards? God, in His mercy and grace, provides a means of restoration, fellowship, and healing. God did not give up on the human race when Adam and Eve sinned, but He provided the "coats of skins" and a plan of redemption.

By the time we get to the nineteenth chapter of Genesis, mankind was so morally corrupt that homosexuality was rampant in "Sodom and Gomorrah" (Gen. 19:1-38). "Lot" had become so morally misguided that he even offered his virgin "daughters" to the lustful fornicators who knocked at his door. He had lived out of fellowship with God for so long that even his thinking resembled an unregenerate. Herein is a lesson for all believers as we live in the world, to put up our guard and not think nor act like our pagan society.

After Lot's family fled the "cities of the plain," we see once again the carnal influence that such a worldly environment had made on their lives. His "daughters" got their own father intoxicated and seduced him in his drunken stupor into have sexual intercourse with them so they could get pregnant. As one can easily see by this time in history, men and women were acting like animals in so far as their sexual appetites are concerned. When people do not exercise their moral consciousness then they become like the animal kingdom in their behavior. The amazing thing about "Lot" is that he is called a "righteous man" (II Pet. 2:7-8) in the New Testament which just goes to prove that regardless of the sins in our lives, we can be made righteous through faith in Jesus Christ.

After God's people spent over "400 years" (Acts 7:6) in Egyptian "bondage," God called "Moses" to be not only their deliverer, but the prophet through whom He would speak to

"Israel" regulating their moral lifestyle by the "ten commandments" (Ex. 20:1-21). Included in this list of regulations are prohibitions dealing with adultery and fornication (Ex. 20:14, 17). Following the giving of the "ten commandments," God enlarged and expanded His teachings on these subjects in the giving of His judicial laws (Ex. 21:7-11, 22:16-17).

Today, fewer and fewer people view marriage as a lifelong promise of commitment. Shacking-up, partner swapping, and extra marital affairs are becoming far too common place. Family life is breaking down at an alarming rate as we witness the collapse of the home like it was traditionally know in years past. But, I believe that the happiest people on earth are those who seek to live according to the teachings of God's Word. Christians need to take their marriage vows seriously, hold on to the old fashioned standards of purity, loyalty, faithfulness, and fidelity. At one time in society, marriage was considered a lifelong contract with very few divorces taking place and those that did occur were frowned upon. Some infidelity occurred, but it was looked upon as wrong and generally unacceptable. But now, with TV making light of everything sinful, our world has come to accept the very things that God deems unacceptable.

No marriage is trouble free simply because when two imperfect people get together, there are bound to be problems. However, a successful marriage is one that looks to God for help in problem solving. When problems arise, the Christian couple needs to remember the sacredness of their union in God's sight and call upon Him to see them through the difficult times. Marriage was designed by God as a monogamous relationship to last for a lifetime. The institution of marriage has been with us from the dawn of human history and regardless of what some men say, it will never become outdated and go out of style in the sight of God. There isn't another relationship on earth outside of one's own personal relationship with Jesus Christ, that is more important than the husband and wife relationship. In this "one flesh" relationship, a couple is bonded together in a union that embraces the whole personality while at the same time, portraying the relationship of "Christ" to His "church" (Eph. 5:32).

Chapter 2

The Authorization of Divorce

"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. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

(Deut. 24:1-4 KJV)

Bible believing Christians don't all see eye to eye on the matter of divorce and remarriage, but we all can agree that divorce represents a compromise of God's IDEAL. Divorce is the breaking of a marriage contract and is always the result of sin. Divorce never occurs without sin being involved.

To begin with, we need to see that the concept of divorce is BIBLICAL (meaning that it is permitted in Scripture), but it is certainly far from God's IDEAL plan for marriage. Capital punishment for murder is BIBLICAL, but murder is far from God's IDEAL for human existence. There are many things in life that are far less than God's IDEAL. As a pastor, I've discovered where there are things taking place in the institutionalized church today that are less than God's IDEAL. Even though the Christian life is one of joy, many times it turns out to be less than IDEAL. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't strive for God's IDEAL, but the simple truth is that so often we fall far short of achieving it. In the Garden of Eden, God set his IDEAL in motion, but sin invaded the human race and sought to disrupt it in every way imaginable. After Cain and Abel grew up, Satan attempted to thwart the coming of Christ through the seed of Abel in having him killed by

his brother (Gen. 4:8). As a result, God raised up Seth (Gen. 4:25) through whom the Lord Jesus would come. From our previous study, we've already seen how Satan corrupted God's IDEAL for marriage through "Lamech" (Gen. 4:19) who became the first known bigamist.

There is no question that God hates the sins that causes divorce and its devastating consequences. We never want to minimize the sins that causes divorce, but neither should our attitude toward it be different from God's. Just because all divorces are caused by sin, doesn't mean that all divorces are sinful.

Before we proceed any further, now is a good time for us to examine our own attitudes toward divorced people. Do we consider them spiritual lepers and unclean for Christian service? Are we subtly saying that we are better than they because our sin is not the same as theirs? All of us would like to go back and do some things differently in life if we could. We've all "sinned" (Rom. 3:23), regardless of what sins are involved.

It may come as a SHOCK to many, but God Himself has been looked upon as a divorced person because of the way He gave a "bill of divorce" to "Israel" (Jer. 3:1-11). This is the only "divorce" recorded in the Bible and it's in reference to God telling "Jeremiah" to remind "Judah" of how she had witnessed Israel's spiritual infidelity for which God had "given her a bill of divorce." From this terminology, we are reminded that God's people should be as concerned about their spiritual "adultery" as they are over physical "adultery." Playing the "harlot," filling the land with "whoredoms" and committing "adultery" is bad physically, but even worse spiritually, when God's people become unfaithful to the Lord.

Keep in mind, that Isaiah and Hosea were contemporaries and about 100 years after them, Jeremiah reminded Judah of what God had done to Israel (Isa. 50:1). The marital conflict between Hosea and Gomer was an object lesson for Israel to see themselves in their UNFAITHFULNESS to God and witness God's willingness to take her back and renew His covenant with His people (Hosea 1:2, 2:2, 3:1-5). On numerous occasions in the Old Testament, God referred to His relationship with Israel as a marriage (Ps. 73:27, Ezek. 16:8, Jer. 2:2, 3:1-9,23-25, Hosea 2:5-7,13, 14:1-2, Isa. 50:1, 54:6-7). In the New Testament, Christ referred to His

church as His "chaste virgin ... bride" (II Cor. 11:2, Rev. 21:2). An adulterous soul in both the Old Testament or New Testament, is either an apostate or an unfaithful believer who delights in having pleasure with someone or something other than the Lord God of Heaven (Jam. 4:4). It's possible for God's people to backslide and become "estranged" (Ezek. 14:5) from God just as husbands and wives can become estranged from one another.

On another occasion in the Old Testament, Israel made a "covenant with God" to "put away" (eject) their "strange (foreign) wives according to the law" so they could "do his pleasure and separate from the people of the land, and from the strange wives" (Ez. 10:1-5, 10-11, 17-19, 44). "According to the law" is a reference to the Mosaic Law dealing with how to legally "put away" a wife with a "bill of divorcement." From our TEXT, we find a biblical "law" pertaining to the subject of divorce and remarriage. It's a "law" that shows us how merciful God is to sinners and how we, as His people who have experienced His mercy, should also be merciful to others.

From the beginning, God established the purpose of marriage and divorce was never a part of His original plan for mankind. Divorce was not introduced nor initiated by God, but by man and as a result of hardened "hearts" (Matt. 19:8), God merely permitted and regulated it. God did not instigate divorce because He never intended for marriages to come apart. Marriage is a God ORDAINED INSTITUTION, but divorce is a man ordained institution. God didn't institute divorce no more than He is the author of sin, He only recognizes and regulates it and made provision from the time of the Mosaic Law for human life that was less than IDEAL. Therefore, Scripture recognizes divorce as a necessary provision due to human imperfection.

There is no question about what God thinks of divorce and neither is there a question about how God feels of sin in general (Rom. 3:9-12). Sin is disobedience and rebellion against God and every one of us are guilty of sin. We're "all" (Rom. 3:23) sinners, we just don't all sin in the same ways. It was a very simple act of disobedience which led the human race into a life plagued with a depraved nature. All Adam did to condemn mankind to our inherited depravity was to take a bite from a forbidden piece of

fruit. We can't argue over what God thinks of divorce no more than we can argue over what God thinks of sin, because the Bible is crystal clear on the subject. Some sin may be more obvious to others, but there is no such thing as secret sin in the eyes of God.

Our Text, that comes from the Old Testament BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY, doesn't necessarily COMMAND couples to DIVORCE, but merely regulates it as a LEGAL PROCESS (Deut. 24:1). When a couple divorces, they are no longer married to one another, no, not even in the sight of God because a "bill of divorcement" severs their marital ties. Before entering into the study of this passage, we need an understanding of two Hebrew phrases from the Old Testament pertaining to DIVORCE. The term "send her out" (Deut. 24:1), "put away" (Jer. 3:1), or "putting away" (Mal. 2:16) comes from the Hebrew word SHALACH {shaw-lakh}. This term has several renderings, such as to send, send away, send out, send forth, stretch out, to let loose, cast out, and give over. One of the best translations of the term is for it to mean DISMISS. It's a term that is generally used synonymously along with the subject of "divorce" in Scripture. Simply because, when "divorce" occurred, a wife was "put away" from her husband; however, there were other times when a wife was "put away" and "a bill of divorcement" was not written.

The other term is the word "divorcement" (Deut. 24:1,3) or "divorce" (Jer. 3:8) which comes from the Hebrew word KERIYTHUWTH {ker-ee-thooth}. The meaning of this word is much more limited than the term "put away." Instead of having several renderings, it always means either divorce, divorcement, or dismissal. In referring to a "bill of divorcement" (Deut. 24:1) the Hebrew word CEPHER {say-fer} is used along with the word KERIYTHUWTH {ker-ee-thooth} speaking of a document, writing, written order, written decree, or legal certificate of divorce (dismissal).

To "put away" a wife meant to dismiss her and send her out of the house, but to "divorce" her meant to legally sever all rights and privileges to one another including sexual intimacy. A "bill of divorcement" prevented a man who "put away" his "wife" from ever abusing or violating her anytime he so desired. As we can see, the Hebrew word for "put away" is not the same word for

"divorce." It was a cruel thing to "put away" a wife for another woman without giving her a "bill of divorcement."

In order for a spouse to legally remarry someone else, such a "bill" was required. Unfortunately, women have been treated down through most of history as slaves or property with little personal consideration or rights of their own. The prophet Malachi proclaimed that God hated the "putting away" of women that was going on among God's people (Mal. 2:14-16). Note, He didn't say He hated "divorce," as some translations have it, but the "putting away" that was apparently going on without "a bill of divorcement." This does not mean that God approves of divorce, but only that He has allowed it due to man's sin and He certainly hates the sins that cause divorce.

Under the Mosaic Law, a man was allowed to divorce his wife for reasons other than infidelity as we see in our text (Deut. 24:1). The word "uncleanness" comes from the Hebrew word ERVAH {er-vaw} meaning something disgraceful, shameful, offensive, or improper. Literally, it means a matter of nakedness speaking of something indecent, disgusting, or repulsive. Most of the time when this word is used in Scripture, it is translated to mean "nakedness" (Lev. 18). But, based upon the context in which the word is used, scholars don't believe that it's limited to adultery or an act of sexual sin. The idea of repulsiveness or repugnance seems to take precedent over the concept of adultery or sexual uncleanness.

In the previous chapter the same word is used to speak of an "unclean thing" referring to the covering of bodily excrement and a toilet outside the "camp" of Israel (Deut. 23:12-14). God was teaching Israel that outward cleanliness should be symbolic of inward holiness; therefore, He expected His people to keep a clean "camp." From this, one can conclude that this Hebrew word, ERVAH {er-vaw}, is rather general and could refer to any type of improper behavior that a husband "found" in his wife (or vice versa in today's culture). "Some uncleanness" lets us know that divorce should not be considered for just any trivial reason, but due to some awful indecency or impropriety of behavior. Unless there is a terrible act of misbehavior from a spouse, divorce should be out of the question. There is no doubt that the passage in

Deuteronomy is referring to divorce for reasons other than adultery because under the Mosaic Law, adultery was punishable by death (Ex. 20:14, Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:22).

The main thrust of this passage was God's way of prohibiting easy divorce and making light of the marriage contract. It was very common for men of old to marry more than one wife and get rid of any wife they chose without bothering with divorce. To get rid of a wife without divorcing her was merely to "put" her "away." God does not approve of wife swapping and to prevent such from being the case, if the woman who was "put away" remarried, it was required for her husband to give her a "bill of divorcement."

It is also from this same portion of Old Testament scripture that we find permission being given the divorced woman to remarry, but NOT to return to her first husband AFTER the "bill of divorcement" had been issued (Deut. 24:2-4). There are two reasons for this restriction. First, a reunion with her first husband would lower the dignity of a woman treating her like property or a concubine. Secondly, the physical union with her second husband made them "one flesh" in God's sight. The "bill of divorcement" severed the "one flesh" relationship with her first husband meaning they were no longer married and permitting remarriage to another.

Following divorce, it was lawful to remarry because the "bill of divorcement" dissolved the existing bond of marriage just as the death of a mate dissolves it and frees one to marry again. Scripture plainly states that a divorced woman "may go and be another man's wife." When it comes to divorce, God tolerates it but He does not like it. In fact, there are many things in our lives that God does not like, but because of His great mercy, grace, love, and patience, He is long-suffering toward us in order to bring us closer unto Himself. If things get so bad in a marriage that the two separate, then God permits a "bill of divorcement" and not a mere word of mouth agreement. Such a verbal agreement was not legally binding and gave the husband the liberty to take advantage of the woman at any time.

By requiring a "bill of divorcement," the husband and wife would no longer be considered married and neither would owe the other any physical obligations. The divorced woman was never to

return to her first husband in the event she remarried again or something happened to her second husband. In so doing she would be "defiled" (sexually unclean) because she was no longer married to her "former husband." Such a return would amount to wife swapping which God considers "abomination" (disgusting). This measure prevented either the husband or wife from taking advantage of a "former" spouse. Once divorce has occurred, the couple is no longer married and are not to return to one another in a husband and wife relationship because the right to sexual intimacy has been terminated. If a situation occurs, like the one in our text, then the two must remarry in order to become husband and wife once again, because divorce severed their previous relationship as such.

Not everyone is going to have a heart for God and for that reason, He is merciful enough to permit things that are not in His IDEAL plan. It is at this point where God's permissive will manifests His "GRACE" (Rom. 5:20). Those of us who have acknowledged His "GRACE" should be willing to demonstrate it to others who themselves are in need of it. The same "grace" (Eph. 2:8) that forgave us, forgives all sinners who come to Christ through "faith." We should be as willing to forgive others as God is to forgive us.

A divorce is a legal act dissolving the covenant of companionship that became binding by writing a "bill of divorcement." Such a decree established the status of those divorcing as unmarried. This meant that the two parties were no longer to live together nor engage in sexual relations. It also allowed them freedom to remarry, but never to engage in sexual intercourse with the "former" husband or wife after the divorce.

In dealing with troubled marriage relationships, we must realize that the best option is always RECONCILIATION rather than divorce. When the Constitution of the United States was adopted in 1787, divorce was so rare that it was practically unknown. In 1932, one out of every six marriages ended in divorce. In 1965, one out of every three marriages ended in divorce. Now, with one out of every two marriages ending in divorce, some may be tempted to ask, if marriage is even worth the risk? Statistics show that 60-70% of second time marriages end

in divorce and 70-82% of third marriages end in divorce. At least 50% of today's children live with only one parent for some period of time before they reach age eighteen.

These staggering statistics prove that divorce is not the solution to marital problems and should not be ignored by the Church of Jesus Christ because we have the answers to a happy marriage relationship in the Word of God. We need to be helping people to rebuild their lives, even people whose homes have come apart through divorce. There are about 62 million singles and single again adults who live in the United States and we're told that the divorce rate would be even higher if so many people of our day weren't choosing to live together without being married. Our generation is obsessed with illicit sex, extramarital affairs, and safe sex. We're living in an age of sexual promiscuity and every way we turn (TV, magazines, billboards, etc.) there is something sexually provocative.

Many couples never dreamed when they exchanged their vows with one another that things could get so messed up and turn out so miserably. When the hard realities of marriage hit home, it comes as a shock to most couples that the honeymoon could be so short. (In fact, most couples today are co-habiting and will never know the joy of a real honeymoon) However, marriages don't have to turn sour if we're willing to assume our God given responsibilities, work at it, sacrifice, forgive, and take seriously the lifelong commitment that marriage involves in the plan of God. So many times, it's not really a matter of whether or not a couple should get a divorce, it's a case where they shouldn't have ever gotten married to begin with. Today, divorce is just too easy to obtain in a society where the home and marriage has deteriorated to a level equal to that of the "days of Noah" (Gen. 6:2, Matt. 24:38).

There is NO QUESTION what God's IDEAL is for MARRIAGE because that fact is INDISPUTABLE from HIS WORD. We need to do everything possible to keep families together and couples from divorcing. But, the question that we must face in the church is, HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH PEOPLE AFTER THEY'VE BEEN DIVORCED? Personally, I cannot help but conclude that we must deal with divorcees just like

Jesus dealt with us as sinners. How would YOU like for God to deal with YOU the way YOU deal with divorcees? Understanding that God's "grace" is greater than our "sin" (Rom. 5:20), it's time for us in the CHURCH to quit looking down at divorcees and remember the words of Jesus when the woman who was caught in the act of "adultery" was brought to Him and He said, "he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (Jh.8:7).

One problem with the divorce issue is that so many different factors can be involved in each case. The typical belief is that if your spouse has not committed some sexual sin, then you're locked in with nowhere to go. Those who hold this view to the extreme would even advocate a wife staying with an abusive husband regardless of how much he may mistreat her. Some believe that a divorce is only permissible when a man marries a wife and then discovers that she was not a virgin, but even then he is not permitted to remarry. Some believe that adultery breaks the marriage contract and remarriage is acceptable while others believe divorce is permissible but remarriage is not. Some extremist even believe people will go to Hell if they divorce and remarry which in their opinion constitutes adultery (I Cor. 6:9, Rev. 21:8).

All of these views that I've just mentioned are very rigid and do not take into account the complete teaching of Scripture on the subject of remarriage. Views on this subject range from one extreme to the other just as they did in the time of Christ. However, as in everything else that we do and believe, we need to find a proper balance. Satan does everything he can to get believers off balance and take a position either way out in right or left field. If we're not careful, we can become like the PHARISEES or SADDUCEES who were neither theologically in keeping with the teachings of Christ. The easy thing to do is simply ignore the problem of divorce, but the Bible doesn't avoid it and if we're going to preach the whole council of God then we're going to have to deal with it. It's not fair to those who are victims of divorce if we refuse to confront the issue and if we fail to deal with it properly. Besides, our own spiritual growth will be stunted in this area of learning. Like it or not, the church of today is forced to examine this subject and we should dare to believe God for His

revelation. It's time for us to quit following our feelings and activate our faith in what thus saith the Lord.

If you've been married, divorced, and remarried, then that's water over the dam and you can't put spilled milk back into the bottle. Therefore, when it comes to dealing with divorce in the church, we must start with people where they are and try to develop them as "disciples" (Jh. 8:31-32, 13:35). There's not an individual anywhere who wouldn't like to go back and change something that he or she has done in the past, but that's impossible. The only thing we can do is turn our all over to Christ, repent, and let Him (the Master "Potter" of the "clay") put the broken pieces of our lives back together again (Jer. 18).

There are many things that God permits in His permissive will because of the way sin has invaded the human race. And, divorce is one of them, although it is far from His IDEAL for any husband and wife. If you want what God wants, then you'll never want divorce to destroy your marriage and you'll do all within your power to keep it from happening. However, it takes two people to make a marriage work. There are cases when one wants it to work while the other doesn't. Whenever the "hardness" of a man's heart breaks God's IDEAL standard, His "GRACE" is ready to manifest itself upon confession and repentance.

Sexual sins affects the human personality like no other sin because sexuality is so deeply ingrained within man's physical and emotional make-up. Adultery and fornication are some of the worst sins that can be committed because they directly involve the violation of someone else's body, but they are forgivable. There is only one unpardonable sin and that is the failure to trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Our churches are filled with people who have been married only one time, but live like the Devil. Just because people have been married one time doesn't mean they're going to heaven. Man's greatest need is to get saved and then let God make out of them a life worth living. The sin of adultery heads the list of "the works of the flesh," but "love" heads the list of "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:19, 22). Do we bare "the fruit of the Spirit" in our lives? Do we love sinners like God loves sinners? God's "love" will activate His "GRACE" in the heart of any repentant sinner and His "love" can be demonstrated in any home

where the husband learns to "love" his wife like "Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. 5:25).

There should never be a reason why two born again Christians would ever consider divorce. Followers of Christ are expected to maintain a higher standard than the world and we need to put up our guard lest we be influenced by the decay of our society. God's people must understand the sacredness and permanency of the marriage contract and realize that the words "TILL DEATH US DO PART" embodies the IDEAL teachings of Christ for which we should strive. The crying need of every individual is to be "born again" (Jh. 3:3) and discover the precious Lordship of Christ over His own. He knows what is best for us; therefore, why bite into the Devil's big lie that would try to convince us otherwise?

Chapter 3

A Mistranslated Confusion

"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 (put away) committeth adultery."

(Matt. 5:31-32 KJV)

From the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus corrected some misconceptions about the Old Testament law. Rather than setting aside the moral law of God found in the Old Testament, the New Testament reiterates it and develops more fully the germinal truths contained therein. The New Testament focuses more attention upon the SPIRIT OF THE LAW than upon the LETTER OF THE LAW (Jh. 1:17). With His coming into the world, Jesus fulfilled the COVENANT OF GRACE that was initiated in the Garden of Eden. This means that the Old Testament "LAW" had fully matured (Jh. 1:14). A close study of the above opening text, reveals more than His famous BEATITUDES which He delivered from the SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

In the 5th chapter of Matthew, Jesus was actually defending the Old Testament Scriptures commonly referred to as the "law and the prophets" (Matt. 5:17, Jh.1:45). In His attempt to teach the value of the "law and the prophets," Jesus said that He had "not come to destroy" it, "but to fulfill" it (Matt. 5:17). Trying to impress upon the people the importance of the Old Testament, Christ promised that "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:19). He continued His discourse by saying that if anyone takes away from the Old Testament, then such a person would be considered "least in the kingdom of heaven," but one who continues to "do and teach them" shall be "called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19).

The PHARISEES came up with a set of self-imposed self-righteous laws that they added to God's "law" and were never

endorsed or approved by God. They extended God's "law" by restricting such things as, the number of steps a person could walk on the Sabbath day. They even allowed a man to divorce his wife for such trivial things like burning the bread. Jesus made it clear that unless a person's "righteousness" exceeds that of the "Pharisees" then he'll "in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Unless a person is made righteous through FAITH in the shed blood of Christ, then he'll never know what GENUINE "righteousness" is all about. It's impossible for man to write his own rule book on how to please God because nothing can be added nor taken away from God's requirements on "righteousness." The first coming of Christ didn't make God's requirements null and void, nor did it destroy the value of the Old Testament. In fact, when Jesus said that He had come to "fulfill" the "law" and the "prophets," He meant that He had come to INTENSIFY IT, TO CLARIFY IT, and NOT ABOLISH IT.

In order to explain the value of the "LAW" in relationship to "GRACE," Jesus used the illustration of "adultery" from the Old Testament to show the real extent of man's sinful nature. By looking at this illustration, we need to keep in mind that NO ONE has ever lived up to the "commandments" except the Lord Jesus Himself. When Christ looks at "sin," He doesn't do so in a superficial way as man does. Our tendency is to look on some outward act and call it sin based upon our personal interpretation of the matter. As a result, we end up judging and condemning others and refuse to see the corruption of our own hearts (Matt. 7:1-5).

The illustration used by Christ in our text alludes to the 7th of the TEN COMMANDMENTS pertaining to "adultery" (Matt. 5:27). As we'll study later, Jesus said that it was due to the "hardness" of "hearts," God permitted the Israelites "a writing of divorcement" (Matt. 19:7-8). To show the seriousness of marriage and the everlasting truth of the "law," Jesus expounded upon the subject by saying that "adultery" could even be committed in the "heart" as well as in deed (Matt. 5:28-30). His teaching is that if your "eye" or "hand" is going to get you into trouble, then you're better off without that particular "member" of your "body" (I Cor.12:14). As a result, we need to remain on constant guard,

especially in this sex crazed age of ours, not to look at or touch anything that would morally pull us down.

If these verses in Matthew 5:31-32 were the only ones in the Bible pertaining to marriage and divorce, then the subject would be even harder to deal with due to the translation involved. However, it's just one of several passages and it's believed that the case to which Jesus referred takes us back to the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 24:1-4). Jesus was explaining why a "bill of divorcement" was necessary when a wife was "put away" by her husband. Just as I pointed out the difference between the Old Testament Hebrew words for "put away" and "divorce," I must also call your attention to the difference between the New Testament Greek words for "put away" and "divorce." The Greek word for "put away" is APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o} which could mean several different things, such as, release, put away, send away, let go, set at liberty, let depart, or dismiss. The best translation of the word is DISMISS. It, like the Old Testament word for "put away," was used synonymously along with the word "divorce," because when a woman was divorced, she was "put away." However, the problem became worse when men "put away" their wives without a "bill of divorcement."

Many and perhaps most modern day Bible translators and commentators have used the word APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o} to mean "divorce." It does refer to the ACTION of PHYSICAL SEPARATION that occurs in a "divorce," but APOSTASION {ap-os-tas-ee-on} is the ACT of LEGAL SEPARATION which severs the bond of marriage between the couple. There are several Hebrew and Greek words for "put away," but every time SHALACH {shaw-lakh} is used in the Old Testament and APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o} is used in the New Testament, it's referring to marital SEPARATION and the dismissal of a wife.

The Greek word for "divorce" is APOSTASION {ap-os-tas-ee-on} which always referred to "divorce" or repudiation. With the understanding of these Greek words in mind, we can begin to uncover the problem with a long held typical belief about marriage, divorce, and remarriage that has been off center to the far right. In biblical days, men would "put away" their wives without a "bill of divorcement" which was not only cruel, but

adulterous, because to remarry without "divorce" papers made all parties involved in remarriage, guilty of "adultery." APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o} is not the same as APOSTASION {ap-os-tas-ee-on} and even though the two words are used in conjunction with one another, the distinction between them is critical. It's possible for people to SEPARATE without getting a DIVORCE, but they can't DIVORCE without SEPARATING. If you will keep this concept in mind, it can become the key to unlocking the truth that Jesus was teaching about divorce. A "bill of divorcement" is recognized as a termination of the marriage contract where both parties are free to choose new mates and remarry. Divorce was never God's IDEAL, but it was allowed due to sin within the human heart.

For a man to "put away" his wife without giving her a "bill of divorcement," meant that he could kick her out of the house and if she remarried then she would be committing "adultery" because technically she would still be married to the man who dismissed her. If she had committed "fornication," referring to some sexual sin, then she could have been dealt with under the "law" which called for death by stoning because she would have already been guilty of "adultery." This Greek word for "fornication" is PORNEIA {por-ni-ah} which refers to any illicit sexual intercourse. It could include "adultery" when used of a married person, but most often refers to sexual sin outside of marriage. The word "fornication" which Jesus used in this verse, speaks of any and all types of illicit sexual activity, homosexual or heterosexual, or any other kind of sexual perversion that occurs inside or outside the bonds of marriage. Therefore the exception ("saving for") clause pertaining to "fornication" is saying that if a man dismisses his wife for some other reason, he is required to give her a "writing (bill) of divorcement" so she will be free to remarry (Matt. 5:32, 19:9).

Without a "writing of divorcement" she would be committing "adultery" if she remarried a second husband because technically she would still be married to her first husband. The Greek word for "adultery" is MOICHAO {moy-khah-o} and always means to have unlawful intercourse with another's spouse. "Adultery" is sexual sin with someone other than the one with whom one ought to be having sexual relations. To "put away" a "wife" who had

committed "fornication" (sexual sin) meant that she was already guilty of "adultery." To "put away" a "wife" for some other reason caused her and her next husband to "commit adultery" because the first "marriage" was never severed by a "writing of divorcement" or the "marriage" bond broken by "fornication." If "fornication" wasn't involved, the man who "put away" his "wife" without a "writing of divorcement" also became guilty of "adultery" if he remarried (Matt. 19:9). "Fornication" certainly appears to be a sound biblical basis for throwing a spouse out of the house. However, we must remember that although it is grounds for divorce, it's not required if the couple desires to reconcile which is seen from the Old Testament story of Hosea and Gomer.

To complicate this passage is a mistranslation from the 1611 Edition of the King James Version which is probably the reason why we ever began reading "whosoever divorces his wife" into what Jesus actually said. If we believe that the Bible is a God breathed Book, then let's read it the way God wrote it and stop reading into it what people say that it says. Verse 32 of our text is translated to read "divorced," but the Greek word is APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o} meaning "put away" or "dismissed." Also, the New International Version as well as other translations, mistranslates this same word on numerous occasions to read "divorce." I personally believe that if God had meant for scripture to say "divorce" then He would have used the word APOSTASION {ap-os-tas-ee-on} that exclusively meant "divorce."

Where we have gotten ourselves into trouble is by making the term "put away" (which means to dismiss) to mean "divorce." The word APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o} could refer to "divorce" because when "divorce" occurred, a man would "put away" (dismiss or separate from) his "wife." However, in the culture of old, many men "put away" their wives without giving them a "bill of divorcement" and this is what Jesus was regulating. We must remember in studying this passage that the Christian faith took root in a pagan atmosphere where sexual immorality was commonplace and women were looked upon as inferior sex objects.

Women of our day don't seem to fully understand nor appreciate how Jesus set them on a plain higher than they had ever

been before His coming into the world. In biblical days women were looked upon as objects of ownership and when they were "put away," most would have nowhere else to go while at the same time not released from their marriage bond thus leaving them in a most precarious predicament. Today, divorce is far too commonplace and one of the biggest reasons for it is that the commitment level between husband and wife is almost zero. This commitment level is also reflected in the spiritual commitment level of people to Christ in the modern day church.

One of the biggest problems in understanding the teachings on divorce in the church does not result from the inerrant, infallible Word of God, but from the translators of the Holy Scriptures. The original manuscripts are nowhere in existence and all the copies of God's Word that we have today are translations. Dr. Woodrow Kroll has said that the best translation of scripture is the ONE THAT YOU READ because without reading God's Word, it will do you no good. In all likelihood, none of the translators set out to deliberately water down the Word of God; however, some translations are better than others. Even though the King James was translated from the TEXTUS RECEPTUS, which is believed by many conservatives to be the best manuscript in existence and nearest to the originals, the translators confused the subject by translating APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o} to mean "divorce" rather than "dismiss."

Another example of a mistranslated word is found in the Book of Acts (Acts 12:4) where it should have been translated "passover" from the Greek word PASCHA {pas-khah} instead of Easter. Easter was a pagan festival of Astarte (same as Ishtar) who was looked upon by her heathen worshippers as their main female deity and recognized as the "queen of heaven" (Jer. 7:18). She was considered by heathens to be a goddess of spring and fertility or in other words, she was their sex goddess. Even though the Jewish "passover" and the heathen observance of Easter came about the same time of the year in the spring, it is an incorrect translation from the Greek, although, it doesn't alter the truth being taught in the Book of Acts. However, this is a good illustration of how the church has fallen victim of pagan culture and human tradition. When we talk about the New Testament Church celebrating

Easter, most of us don't even know what we're talking about. It's not Easter that we're celebrating, but the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ which took place at the time of the Jewish "Passover" after He became the Supreme Pascal Lamb (I Cor. 5:7). It just so happens that the New International Version as well as other modern versions translate this passage correctly to read "Passover." The truth of God's Word is perfect and without error. However, some translations are better than others and for that reason we must be good students of Holy Scripture and depend upon the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to our hearts.

Also, we need to keep in mind when we consider the translation process of Scripture, that all italicized words which appear in our copy of the KJV Bible are not found in the Greek Text. In most cases, the italicized words were inserted to help us better understand the text that was being translated from one language to another. However, in the case of FIRST CORINTHIANS, it has only added confusion to the subject of "tongues" simply because the word "unknown" (I Cor. 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27) is not found in the Greek manuscripts. There is no such thing as an "unknown tongue," but "tongues" are languages and the apostolic gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to preach the Gospel in a language that had not been learned or studied.

Keep in mind, that God gave His original "WORD" in the Hebrew and Greek languages. The Septuagint was the first Greek translation of the Hebrew Text. We not only believe that the original manuscripts were inspired by the Holy Spirit, but that God has preserved His "Truth" down through the years as it has been translated into various languages. However, in order for His "Truth" to be found, it must be studied (II Tim. 2:15) and compared to the best manuscripts in existence. This is just one of the reasons why God gives pastors to churches, so that God's Word might be studied by the pastor-teacher and then taught to the assembly. Such is the case with this passage in our text, as we study the words from which the King James was translated. Literally, from the Greek, Matt. 5:31-32 says, "It was also said, Whoever puts away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, Whoever puts away his wife, apart from a matter of

fornication, makes her commit adultery. And whoever shall marry the one put away commits adultery."

Just as the yearly observance of EASTER has been so deeply ingrained in the Christian Church, so has it been with what we have read into this passage of Scripture. Typically (and I'm not referring to biblical typology but to that which is believed by many pastors), it has been taught that if a man divorces his wife, except she be guilty of "fornication," and remarries, then he becomes an adulterer and if she remarries she becomes an adulteress. Well, if that is what we really believe in the church, then why is it that we accept these, whom we call ADULTERERS AND ADULTERESSES, into the fellowship of our congregations? I need not have to tell you that there are some awful inconsistencies in what a church says and does along these lines.

Are people who are divorced and remarried to another living in "adultery?" It appears from Scripture that a "bill of divorcement" severed the marriage bond LEGALLY, just as death severs it PHYSICALLY (Rom. 7:1-4). This passage in Romans is NOT a discourse on marriage and divorce, but is illustrating a truth about the MOSAIC LAW. In explaining the relationship of a believer to the Old Testament "law," Paul used the permanence of the marriage union to demonstrate his point. But, in so doing we are reminded that the marriage contract is a binding agreement in the sight of God and that it cannot be undone without inviting His displeasure. These verses can only be understood as it relates to the MOSAIC LAW and cannot be singled out as a study on the subject of marriage and divorce.

In every passage of Scripture dealing with "divorce" (Matt. 5:32, 19:9, Mk. 10:10, Lk. 16:17-18), Jesus did not forbid divorce, APOSTASION {ap-os-tas-ee-on}, but APOLUO {ap-ol-oo-o}, "putting away" without a bill of divorcement. Written "divorce" was a legislation under the Jewish "law" that God required in order to regulate sexual intimacy whenever a man "put away" his wife. Marriage was the first basic human right given to man and to throw a woman out of the house with no place to go was not only inhuman but immoral.

Divorce never has been God's IDEAL, but He did allow it as a provision for an intolerable situation. Unfortunately, it is most

often abused and too easily obtained in today's world. The majority of couples run to the divorce courts instead of giving the church first opportunity to discipline a sinning member or help salvage the marriage through wise counsel and prayer (Matt. 18:15-20). The loneliness, rejection, hurt, and loss felt in divorce is said to be worse than experiencing the death of a loved one. Rather than running to the divorce court, couples need to go to the church house and get help. People with marriage problems don't need to talk about those problems with their friends in the work place and in most cases it probably shouldn't even be discussed with mama and daddy because they will most of the time not be as objective.

One's marriage difficulty should not be widely broadcasted and made public knowledge. Running down your mate before others will never help improve your marriage relationship. To salvage a troubled marriage, biblical advice should be sought from Christians who know how to give it. There is no wonder people have marriage problems and sinful problems of all types when Jesus Christ is left out of the picture in their homes and individual lives.

Sin always causes divorce and it's never pleasing to God, but never should we look down on divorcees because we "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23) and fallen short in keeping God's "law." Neither should we look down on people who are divorced and remarried because as we'll see later in this series, "all men cannot receive this saying" (Matt. 19:11) and for them "it is better to marry than to burn" (I Cor. 7:9) with passion. I'm afraid churches are too quick to condemn divorced couples instead of trying to restore them in loving forgiveness to a close walk with God. This kind of religious condemnation is probably the reason statistics indicate why most single adults leave the church after a divorce.

If there is ever a time when the church of Jesus Christ needs to reach out in love to hurting people, it is when they experience the trauma of divorce. It's easy for us in the church to preach against divorce, but it's much more difficult to help divorcees overcome their pain. Today's high divorce rate is not the problem in our society, but only an indicator of how many marriages that are in trouble and the reason they're in trouble is because they have left

Jesus Christ out of the picture. Marriage failure comes before divorce and for that reason, we as believers must do everything possible to build our homes on the solid "foundation" (I Cor. 3:11) of "Christ." This includes making the church assembly, family time, Bible study, and prayer a habitual daily and weekly routine in our households.

God's IDEAL was for man not to sin in the beginning, but he did and we "all" (Rom. 3:23) are sinners today as a result. We've "all" failed to live up to God's perfect standard of holiness and we shouldn't become self-righteous towards those who have "sinned" in ways different from ourselves (Prov. 6:16-19). God isn't pleased with adultery, but neither is He pleased with our pride, a wife abuser, a drunkard, a child molester, a man who is angry with his brother without a cause, a foul mouth swearer, a thief, a person filled with hate, a gossipmonger, and thousands of other sins that dominate the human race. The greatest need in the heart of any man is to "repent" (Lk. 13:3) of "sin" (Rom. 3:9), regardless of what "sin" it is, and turn to Christ in confession trusting by faith that He alone can save us from its penalty. The only way to be cleansed from any "sin" is by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4

Jesus Dealt With The Subject Of Putting Away

"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? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 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. 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. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to who it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

(Matt. 19:3-12 KJV)

The religious problem of dealing with divorce has been around since before the time of Christ. During Jesus' day, Jews were divorcing for all sorts of reasons. It was a difficult problem to deal with then, just as it is today. It has always been a most controversial issue with the church and especially among those of us who consider ourselves conservative Bible believing Christians. Actually, we discover from the study of history that the typical belief of adultery being the only exception to remarriage, has been handed down to us from the SHAMMALITES. During

the time of Christ, there were two schools of religious thought on the matter of divorce. The SHAMMALITES believed that the only grounds for divorce was adultery while the HILLELITES believed that a man could divorce his wife for the most trivial reason.

The "Pharisees" in our text who approached Jesus reflected the more lenient attitude and the only reason they asked Jesus this question about DIVORCE was to entrap Him ("tempting him"). In other words, they wanted Him to say something that was contradictory to the Old Testament law. So, they asked him, "is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Their question was dealing with the "cause" of a man putting "away his wife."

Christ answered their question by taking them back to the "beginning" and restating God's IDEAL for the marriage relationship the way He initiated it in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2) before sin entered the human race. Marriage is more than legalized mating, but it is a companionship of a man and woman committed to one another in a "one flesh" relationship. Unless a man is willing to "leave" his parents and "cleave" to his wife, there will be marital problems. Newlyweds must learn to put their spouse in proper priority, above things, places, and people of lesser importance.

A big problem today is that people want to be married, but live as though they were SINGLE assuming little, if any, responsibility of the marriage state. Even when children come along in a marriage, they must never be substituted for the COMPANIONSHIP of one's spouse. God didn't put parent and child in the Garden, but husband and wife. If couples don't cultivate COMPANIONSHIP in their marriage, it will be headed toward misery or divorce. COMPANIONSHIP is one of the main reasons God ordained marriage (Gen. 2:18). However, COMPANIONSHIP cannot be experienced apart from spending time together. One wife said that her husband spent so little time with her, that if she died, he wouldn't be able to identify the body. Another wife said that when she and her husband got married, their agreement was to go out for dinner once a week, which they do, he on Mondays and she on Fridays. Spending time together solidifies God's design for marriage and gives stability for the children

within the home. So many children feel insecure and have behavior problems because of a strained home life and tension between the parents. Husbands and wives need to enjoy one another rather than merely enduring one another (Col. 3:12-21).

As we look at what the Bible says about marriage, we must remember that these regulations were given to God's people. An unregenerate world could care less about the laws of God or obeying His commandments. Lost sinners are going to Hell regardless of how few times they have been married or even if they've never been divorced. As far as eternity is concerned, the issue is not a matter of how many times a sinner has been married because the greatest need is not to straighten out one's marriage, but to get "saved" (Rom. 10:9,13) and in so doing discover the sacredness of HOLY MATRIMONY.

It's absurd for the church to hold a man's past against him after getting "saved" when God Himself doesn't (Ps. 103:12). God forgives the sins that cause divorce, just as He can forgive any other sin. It is not the UNPARDONABLE SIN and it's time that we in the church quit treating it like it is. Divorcees shouldn't be stigmatized any more than the rest of us sinners who get "saved" and try to live for the Lord. Marriage is one of the most sacred INSTITUTIONS on the face of the earth, but it is not a sacrament of saving quality nor is it equivalent to salvation.

All we have to do is look at the example Jesus set for us in dealing with people guilty of some moral indiscretion. In the Old Testament, God didn't allow Abraham's affair with "Hagar" to prevent His promise from being fulfilled through "Sarah" (Gen. 16). Even though "David" was a bigamist and an adulterer, God heard his prayer of confession (Ps. 32, 51). In the New Testament, Jesus offered the woman with "five husbands" living "water" and sent her out as a witness (Jh. 4:1-30). On another occasion, Jesus said to an adulterous woman, "neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (Jh. 8:1-11).

If Jesus is willing to forgive people who repent of their sin, even sins of immorality, then so should we. There is no question as to what God thinks of divorce. But, the question that we must face and deal with in the church is, HOW TO TREAT THOSE WHO HAVE DIVORCED AND PERHAPS HAVE EVEN

REMARRIED? When we encounter people who have fallen from God's IDEAL in a marriage relationship, we must learn to deal with them the way Christ did. In preaching the whole council of God, we must uphold God's IDEAL standard of ONE MAN AND ONE WIFE FOR LIFE. However, we must also preach that God's "GRACE" is great enough to forgive any "sin" (Rom. 5:20). God's people must strive to live "holy" (Eph. 1:4) and "separate" (II Cor. 6:17) from the world and be properly balanced as we deal with others who "have sinned" (Rom. 3:23).

Christians should do their utmost to stay out of the divorce courts. All marriages have problems, but the degree of one's commitment to God's principles will manifest itself in how you deal with those problems. Divorce represents one of the greatest failures in human life and for that reason it carries some of the greatest grief imaginable. There should never be a cause or reason for divorce among couples where both are believers in Jesus Christ. When conflicts arise in the Christian home, we must forgive one another as Christ has "forgiven" us (Eph. 4:32). Even if a spouse becomes unfaithful, God certainly allows a believer to divorce, but even then it's not required as we see illustrated from the story of "Hosea" who took his adulterous wife back (Hosea 1-3). It's always best for people to reconcile their differences and remain together, than to divorce and remarry thus multiplying their problems.

Some churches have gone so far as to suggest that divorced people should not have their wedding in a church building. However, nothing should ever be done to indicate that God's forgiveness is not complete in Christ. If a marriage cannot bring glory to God, then we need to question as to why a church facility should be used regardless of it being a first marriage or not. Besides, wedding ceremonies can be held in any location and be honoring to God.

I remember back during my childhood years when a woman would not wear a white dress during the marriage ceremony if it was not her first marriage. A white dress was a symbol of being a virgin. My, how things have changed down through the years. Most men and women getting married today for the first time are not virgins and the majority did not save themselves for their

wedding day. For that, they have missed out on the beauty of waiting to have a real honeymoon. Many women today cannot wear a WHITE dress down the aisle to symbolize their purity as a virgin, but hopefully they can wear one to symbolize the cleansing power of Jesus' blood that saves from sin and pardons one of moral failure when God's forgiveness is received. There is no such thing as a secondary virginity for either a male or female, but God specializes in forgiving those who come to Him in true repentance.

In our text, Christ teaches that DIVORCE is a provision due to man's sin and is in violation of God's original purpose for marriage. The "Pharisees" were completely wrong when they stated that "Moses" commanded "a writing of divorcement." God's Word never commanded divorce, it merely permitted it. The Greek Word for "suffered" is EPITREPO {ep-ee-trep-o} meaning to permit. Jesus went on to say that divorce was "permitted" under the Mosaic Law because of the "hardness of your hearts." One of the worst types of "hardness" is a harshness that one spouse might have for the other. Only Christ can cure this type of "hardness" and to prevent such from occurring in a marriage, both spouses need to spiritually feed on Christ. Divorce was never an option under God's original plan for marriage, simply because SIN wasn't in God's original plan and divorce is always the result of SIN. But, as an act of MERCY, God "permitted" divorce after sin began to play havoc with the human race.

Some go so far as to say that divorce doesn't dissolve a marriage in the sight of God, but if that be the case then why would He "permit" a "bill of divorcement" and a "putting asunder?" There is no doubt that divorce not only brings a marriage to an end legally, but also in the sight of God. Otherwise, a man could go in to his divorced wife anytime he wanted and have sexual relations with her even though she be remarried to another man and if he remarries, this type thinking would constitute polygamy. Bigamy (polygamy) is not usually seen as the committing of "fornication" or "adultery," but the having of more than one wife at a time.

Numerous instances of this is seen in the Old Testament. I'll only mention King David as one example who had several wives and many concubines. He even committed adultery with Bathsheba. God never approved of his actions, but God's grace

was greater than David's sin. In regards to polygamy, two men having the same wife creates another problem as to whom she was married to first and then the problem of "fornication" or "adultery" arises as we have seen from the previous chapter.

The teaching of Jesus on the subject of DIVORCE was intended to correct the interpretation of the Jews regarding "putting away" (Mal.2:16) their wives. The men were "putting away" their wives for all types of trivial reasons and Jesus emphasized the seriousness of the marriage covenant and that it wasn't easily to be ended. Once again, I remind you of the Greek words for "put away" (APOLUO) {ap-ol--oo-} and "divorce" (APOSTASION) {ap-os-tas-ee-on}. Instead of using the word for "divorce," Jesus used the word for "put away" meaning to dismiss.

It was common during the time of Christ, for men to "dismiss" their wives like a piece of property treating them like slaves. Christ spoke out against this and regulated the marriage relationship by requiring a legal document. If a man "dismissed" his wife, he was to give her a "bill of divorcement" setting her free to remarry. If she had been guilty of "fornication" (PORNEIA) {por-ni-ah}, then she would have already violated the "one flesh" nature of marriage and could be dealt with accordingly. PORNEIA {por-ni-ah} is a word that could include "adultery" on the part of a married person, but it was a word that usually referred to sexual immorality in general. It could include the sins of incest, homosexuality, bestiality, or any other sexual sin. Throughout Scripture, it's implied that any sexual sin of a married person violates the marriage relationship and for that reason the word "fornication" is used rather than "adultery."

By the time of Christ, it's believed that Roman law substituted divorce for stoning in cases of "adultery." This meant that in all likelihood, very few unfaithful spouses were being stoned according to the MOSAIC LAW. Since it was an accepted fact that "fornication" broke the "one flesh" union, the innocent victim could initiate a divorce, "put away" the guilty party, and be free to remarry. Even back when David committed "adultery" with Bathsheba, he wasn't put to death, but he did repent and discover God's forgiveness so that he not "die" (II Sam. 12:13). It's interesting to note that in speaking to David, Nathan told him that

the "Lord hath put away" his sin. This word "put away" is ABAR {aw-bar} meaning to take away, do away, or pass over.

The Greek word MOICHAO {moy-khyah-o} means "adultery" denoting sexual infidelity and referring to intercourse with someone else's spouse. If a man "put away his wife" without giving her a "bill of divorcement", then not only is "adultery" involved if they go off and remarry, engaging in sexual relations, but also the problem of bigamy. God did not institute divorce and He certainly did not favor polygamy or the owning of concubines; therefore, He regulated marriage to a "one flesh" union (Ex. 21:7-9, Deut. 21:10-14, Judg. 8:30-31).

A Jewish engagement during the time of Christ was considered a legally binding agreement to marry. This engagement could only be broken by DEATH or DIVORCE (Deut. 22:23-24). Such was the case with Mary and Joseph when he found her to be "with child" (Matt. 1:16-25), thinking at first that she had been unfaithful to him, until informed otherwise by an angel that she had conceived by the "Holy Spirit." Illicit sexual relations with someone else during engagement was considered nothing less than "adultery." A single person who was not engaged, but had illicit sexual relations, suffered a lesser penalty than the woman who was espoused (Deut. 22:28-29).

From Jewish custom in the Old Testament, we learn that marriage did not begin with the sexual union, but with the marriage agreement. In the sight of God, marriage is a "covenant" (Mal.2:14) made between the bride and groom committing themselves to each other for life. Only after the marriage ceremony did the Jewish couple sexually consummate their marriage and begin living together as husband and wife. In the case of Christ, the Bible clearly says in regards to Joseph and Mary, that he "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son," meaning that their marriage was not consummated until after the birth of Jesus.

When Jesus spoke of "adultery," He was talking about unlawful intercourse with someone who was married to another person. For centuries, people have confused the term "put away" with "divorce" and have interpreted the passage in various ways. Some believe that it says "divorce" is not permitted except in cases of "adultery." Some believe that a divorcee cannot remarry and if he

or she does, then he or she lives in "adultery." Some believe that a divorcee cannot ever be ordained as a "bishop" or "deacon" regardless of when the divorce occurred or the circumstances involved.

To begin with, most of these ideas are contrary to the MOSAIC LAW and people have confused the Greek word for "divorce" with the word for "put away." In our text, Jesus dealt with the problem of "putting away" and not "divorce." Divorced people should not be afraid of the church, but should see it as a spiritual hospital for their hurting souls. It's never the job of the church to make people feel comfortable in their sin, but to preach the Word with such boldness that the Spirit of God will bring conviction and conversion to the lost. However, our preaching must be done in love, so that instead of shooting our own wounded, or stomping the downcast further into the ground, we can offer the solution to their problems from the Word of God.

After reminding the people that marriage was divinely ordained of God and of the importance of the marriage contract, the "disciples" asked Jesus if it was even "good to marry." He uses the term "eunuchs" in referring to those with the "gift" (I Cor. 7:7) of SINGLENES. It's best for those with such a "gift" not to "marry," but to forbid marriage to those who have not this "gift" is wrong because "all men cannot receive this saying." The Greek word for "eunuch" is EUNOUCHOS {yoo-noo-khos} and refers to a man who is either incapable of bearing children or one who voluntarily abstains from marriage and prefers the single life.

The SINGLE (celibate) life can either refer to life before marriage or life after marriage in the event of divorce or the death of a spouse. Following divorce it's best to remain single unless one is not gifted with CELIBACY (meaning that one is not content being alone). Some people should never get married simply because they prefer a SINGLE lifestyle. For a person, who prefers CELIBACY to get married, only causes trouble and makes marriage miserable for everyone involved. As we'll learn from the 7th chapter of First Corinthians, SINGLENES is a God given "gift." However, marriage is also a "gift" with which the majority of people have been endowed.

Chapter 5

Paul Wrote About Celibacy, Marriage, And Remarriage

"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer: and come together again that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is

any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for our own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not, let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth

well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better. 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. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

(I Cor. 7:1-40 KJV)

Today, there are many differing views held with regard to marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Many couples are living together without the benefit of marriage vows. Even many of the vows that are exchanged in a church ceremony are often regarded very lightly (Ecc. 5:4-5). Just as God made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-4, 13:14-17, 15:7-18, 17:2-27, 26:1-4, 28:10-15) and renewed it on several occasions confirming it with Isaac and Jacob, it would be good for husbands and wives to be reminded of their marriage covenant and renew their vows occasionally. Like it or not, the divorce issue has swept into our churches and we're going to have to deal with it. There are many broken homes and hurting hearts that God has led into the church and He has given us, as believers, the responsibility of helping them.

The Corinthian Church had some serious problems just like we do in our churches today. Corinth was a wicked, perverted city where illicit sex was a way of life and even a part of their pagan religion. The previous chapter actually lays the foundation for chapter seven which deals with the subject of CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (I Cor. 6:19-20). The "body" of every Christian belongs to Christ and not to the individual. Therefore, God has a right to be honored in every aspect of life including marriage.

There are FOUR DISTINCT GROUPS referred to in our text. The FIRST GROUP speaks of those who are perhaps unmarried, but realize that they do not have the "gift" of singleness and are taught responsibilities of the marriage state (v.1-6). The SECOND GROUP speaks of those who have the "gift" of singleness (v.7-9). The THIRD GROUP speaks to "husbands" and "wives" who are believers in Christ (v.10-11). The FOURTH GROUP speaks to believers who are "married" to one "that believeth not" (v.12-16).

We begin our study of this text by looking at the instructions to the unmarried who don't possess the "gift" of singleness (v.1-6). The subject of SEX should only be considered in the framework of marriage, but due to the invasion of sin in the human heart, such is not always the case. In the opening verses of this chapter, God lays down one of the reasons for marriage and that is for people to fulfill their sexual urges and "avoid fornication." At the time Paul wrote the Corinthian letter, the Romans generally had several wives to do the housework and had sex with the temple prostitutes in the name of religion. In writing to the Corinthian Christians, Paul lifts marriage to the heights intended by God. According to the Gospel of Christ, woman was not to be man's slave but his companion ("help meet").

"Every man" was to have his "own wife" (not wives) and "every woman" was to have her own "husband" (not husbands). Marriage is a remedy against "fornication" and this passage makes it clear that a person should have sex with only his or her spouse. Extramarital relationships are totally ruled out in God's WORD, including polygamy, homosexuality, lesbianism, or any other form of sexual sin. Sexual relationship is only to be practiced within the bonds of marriage and to avoid "fornication," a "man" should have his "own wife." "It is good for a man" NOT to get married and have sex ("touch a woman") if he is gifted with celibacy, but if one has difficulty restraining his sexual desires, then it's best to seek marriage or remarriage.

Sex outside of marriage is sin, but it's also a sin to sexually reject one's spouse. The real basis for marriage is LOVE and marital sex is simply an expression of true LOVE. Husbands and wives need to celebrate their sexual union unless they mutually agree to refrain for some good reason so that "Satan" will not "tempt" them to look elsewhere to have their sexual appetites met. Apparently, there were some in the Church at Corinth who were advocating that married couples abstain from physical contact. In other words, they were teaching the practice of CELIBACY while being married and Paul pointed out that while CELIBACY is "good" for some it is NOT to be practiced by married couples. Married couples should freely give of themselves to one another unless it be for brief periods with mutual consent. Naturally, such

things as illness, would be included in this "consent" as well as other matters of similar concern.

In contrast to the state of marriage is the state of SINGLENES which is considered a special "gift" from God (v.7-9). Paul declares that "every man hath his proper gift of God" meaning that not all of us are going to be made just alike even when it comes to our passions. Although most people are not gifted with SINGLENES, there are some whom God has endowed with this special "gift." Being a "eunuch" (Matt. 19:12) meant that one would live a celibate life of SINGLENES.

If a man doesn't have the "gift" of SINGLENES, then it's best for him to "marry" and "avoid fornication" than "to burn" with sexual desires that cannot be fulfilled. The extreme Jewish view was that it was a sin for a man to reach 20 years of age and not be married which is refuted in this passage of Scripture. God's WORD teaches that both the marriage state and the single (celibate) state is a "gift of God." The "gift" of celibacy is not only an exception to the rule given in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:18), but it shows that those who are not sexually gifted with celibacy are permitted to "marry".

Each person must determine his or her own "gift" and respond either by pursuing a SINGLE or MARRIED life. Singles are not weird people, but individuals who have been gifted accordingly by God. Paul himself was gifted with singleness; however, it's believed that he was a widower because he had been a member of the Sanhedrin and it was probably required that a member be a married man. Some have even suggested that perhaps Paul's wife had divorced him due to his conversion to Christianity, but there is NO grounds to believe such to be the case. In referring to singles, it includes people who have never been married, left single due to divorce, or left alone due to the death of a spouse. Just because a person becomes a Christian, experiences a divorce, or is left a widow or widower doesn't change the fact they have sexual needs that can only be properly met in God's design of marriage. Unless such an individual is given the "gift" of CELIBACY, they need to consider MARRIAGE.

When Paul addresses the subject of husbands and wives who are both believers, he merely repeats the command of Christ

already presented in the Gospel of Matthew (19:10-11). An IDEAL Christian marriage is a marriage that will not experience abandonment, separation, or divorce. It's so very sad that many professing believers don't have a true Christian marriage because they haven't given Christ His rightful place in their home and for that reason divorce is becoming more commonplace even in the church. The Jewish practice of divorce had become very liberal in favor of the "husband" during the time of Paul. Many of the marriages in that day were contracted by parents which resulted in little or no affection between the spouses.

Divorce never has been the answer to marriage problems, but in fact only increases problems. God's IDEAL for the marriage relationship is ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN for life until separated by death. The "Lord" doesn't want "the wife" to "depart from her husband" and neither does He want "the husband" to "put away his wife." Separation is one thing and divorce is another. The Greek word for "depart" is CHORIZO {kho-rid-zo} meaning to separate. The Greek word in this passage for "put away" is APHIEMI {af-ee-ay-mee} meaning to abandon, leave destitute, or wrongfully desert. Separation may occur in hopes of reconciling differences which can sometimes be a good thing when bad situations (abuse, drunkenness, etc.) necessitates it. Separation alone does not terminate the marriage, but divorce does and even though it is NOT God's IDEAL, it is permissible due to the "hardness of....hearts" (Matt. 19:8) caused by sin.

If the Christian "wife" feels that her situation is unbearable and she "departs" (separates) from her "husband" then she is to "remain unmarried or be reconciled" to him. The purpose of remaining "unmarried" is to keep the door of reconciliation open in hopes of getting back together again. If remarriage occurs by either spouse, then naturally reconciliation would be impossible. In other words, if marital separation occurs in a Christian marriage, try to work out the differences and "be reconciled" to one another instead of going after a quick divorce. If a person has a spouse who claims to be saved, but lives like an unregenerate and doesn't respond to biblical authority, then, he or she should be treated and dealt with as a non-believer regardless of his or her profession (I Cor. 5:11 , II Pet. 2:19-22). Failure to "be reconciled"

in a troubled marriage should never be the fault of a Christian. Divorce should never take place between two people who are BOTH truly "born again" (Jh. 3:3) believers in Jesus Christ. No saved "husband" should ever desert his "wife" and family, because to do such a thing is being worse than an "infidel" (I Tim. 5:8). It's so very sad today to see churches filled with people who have done nothing more than make a mere profession of faith, but bear no testimony of possessing genuine faith. People know how to use religious lingo, but do not know how to walk the talk.

Last of all, a word is given to those who find themselves in a mixed marriage where one partner is a believer and the other is not (v.12-16). While living upon earth, Christ didn't directly address the subject of mixed marriages (or at least there is no recorded passage dealing with it up to this point) and that's why Paul said "speak I, not the Lord." In these verses, Paul is dealing with a question not mentioned thus far in the scriptural account on the subject of marriage. Writing under divine inspiration, he adds to the biblical teaching on divorce already laid down by Christ during His earthly ministry.

"Speak I, not the Lord," doesn't mean this passage wasn't inspired by the Holy Spirit. Everything Paul wrote in the Bible is inspired, whether Jesus said it first while living upon earth in the flesh or the Holy Spirit inspired it through the written WORD (II Tim. 3:16). The teaching of Christ as recorded in Matt. 19 was very general and dealt only with some basic principles of marriage and "putting away." There were certain principles and areas of life that Jesus specifically addressed verbally while on earth and there are others of which we have no written record up to this time. Concerning those issues of which Jesus spoke, Paul said that he had no new "commandment" (v.6, 25). However, "by permission" of God, Paul was going to expand on those teachings previously recorded.

To begin with, Christians should never marry non-believers (Amos 3:3, II Cor. 6:14). The results of a believer marrying an unbeliever can be disastrous. For a Christian to deliberately enter into such a partnership is contrary to God's will. Many young couples begin their married life in church, but gradually drift away, especially when a baby comes along, they find it easier to

come up with excuses. It's hard for a spouse to come to church alone leaving their other half at home and even harder raising children in such an environment. For a Christian to marry a non-believer is just as wrong as it is for a couple to allow sin to destroy their marriage ending it in divorce. Our text, no doubt, is addressing the issue of a person who gets saved while married to one "that believeth not." Frequently, a "husband" or "wife" gets saved while the marriage partner does not. In such a case, a believer's dedication and commitment to the Lord must set the right example for the lost spouse. That means being willing to go THE SECOND MILE in hopes of seeing the lost loved one saved. A Christian is "not" to "leave" an unsaved spouse who is willing to remain in the marriage.

The Christian spouse is under a divine obligation to do whatever it takes within biblical boundaries to save and preserve their marriage. God's desire in a mixed marriage is for it to be kept intact because marriage is a sacred institution. There is no marriage that is problem free, but marriages where neither spouse is saved or where only one is a Christian is especially susceptible to serious trouble due to the conflict of wills and convictions. If one be married to an unsaved spouse and there are "children" involved, then for their sakes, the marriage should be worth saving if at all possible.

The goal of a believing spouse should be to lead their mate to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 3:1-7). By keeping the marriage together, the believer can be a continuing spiritual influence in the home and keep the family in a sphere of potential blessing from the Lord. The unbelieving partner is "sanctified" (set apart) by the believer just as the "children." It's possible that through the testimony of the believer, the spouse and children could be saved as well as the marriage salvaged. If God blesses a believer's life, some of that blessing is bound to spill over into their home. However, in the event an unbelieving spouse "depart," a believer "is not under bondage in such cases" meaning that the believer is free to remarry. This word "depart" is the same Greek word that we just saw in verse 11 meaning FORSAKE or ABANDON. But, in this case if the "unbelieving depart" then the

believer is to strive for a life of "peace" and is not bound to the one who does the leaving providing the separation is final.

Feuding couples who are "unequally yoked" should either reconcile or divorce because God doesn't want people living in an uproar where there is routine fussing, fighting, and turmoil. If it's not possible for a believer to live in "peace" with a non-believing spouse (even a spouse that professes to be saved, but bears no evidence of possessing salvation), divorce is permitted because a believer is not in "bondage" in cases of desertion. In other words, the non-believer and not the believer should be the one to initiate or cause the divorce and in such a case the believer should consent to it and be released from "bondage," meaning to be released from the obligation of marriage. When a believer has made every effort to make the marriage work, but the non-believer does not want it to, the Bible says the Christian is "not under bondage in such cases".

In the above paragraph, I've tried to make it clear, that not everyone who claims to be a Christian is a child of God. Some people are so full of religion and churchanity that they make a claim of salvation, but bear no fruit of the Spirit nor evidence of having a new nature. I believe that such people should be dealt with as non-believers. God does not want people living in turmoil, but at peace. If a spouse makes the other's a living hell on earth, then the believer should seek after a life of peace. There is more than one way for spouses to desert one another. Far too many couples live under the same roof, but live separate lives spiritually, physically, emotionally, materially, and financially.

After addressing these **FOUR DISTINCT GROUPS**, Paul summarizes his teachings on marriage in the closing verses of this chapter (v.17-40). Although a believing spouse is not enslaved to an unbelieving partner, there should be no reckless usage of "liberty." Conversion to Christ is an **INWARD** transformation (Rom. 12:2) that should produce an **OUTWARD** change in conduct. However, just because a person gets saved, doesn't make him any less of a human being. Salvation doesn't require one to be "circumcised" or "uncircumcised" and Paul simply used the rite of "circumcision" to illustrate a believer's "liberty" in Christ if they found themselves in a mixed marriage.

In a believer's life, ritual is not as important as spiritual obedience and "the keeping of the commandments of God" (I Sam. 15:22). It's not required for a Christian to necessarily change spouses or jobs, but to "abide in the same calling (vocation)," even if it was that of a lowly "servant." In Corinth there were probably a lot of slaves and most of them were "servants" for life. Some, no doubt, had been converted to Christ and Paul used their situation to remind us that "likewise" all believers are "Christ's servants" for life. On the cross, He "bought" us "with a price" and set us "free" from the penalty of sin. In so doing, we are obligated to "glorify God" by living a holy committed life (Rom. 12:1, I Cor. 6:19-20). Being "free" in Christ doesn't mean that we are at "liberty" to sin and get by with it. If that be one's attitude, then they had best examine their salvation experience.

Pertaining to VIRGINITY or CELIBACY, Paul had nothing new to "say," but he does tell us that due to the "present distress" that was upon the believers, that it was "good" for them to consider remaining SINGLE (v. 25-31). Since persecution was increasing against the church at the time Paul wrote this letter, he warned of how difficult it would be on one's family if someone therein had to suffer for the sake of Christ. When he said, "the time is short," means that they were looking for the imminent return of the Lord. From the context of this passage, Paul states some basic principles about marriage and remarriage by addressing three specific groups of people (v.27-28a).

First, he speaks to those who are "married" (where both are saved or a mixed marriage with one spouse saved and the other is not) by saying, "Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed," telling them not to be "loosed" which is the Greek word LUO {loo-o}, meaning to breakup or dissolve their marriage. Secondly, he speaks to those who are either widows, widowers, or divorcees telling them that if they are "loosed from a wife," it's best to "seek not a wife" because in so doing, problems will only be compounded. Notice, the same word "loosed" that is used in reference to the break-up a marriage is used here, causing us to believe he is speaking to those who remarry due to either the death of a spouse or divorce. Then, he expounds, "But and if" a "loosed" person chooses to "marry" (remarry) "thou hast not sinned." A

"loosed" person is one who has been previously married. The word widowed is not used here nor are the words "put away" or divorced. Within this context, the word "loosed" is used in referring to those who are married, admonishing them to "seek not to be loosed" from the commitment of their relationship. Therefore, in all likelihood, this passage is having something to say to divorcees as well as to widows and widowers. Besides, scripture actually encourages the "younger widows" to "marry" (I Tim. 5:11-14). Thirdly, he speaks to those who have never married by saying, "if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned" because marriage is God's design for the majority.

Married people "shall have trouble in the flesh" more so than unmarried people (v.28b). The Greek word for "trouble" is THLIPSIS {thlip-sis} which means pressure or stress. Dealing with different personalities isn't easy, not even within one's own immediate family. The more people who are involved in a family unit, the more "trouble" (stress) we'll have to encounter simply because their "trouble" becomes our "trouble" due to our involvement in their lives and our love, care, and concern for them.

Paul continues stating that "it is good for a man" (v.26) to remain SINGLE as far as the cares of this "world" are concerned (v.32-35). Because of the responsibilities that go along with marriage, married couples will have more earthly concerns than the unmarried. Reference to the "world" in this passage doesn't mean the "love" (I Jh. 2:15) of sinful things, but to the necessities of life (v.32-33). It's simply stating that SINGLE people don't have as many people to claim their attention as does a married person. A married person has the cares of the "world" to think about and is responsible for the welfare of a family. The concerns of your individual family members cannot help but become your own personal concerns. It's been said, "When children are small they step on your feet, but when they get grown, they step on your heart." How true it is, because regardless of age, parents never quit caring for their children. Needless to say, without a spouse and children, one will not have as many concerns and responsibilities. Whether married or unmarried, we must properly weigh our worldly concerns and never allow them to choke out a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Advice to parents is for them not to prohibit their "virgin" children from marriage when they become old enough (v.36-38). It's inferred in our text, that years ago, fathers would arrange the marriage of their daughters. "Flower of her age" spoke of when a daughter reached full sexual maturity at which time, fathers were not to refuse their daughters in marriage. The intent of this passage is not to DISCOURAGE marriage, but to honestly deal with our individual "gift" regarding it. If a daughter wanted to get married, then she should be allowed to do so. It's no sin to "marry" and neither is there a superior virtue in CELIBACY.

Each person must decide for himself his "gift" when it comes to either a SINGLE unmarried life or a married life (v.39-40). To be "bound," which is the Greek word DEU {deh-o}, to a husband or wife means to be OBLIGATED "by the law" of God until death. Herein, God's IDEAL for marriage is restated in that it is intended to be a lifelong commitment broken only by death. Many widows and widowers may be "happier" if they remain unmarried, but it's certainly permissible, and depending on the age and circumstances, even advisable for some to remarry as we've already discussed (I Tim. 5:3-16).

The very best marriage counsel that can be found anywhere, is in the Word of God. If we'll only learn to believe what God says, accept it by faith, and put it to work in our hearts, then we can discover what it means to have a HAPPY CHRISTIAN HOME. There are reasons why the marriage covenant is broken, but every one of those reasons is due to a heart hardened by sin. In no way whatsoever should Christians try to minimize the terribleness of divorce because it's a tragic event that results from sin dominating the heart of man. We, in the church, must never minimize "sin," but always maximize "Christ" and His saving, cleansing, grace (Rom. 5:20-21).

According to the plan of God, only DEATH should change the marriage agreement made between husband and wife and then the surviving partner should marry "only in the Lord." To marry outside of God's will is only asking for spiritual trouble and a life of conflicts. The ambition of every Christian should be to please the "Lord" and not himself (Matt. 6:33). If BOTH, the Christian husband AND the Christian wife, will allow Jesus Christ to be

Lord of their lives and Lord of their homes, then they'll never suffer the devastating effects of divorce.

May our prayer be the words of B.B. McKinney when he wrote: God, give us Christian homes! Homes where the Bible is loved and taught, Homes where the Master's will is sought, Homes crowed with beauty Thy love hath wrought; Homes where the Father is true and strong, Homes that are free from the blight of wrong, Homes that are joyous with love and song; Homes where the Mother, in queenly quest, Strives to show others Thy way is best, Homes where the Lord is an honored guest; Homes where the children are led to know Christ in His beauty Who loves them so, Homes where the altar fires burn and glow; God give us Christian Homes!

Chapter 6

Christian Marriage, An Analogy Of Christ And His Church

"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 saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 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 thin; 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."

(Eph. 5:21-33, KJV)

The BOOK of EPHESIANS is divided into TWO main sections. Chapters one through three deals with a believer's DOCTRINE. Chapters four through six deals with a believer's DUTY. This BOOK of only six chapters is beautifully balanced with three chapters each devoted to what a Christian is to believe and the type of life he is to live. Christian living is based on Christian learning and unless we learn how God wants us to live, we'll never know how to activate the principles of a Christian lifestyle. There are many Christians who come to church and pretend to learn DOCTRINE, but are reluctant to live a God controlled life by being "filled with the Spirit" (5:18)

Paul begins this last section of EPHESIANS by telling believers that we are to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (4:1). Chapter four deals with a believer's conduct in the world, portraying the church as a "new man" (4:24), but in chapter five, the church is pictured as a "wife" (5:22-25) and elsewhere in Scripture as a "bride" (Rev. 21:2). Chapter four is a good PRELUDE to the love life of a husband and wife that is taught in chapter five. Chapter five begins by saying "be ye therefore," letting us know that the subject of chaste conduct from the previous chapter is continued. In the very first verse, believers are commanded to be "followers" (imitators) of Christ in their daily living. The result of being a child of God should be a life that tries to imitate the likeness of Christ.

Reference to the "body" (5:23) of Christ in this epistle, is speaking of the church collectively and the spiritual truths relating to the whole program of God for His "bride." God used the relationship of husband and wife to teach us about His relationship to His church. Therefore, Christian marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship to His church and forms the basis for today's sacred marriage covenant.

This passage regarding the husband and wife relationship teaches that Christian marriage should be a mirror of the relation between "Christ" and His "church" (5:21-25). Although the analogy is beautiful, there are some differences in the two compared relationships. The greatest difference being that "Christ" is not only the "head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body." No "husband" can ever be his wife's "savior," but he is to symbolize "Christ" by the way he provides for her and protects her. The best interest of the "wife" should always be in the husband's heart.

God's principles of headship should regulate both the church and the Christian home. First of all, believers are told to submit themselves "one to another in the fear of God" (5:21). Pride and a desire for preeminence should never cause us to act like a boss over our brethren, not even our spouse. By "submitting" ourselves to God we should yield our wants to God's "will" (I Jh. 5:14) and avoid becoming selfish and demanding. SUBMISSION to "Christ" will cause us to work together in "unity" (4:3,13) as the

"body" (4:4) of "Christ." From chapter four we discover how this can be accomplished (4:2-3). "Submitting" ourselves "one to another" doesn't mean every individual in the church try's to run the local assembly. It means that decisions are made with the good of the assembly in mind and that we'll desire the will of God seeking direction through the "unity of the Spirit."

The biggest reason why so many churches and homes of today are not at "peace" is because Christ is not given his rightful place of authority. Both the church and the home should be happy places, but unfortunately, oftentimes, such is not the case. After 60 years of marriage, a man inscribed on the tombstone of his wife that "she always made home happy." Each one of us in the church must develop the attitude of SUBMISSION to Christ and allow that attitude to be evidenced by a life "filled with the Spirit" (5:18). Living a "Spirit filled" life is a life controlled by the Holy Spirit. The secret to Christian harmony is living in the power of the Holy Spirit. It's spiritual power from within and not worldly pressure from without that holds the church and the Christian home together.

The Greek word for "submit" is HUPOTASSO {hoop-ot-as-so} meaning to put in subjection, yield to one's admonition or advice, to obey, or to respond. It is a Greek military term referring to the arrangement of troops under the command of a leader. In a non-military usage, it referred to a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperation, assuming responsibility and carrying out a burden. From the example of Christ we learn that both husbands and wives have a duty of SUBMISSION. In the beginning, God designed the wife to "submit" to her husband by making her a "help meet" (Gen. 2:18), but on the cross we have a display of how Christ submitted Himself to the Father's will in crucifixion. Just as there should be "unity" between Christ and His church, there should be harmony between the husband and wife.

As far as a wife's SUBMISSION to her husband is concerned it is expected, providing that he is loving his wife like "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." When the husband loves his wife in such a fashion, the wife is required to respond to him in obedience (Col. 3:18). Keep in mind that Paul is talking about CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE and is speaking to believers. If a

husband and wife are not right with God, then LOVING and SUBMITTING will present a problem. Always remember, the reason a home falls apart is because either one or both of the marriage partners are not right with God.

Not only is the "husband" designed by our Creator as the aggressor and breadwinner, but as the "head" of the family. That doesn't give any man the right to act like a tyrant in the home, but it does place the weight of responsibility upon him to lead his household spiritually. For the sake of order and organization, God has appointed the "husband" to be in charge of setting the example for his family to follow (I Pet. 3:7). God isn't establishing one's superiority or inferiority in the home, but He is teaching us about authority and responsibility in the structure of the family unit. "Husbands" are the God ordained leaders who are to "love" their "wives even as Christ loved the church" and in so doing, "wives" are to "submit" to them "as unto the Lord." Subjection to this kind of authority doesn't make the "wife" inferior nor does it make her less valuable in the sight of God (Gal. 3:28). Ideally, God's order is for the "husband" to be the financial provider for the family while the "wife" keeps the home fires aglow (I Tim. 5:8, Titus 2:4-5).

Christian "love" to its highest degree is total SUBMISSION to "Christ" and only when couples "submit" to "Christ" will they find godly "love" in their "marriage." This kind of "love" is exemplified by "Christ" for His "church." It's a self-sacrificing "love" void of all selfishness and self-centeredness. Today, it's sad that in many homes "husbands" go their way and "wives" another with neither being very involved in each other's lives except in bed and sometimes, not even there. As a result, the two drift further and further apart creating an invisible gulf between them. "Husbands" and "wives" need to learn how to deny themselves of their selfish plans in order to spend time with one another and nurture their relationship. Someone has said that even though marriages are made in heaven, the maintenance work must be done here on earth. The "love" of "Christ" for His "church" and the subjection of the "church" to "Christ" should be the pattern for every Christian "marriage."

Even though "husbands" and "wives" are spiritual equals, the SUBMISSION of the woman makes good sense from the standpoint of order. Every nation needs a head of state, every company needs a leader, and every business needs a manager. In the home, the position of leadership has been assigned by God to the "husband." Even in a mixed marriage situation (I Cor. 7:12-16) where the "wife" is "married" to a non-believer, she is expected to "submit" unless her "husband" makes demands that are in violation to God's will as revealed in His WORD.

This unique analogy of Christ's relationship to His "church" takes on a three-fold aspect (PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE). In the PAST, "Christ loved the church" (5:25) so much that He died for her. The "church" is "bought" (I Cor. 6:20) and paid for by the precious "blood" (Eph. 1:7) of "Christ" (5:25b). The cross of Calvary fulfilled the type of the brazen altar when the "Lamb of God" (Jh. 1:29) purchased our "redemption" (Col. 1:14) and paid our "sin" debt in full. "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), it is all His doings. But just because it's free doesn't mean that it comes cheap. We who believe and receive are merely the recipients of His GRACE. It is God, through His Spirit, Who even offered us His marriage proposal (Jh. 15:16). Man cannot join the church like he can a secular organization. The only way to get in the church of the redeemed is to be "born" into it (Jh. 1:12-13). Through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, sinful man can discover forgiveness and the splendor of being "one" with "Christ."

In the PRESENT, "Christ" is purging out the imperfections from His "church by the word" (5:26). During this age of time, the supreme business of God is the gathering out of His "church" and whenever it is completed, then this age will have served its purpose. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for assembly means to congregate or gather together. Israel is referred to as "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). Israel was God's "church" in the sense she was called out of the world and gathered together to be His holy and separated people of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the Christian "church" comes into focus as an institution at Pentecost. The Greek word for "church" is EKKLESIA {ek-klay-see-ah} and refers to the called out saints of God who are under the dominion and authority of "Christ."

There are many local congregations around the world that we refer to as the visible church. However, there is only ONE UNIVERSAL CHURCH (invisible to the eye of mortal man) consisting of only those whose names are written in the "Lamb's book of Life" (Rev. 21:27). All believers on this side of eternity are part of the MILITANT CHURCH because we still struggle with our imperfections and daily wage war against the Devil and the forces of Hell. All believers who have died are now members of the TRIUMPHANT CHURCH in Heaven awaiting the time of their glorification.

In thinking about the "church," we must realize that she is NOT an ORGANIZATION, but an ORGANISM. "Christ" is the sole builder of His "church" (Acts 2:47) and He has chosen to do his building through "Spirit filled" witnesses who proclaim His saving Gospel (Rom. 10:17). Not everyone with his name on a church role is a member of His "body," but only those who repent, believe, and trust "Christ" by faith as their Savior, Lord, and Master.

Currently, the "church" (whether it be the MILITANT OR TRIUMPHANT CHURCH) is "espoused" (engaged) to "Christ," but is not yet wedded to Him. Today, the "church" is the "new man" learning how to live in the world without being a part of the world (Eph. 4:22-32). Being "espoused" (engaged) to "Christ" means that we should forsake the world and be loyal to Him in all things (II Cor. 11:2). When a couple becomes engaged, they aren't to flirt around and date other people. They are expected to be faithful to one another during engagement as well as in marriage and so must it be for the Christian "church" in her devotion to "Christ."

We must learn "not" to "grieve the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:30) by living for the Lord without a divided devotion. The "Holy Spirit" is a believer's ENGAGEMENT RING (so to speak) and we need to treat our "bodies" for what they are, the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6:19). He is the indwelling presence of God in the life of every believer "whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption". He is the "earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14) guaranteeing for us eternal security. We can rest assured that God

will never break off His engagement to us, but He will chasten us when we "sin."

Emphasizing the chaste conduct that God expects from believers, several sins are mentioned warning us to avoid them in the beginning verses of this chapter (Eph. 5:3-4). A Christian cannot habitually engage in any of these sins without being troubled. It's POSSIBLE for a Christian to "sin," but it is IMPOSSIBLE for a believer to "sin" and get by with it in the sight of God (Heb. 12:5-11). If a person can "sin" and it not bother them, then that person is not really "saved" (Rom. 6:2, 15). These sins named in this passage are not unpardonable, if only the sinner will "confess" and "repent" before God. To "confess" and "repent" means that a believer will not persist in that "sin." There is no "sin" too great for God to forgive, but unless there is repentance of "sin" and conversion to "Christ," there will be no "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5).

Because we are living in a world defiled by sin, "Christ" is sanctifying and cleansing His "church with the washing of water by the word." As Christians we are SPIRITUALLY "in Christ" (II Cor. 5:17) and a part of His "body," but PHYSICALLY we're still living in a world flooded with temptation. Therefore, we need to apply God's truths so that it can "sanctify and cleanse" us from sin. "Sanctify" means to set apart for sacred service. After we experience the "washing of regeneration" (I Cor. 6:11, Titus 3:5), we are to experience daily cleansing from the defilements of the world "with the washing of water by the word" without which we'll not remain pure.

The word for "washing" is the Greek word LOUTRON {loo-tron} which speaks of bathing. In Hebrew, the word is KIYOWR {kee-yore} and is the name for the "laver" found in the Old Testament Tabernacle. The "laver" (Ex.30:18) is where the priests would wash before entering the Tabernacle in service unto the Lord. In the New Testament, God washes His "church" in the LAVER of His "word." The "water" spoken of in this text is not baptism, but a continuous spiritual cleansing as we bathe in the "word" of God (Jh. 15:3). The "church" will not be perfect and spotless until we get to heaven. But, until then, we are not only cleansed by the "word" but nourished by it also (Matt. 4:4).

Spiritual growth and cleansing will never occur in the Christian life apart from time spent in the "word" of God.

In the FUTURE, "Christ" will "present" unto Himself "a glorious church" free from sin (Eph. 5:27). We need to understand that the "church" is destined to be the "bride" of Christ, thus making "Christ" our BRIDEGROOM (Rev. 21:2,9). Following the rapture at the second coming of Christ, we shall become Christ's "bride" and the promise of His marriage to us will be fulfilled at which time we'll celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb. Until we become His "bride," we are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit and seek never to disgrace the One to whom we are "espoused." God wants a "holy" BRIDE (morally pure) and "without blemish." When that day of GLORIFICATION comes, we shall know the promised state of perfection. Then and only then, will we be free from the outward "spot" and inward "wrinkle" of sin.

When this passage is speaking of the "church," it isn't talking about an organization, but the living breathing organism of true "born again" (Jh. 3:3) believers in Christ (Eph. 5:28-33). God uses local assemblies to carry out His work, but not everyone who identifies with an assembly is "saved." Only those "in Christ" (II Cor. 5:17) are considered His future BRIDE and will radiantly reign with Him as the VICTORIOUS "church." Throughout our text, the theme shifts back and forth between "husband" and "wife" to "Christ" and His "church." A picture of TRUE LOVE is seen on Calvary when "Christ gave himself" for His BRIDE. A husband's LOVE for his "wife" should be equal to that of his "own" body. If you want to see a picture of GENUINE LOVE, don't allow the glamour of Hollywood to brainwash you with their sell of cheap sex, but go to the bedside of a sick spouse and watch how they are cared for by their other half.

No one can know real "love" (I Jh. 4:7-8) outside of Jesus Christ and the same is true for marriage. Sex outside of marriage is LUST any way you spell it, but within marriage it can be a beautiful expression of LOVE if both "husband" and "wife" will see their relationship the way God intended it to be. The sexual part of marriage makes the "wife" a part of the husband's body and for that reason "men ought to love their wives as their own bodies." It's unnatural for a man to hate "his own flesh," therefore

the "husband" is to "love" his "wife" because she is his "own flesh."

The physical relationship between the "husband" and "wife" is more than a biological function. Within the bonds of marriage, sexual activity is a rich, deep, and meaningful expression of "love," but outside of "marriage" it is sinful and degrading (Heb. 13:4). Both before and after marriage, people need to guard against feeding their sexual appetites the wrong type of material (books, literature, pornography, movies, etc.). The mishandling of money is one of the major causes of marriage problems. Financial trouble and the mismanagement of money has provoked many disagreements and broken up many homes. Christian couples need to practice putting God first in all things, including their tithes and offerings. The truth about the matter, is that you can't afford not to give God His rightful place in your financial affairs. Tensions and strife of whatever sort doesn't belong in the home. Therefore, we need to work at keeping our love alive in the home and when we do wrong, humbly confess it and repent (turn from it). The first step in your search for a happy home is to have a right relationship with Jesus Christ.

In the sight of God, marriage is to be an inseparable lifelong union where "two shall be one flesh." In five different ways we can compare the "church" to the first bride in scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). First, "Eve" was taken from the side of "Adam," just as the "church" was taken from the pierced side of "Christ." Secondly, "Eve" shared Adam's nature, just as the "church" partakes of Christ's divine nature. Thirdly, "Eve" was the object of Adam's love, just like "Christ" loves and cares for His "church." Fourthly, "Adam" willingly became a sinner identifying himself with "Eve" in her transgression, just as "Christ" was made sin for His "church" but being God knew no sin Himself. Fifthly, just as "Eve" was brought to "Adam" before sin entered the human race, the "church" was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world.

That first bride and groom is a beautiful TYPE which is fulfilled in the "great mystery concerning Christ and the church." The "husband" and "wife" relationship illustrates the "mystery" (hidden truth) of the church's relationship to "Christ"

(Jh. 17:22-24). "Christ" doesn't want to share His "church" with the world no more than a loving caring "husband" would want to share his "wife" with another man. Having fallen in love with "Christ," we should never want to be unfaithful to the One Whom we are "espoused."

In seeking to live the Christian life, "Christ" is our EXAMPLE in all things and apart from the "power" (Acts 1:8) of the "Holy Spirit" the Christian life cannot be lived. "Husbands" should strive to measure up to the IDEAL of "Christ" in His "love" for the "church." "Wives" should strive to measure up to the "church" in her devotion to the "savior." When it comes to marriage or anything else in life for that matter, we don't need to sell ourselves short by seeking to live life our way. God knows what is BEST for us and His desire is to give us His BEST if we'll only be patient and trust Him for it. That is why He has warned us to stay away from "fornication and all uncleanness, etc." (Eph.5:3). God isn't trying to spoil our fun by telling us what not to do, but He's trying to prevent hurt and heartache from coming our way. "Christ" wants you to have a HAPPY LIFE AND A HAPPY HOME, but it cannot be if He is not FIRST PLACE in your life, marriage, and family.

Chapter 7

Christian Service, Marriage, And The Family

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; ... One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity: ... Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well."

(I Tim. 3:2,4,12, KJV)

"If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." (Titus 1:6, KJV)

As Christians, we cannot stick our heads in the sand and refuse to help people who experience the pain and hurt of a divorce. The church is not for perfect people, but imperfect people who are looking to God for the answers of life. Just like the hospital is for sick people, the church is for people who realize their spiritual condition before God and seek a solution from the Great Physician.

Marriages do fail and the church must do all it can to help people put their lives back together again. We must not get so caught up in expounding the biblical teachings on divorce that we fail to show compassion for the individuals involved. The church must not only maintain and preach a high view of marriage, but it must help those who have experienced a marriage failure not to fail again. The question that we now face in our text, is how to treat divorcees when it comes to considering them for one of the two God ordained offices of the church.

These particular verses of Scripture pertaining to the qualifications of "bishops" (elders/pastors) and "deacons" contains two parts. First, it says that the man who holds either of these two offices in the church is to be "the husband of one wife." Secondly, it says that they are to be "ruling their children and their own houses well."

The first part of this admonition has been the subject of various interpretations. One interpretation is that neither of these offices

can be held by a divorced man while others interpret it to mean that a man cannot be divorced and remarried. Some even go so far as to say that a "bishop" or "deacon" must be a married man thus ruling out all singles from ever serving in either of these offices. Being single would refer to a man who had never been married (bachelor) or a man who was left single by the death of his spouse (widower). This interpretation is definitely contradicted in Scripture because single people are not excluded from Christian service whatsoever and they actually have more time to devote to the Lord's work (I Cor. 7:8,32-33,38). Paul identified himself as a single, yet he was a spiritual leader in the New Testament Church and referred to himself as an "apostle born out of due time" (I Cor. 15:8-9).

The primary concern of this passage is to emphasize the Christian relationship that should exist between a husband and wife. Looking into a man's past would disqualify anyone if we based the "office" upon his life when unregenerate. However, his life must be considered in the present and how he is seeking to live for the Lord as a believer in the here and now. Paul's life before his conversion to Christ was a religious one, but he was as guilty of murder as any man could be and was even charged with the death of "Stephen," who is believed to have been one of the first seven deacons (Acts 7:58-8:1).

In writing to the Corinthian Church, Paul made mention of the lifestyle that some of them had lived before their conversion to Christ (I Cor. 6:9-11). In the line of Christ, is found "Rahab the harlot" (Jam. 2:25, Matt. 1:5) as well as "David" and "Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). In the New Testament, Jesus forgave the woman taken in "adultery" and asked those who were "without sin" to "first cast a stone at her" (Jh. 8:3-12). If we're going to exclude all sinners from serving the Lord, then no one including "Paul" could ever hold a church "office." In examining men for church "office," we need to always remember that God forgives all kinds of sin if people will only "repent" (Lk. 13:3, Rev. 2:5), and if God will forgive others, so should we as Christians who have experienced His forgiveness ourselves. However, in talking about forgiveness, let's not forget that God's pardon doesn't clear us from the consequences of our sin that must be suffered in this life (Gal. 6:7).

People who have abused their bodies before coming to Christ, will have to deal with those abused bodies the rest of their lives. Drunkards, dope addicts, prostitutes, and many aids victims who get "saved" are examples of how sin will still be reaped years after the seeds of it have been sown.

The most biblical interpretation of these verses simply prohibits a man from being a polygamist. "Husband of one wife" literally means "a one woman man" and it doesn't concern how many times a man has been married, but how many wives he currently has. Holding to such a view would permit a man who has been divorced and remarried to serve in a church "office." The term "husband of one wife" doesn't mean that a person cannot have had a divorce in the past, but is referring to the qualities that characterize his life at the present. It doesn't mean that a remarried man cannot serve in a place of church leadership.

There are some perfectly good Greek words that God could have used to distinguish divorcees and adulterers if that is what He meant by the phrase "husband of one wife." If God had required the candidate to be free from either "adultery" or "divorce" then He could have said so by using the words MOICHEUO {moy-khyoo-o} for "adultery" and APOSTASION {ap-os-tas-ee-on} for "divorce." He simply states that a man who serves in one of these church offices must not be a bigamist and no reference to remarriage is in so much as suggested in this passage. We must be careful in our study of the Scriptures, NOT to read something into it that it doesn't say, but lift out of it what it does say. At the time Paul wrote this epistle, men were greatly influenced by their heathen society and many were habitually unfaithful to their marriage very much like it is today.

The truth that stands out in our text is the sanctity of marriage (Heb. 13:4). Church officers should have a Christian marriage where Christ is exalted in their homes. Christian marriage is a marriage where divorce is never considered as an option, adultery is forbidden, polygamy is out of the question, and sexual faithfulness is always upheld. Church leaders should strive to uphold God's IDEAL standard for marriage in a monogamous relationship. Only men who currently exemplify godly conduct in their character should be considered for one of these two church

offices. In examination for church office, a man's life must be looked at from the time of his conversion to Christ. Based upon his spiritual growth and present state of Christian testimony, his credentials can be determined for holding such a position within the church.

The circumstances of a believer's divorce and remarriage will have a bearing on his qualifications for service. Each individual situation must be examined separately based upon the circumstances involved. There are many complicated situations today which makes the issue of divorce very debatable. Complex issues such as abuse, addictions, as well as immorality are questions that complicate the problems in many homes. We also find wives telling their husbands that they no longer want to be a pastor's wife and then file for divorce. If we think that marriage, divorce, and remarriage makes a man guilty of having more than "one wife," then why not consider how many sexual encounters a man has ever had outside of marriage since sexual intercourse is the consummation of marriage regardless of the vows exchanged (I Cor. 6:13-18). As far as we know, "Adam and Eve" never exchanged vows nor did they have a marriage license, but they consummated their marriage in sexual intimacy. Today, for the sake of order, marriage needs to be regulated in writing and that is why Jesus spoke of a "bill of divorcement" when a man, for some reason, "put away" his "wife."

The second part of this admonition requires an "elder" and "deacon" to bear evidence of a quality Christian family in the way they rear their "children." A church officer is expected to be the spiritual leader in his home. There is no such thing as a PERFECT HOME, PERFECT HUSBAND, PERFECT WIFE, PERFECT DADDY, OR PERFECT CHILD on the face of the earth, because none of us have yet reached PERFECTION. However, church leaders are to strive to "train up" their children "in the way" they "should go" (Prov. 22:6). Not only by what they say, but how they live, a godly example is expected from the "head" (Eph. 5:23) of the "house."

Although a man himself might appear to be a good candidate for church "office," it's possible for his "wife" to disqualify him from service and in some instances even his "children." Included

in this list of qualifications, are found some requirements for the "wife" (3:11). "Even so", lets us know that the women (deaconesses) who serve the Lord (probably also including the deacon's wives) are to reflect the same commitment unto the Lord as the deacon. Along with being "grave, not slanderers, sober," she is to be "faithful in all things." She should be morally "faithful" to her husband, devoutly "faithful" to her children, and spiritually "faithful" to the Lord and His church. If a man cannot control the "children" who live under his own roof and who are still young enough to be under his "subjection," then "how shall he take care of the church of God?" (3:5). If the leaders of the church, their "wives," and their "children," who are still under the parents "subjection," are not "faithful" to the Lord nor to the local assembly, then HOW CAN WE EXPECT OTHERS to be "faithful?" According to the guidelines set for us in Scripture, church leaders and their families are expected to strive in setting a good example of Christian character, conduct, and consecration.

In considering both parts of this admonition in our text, we must honestly admit that more men will be disqualified on the SECOND part than on the FIRST, merely because it is against the civil law of the land to be a bigamist in our American culture. When it comes to the selection of "deacons," far too often the only qualification that is considered is, "how many times a man has been married." Let's not forget that there are other qualifications besides those pertaining to his home life. However, in order for a man to be considered for the "office of a bishop" or "deacon," his family life must qualify him by the example he sets in his Christian "house" and Christian marriage.

Before concluding our discussion on the matter of elders and deacons, it would be good to address the issue of how to deal with men who violate their position while serving in one of these church offices. To begin with, the Bible doesn't detail everything that should be done, but it does address the subject of confronting a sinning "brother" and rebuking an "elder" who falls into "sin" (Matt. 18:15-17, I Tim. 5:17-25). We can conclude from Scripture that God does have high expectations from spiritual leaders. God laid down some rules of conduct for the Old Testament priests regarding such things as their clothing, hair, diet, and marriage

relationships (Ezek. 44:17-31). They were forbidden to marry "a widow," except it be a "widow that had a priest before" (a widow of a priest), or a woman who is "put away" (the Hebrew word here is GARASH {gaw-rash} meaning expelled or driven out). The emphasis here calls attention to the holiness of the office. Let's remember that in the New Testament we hold to the priesthood of all believers and that God places spiritual pastors in local churches to serve as under-shepherds of God's flock. God expects His people to live holy lives and for His spiritual leaders to strive in living up to His holy standards.

In the New Testament, especially from Acts 6 and First Timothy 3, various qualities of leadership are listed depicting the type of man that every church officer should strive to be. It's my personal opinion, when a "deacon" or "elder" violates the trust of the people by an act of immorality, or any other such gross misbehavior, that he should step aside from his position of leadership. After a time of bearing genuine repentance, then it's possible for him to find a restored place of leadership in the future. But, when gross sin is involved, he cannot immediately pick up where he left off pretending that nothing never happened. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Lk.12:48), applies to the accountability of the Christian "servant" unto his Master.

If a fallen pastor or deacon can ever at any time return to the position of a pastor or deacon after genuine evidence of repentance has been shown is a question that God alone can determine. Scripture does say that the "gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). I can only call your attention to David in the Old Testament that sinned grievously against God, but God referred to him as "a man after mine own heart (Acts 13:22). Also, there was Peter who "denied" (Jh. 18:27) His Lord, but Christ told him to "feed my sheep" (Jh. 21:15-19). That ought to tell us something. God is in the forgiving and restoring business. Praise His Holy Name!

God's people must depend upon the "Holy Spirit" for wisdom and divine instruction (Jh. 14:26). Only the "Holy Spirit" can impart divine "truth" to the heart of man because He alone can

open our spiritually blind eyes. As we study God's WORD, our prayer should always be that we'll be taught by God's "Spirit" so that we might "rightly" (II Tim. 2:15) divide it and make our interpretations based upon divine enlightenment and not human feelings. In studying the "Word of Truth," we must be careful not to read into it something that it does not say, but learn how to glean from it what is meant from the context. Even in the translation of some Greek words into English, the translation must be based on the subject matter of the context.

Regardless of how one interprets these verses, we must respect one another and treat each other in brotherly "love" because without "love" we are like "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (I Cor. 13:1-13). If people don't see eye to eye with us on our views, then we must be patient with them as God is with us and pray for the "Holy Spirit" to reveal His "Word" to us and "guide" us "into all truth" (Jh. 16:13). Regardless of how long we live, we'll never learn all there is to know about God's Word, but we do need to stay teachable.

In dealing with divorcees, we need to always be sensitive to their hurts and never give the impression that sin cannot be forgiven. The "truth" about the matter, is that God specializes in forgiveness and cleansing through the shed "blood" (Heb. 9:22) of Jesus Christ. He alone can remove "our transgressions from us" casting them "as far as the east is from the west" in His remembrance (Ps. 103: 8-14). Everyone who has been "saved," including divorcees, has been "saved" (Rom. 10:9) to serve and should seek out his own individual spiritual "gift" (I Pet. 4:7-11) and use it to the glory of God through the channels of the local church.