

# Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

## Introduction:

1. “The gospel of the grace of God” & of “the kingdom of God” includes “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:24-27). We do not seek to offend or to please, but to preach the gospel of Christ in its original purity and simplicity to save your soul (1 Cor. 2:2).
2. Unscriptural divorces & remarriages are a growing problem in society and in the church. Most families have shared this sorrow.
3. False theories are *spreading*. I was called to Belen, N.M. to answer the false teaching of Homer Hailey in March 1988. I had two debates with Jack Freeman in 1990. Books filled with error are circulating.
4. We must uphold the truth & refute error in order to save our homes and to save our souls (1 Pet. 4:11).

## I. What The Text Teaches

### A. *Overview: One Man for One Woman for Life (One Exception).*

1. Jesus explained this basic rule in Matt. 19:3-9.
2. Jesus reaffirmed Gen. 2:24 & explained its implications.
3. God's ideal in Gen. 2:24 is reflected throughout the Old Testament (Ex. 20:14; Deut. 22:22; Mal. 2:14-16).
4. Deut. 24:1-4 is variance legislation.
5. God's ideal in Gen. 2:24 was *reinforced* by Christ.

### B. *What Jesus Taught in Matt. 5:32*

1. The law of Christ gives *a rule* (“Whosoever shall put away his wife...*causeth* her to commit adultery.”) and *one exception* (Whosoever shall put away his wife for fornication *is not responsible* for her subsequent adultery.). This eliminates the “waiting game.”
2. “Jesus here limits the right of divorce to cases of unchastity....the innocent party to such a divorce can marry again. Of course, the guilty party could not, for no one is allowed by law to reap the benefits of his own wrong” (J.W. McGarvey, *Fourfold Gospel*, p. 242).
3. Jesus ended the Mosaic concession of Deut. 24.

### C. *What Jesus Taught in Matt. 19:9*

1. Christ gave *a rule* (“Whosoever shall put away his wife...and shall marry another, committeth adultery.”) and *one exception* (Whosoever shall put away his wife for

fornication and shall marry another, doth *not* commit adultery.). What Jesus authorized & approved, we should recognize & approve, including the exception. We commend those who act upon it.

2. “EXCEPT” has the force of “IF AND ONLY IF” (Matt. 18:3; Jn. 3:2, 5; Lk. 13:3; Matt. 19:9). Like: Whoever shoots a basketball, except it misses the hoop, scores two points.

D. *How Jesus Defined Adultery (Conform Our Thinking to His).*

1. All cases of divorce & remarriage result in adultery, with only *one exception*.
2. We may hear, “Divorce is tragic, but once it happens, both parties are free to marry another mate.” Not so! All divorced people remain under *the constraint of divine law*.
3. Some cases of adultery are *simple*; others are *complex* because sin is added to sin. “The remarriage of a man after divorcing his wife, or the remarrying of the divorced woman, is tantamount to adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9)” (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, IV:733).
4. “Adultery” must be defined by the use Jesus made of the term: *unlawful sexual intercourse involving someone under the constraint of God’s marriage law*.

E. *What 1 Cor. 7 Teaches*

1. False teachers claim vv. 2, 9, 27-28 allow the put-away fornicator or the unscripturally divorced person to marry another mate, but v. 2 says “*his own wife*” (not another wife), vv. 8-9 is to “*the unmarried & widows*” (not divorcees), and the “loosed” or free man in vv. 27-28 is the male counterpart to “*a virgin*” (i.e. never married).
2. False teachers claim that though an unscriptural divorce is tragic, each party is then “single” & free to marry another mate. Vv. 10-11 prove that theory is false.
3. False teachers claim v. 15 permits a believer deserted by an unbeliever to marry a new mate. We are “not under bondage” to give up Christ to please our mate, but that does *not* mean we are no longer married & can marry another mate (cf.v.23).

F. *Summary: How We Know When It Is Right to Marry Another Mate.*

1. The Bible plainly says we can marry “*another*” mate *if* our mate dies (Rom. 7:2-3) or *if* we put away our mate “for fornication” (Matt. 19:9).
2. Where does the Bible authorize the put-away fornicator or the unscripturally divorced person to marry *another* mate?

## II. Why We Must Preach & Practice What The Text Teaches (What Is At Stake)

A. *Scriptural Authority & Unity*

1. When God *specified one thing* out of a class of things, He *excludes all other things* in that class (Gen. 6:14; Matt. 19:9 specifies the innocent mate can put away

the guilty party & marry “another.”)

2. Unity is based upon truth when we preach & practice *what is clearly stated* in the text of Scripture (Jn. 17:17-21). Human theories depart from the Bible & thus cause division. Immersion is the unity ground (Acts 8:38), but sprinkling causes division (pervert Acts 16:15). We agree the innocent mate can put away the fornicator and marry another (Matt. 19:9), but human theories cause division by claiming others can divorce & remarry.
3. The restoration plea for scriptural authority resulted in scriptural unity during the first century & again during the 1800s. This was true on marriage, divorce, & remarriage (Ed Harrell, *Quest for a Christian America*, pp. 197-198).
4. Sam Dawson (*Fellowship on Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage*) charges those who preach the truth & expose error with causing division, but those who *introduce error* cause it.

#### B. *The Purity of the Church*

1. When we open the door to *one* false theory, we open the door to *all*. Spin the theory wheel of error & win an unscriptural mate every time! *Put-away fornicator can marry a new mate* (Bob Melear, Jack Freeman, Lowell Williams, et. al.). *If unbeliever leaves, believer can get a new mate* (James Bales, Jerry & Don Bassett, et. al.). *Matt. 19:9 is “kingdom law” & does not apply to the world* (E.C. Fuqua; Homer Hailey, et. al.). *Baptism sanctifies an adulterous marriage* (Roy Hall, J.L. Dabney, et. al.). *Redefine adultery as non-sexual* (Olan Hicks, Jim Puterbaugh, et.al.).
2. Ed Harrell says Rom. 14 allows us to tolerate “contradictory teachings & practices on important moral & doctrinal questions” such as divorce & remarriage (*Christianity Magazine*, Nov. 1988, pp. 6-9; Apr. 1989, p. 6; May 1989, p. 6; May 1990, p. 6). But differences in Rom. 14 are in the realm where “*all things are pure*” (v. 20). 2 Jn. 9-11 says we cannot compromise with departures from the doctrine of Christ. To compromise the truth at *one* point opens the door to digression & apostasy of every kind!

#### C. *The Salvation of Souls*

1. False teachers say they can baptize more people with their theories, but salvation requires true repentance (Acts 2:38). If we steal a man’s watch, car, & wife, how do we show true repentance: *return* them or *keep* them?
2. In cases of unscriptural marriage, the Bible requires *true repentance* (Ezra 10; Mk.6:18; Matt. 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 5).
3. Some ask, “If God forgives all sin, why doesn’t He forgive people in unscriptural marriages & allow them to stay married?” Past sins are forgiven, but we *cannot continue* the sinful practice. Also, forgiveness *does not remove the temporal consequences* of sin (Acts 25:11; Lk. 23:40-43; Lk. 15:13; Matt. 19:9).

#### D. *Preservation of Marriage, Morality, & Homes*

1. History proves when men relax God’s law on divorce & remarriage, “The flood

gates are open,” & “We invite the very evils we seek to remedy” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, II:865-866). The results have always been careless marriages, divorce for any cause, & multiplied miseries!

2. *False theories invite, encourage, & defend sin in the church today.* A preacher's wife “confessed” adultery, but wanted to marry the man & remain in the church. A young lady was told to be “rebaptized” to get out of her marriage. A believer deserted a believer, & was told this was grounds for a new marriage. Two deacons swapped wives, “repented”, and were received back into the church with their new mates.
3. God has entrusted to us the precious souls of our children. We are responsible to teach & train them properly, otherwise we *share the blame* for the wreck & ruin of their lives.

**Conclusion:** Our choice: God or Satan (Gen.2:17; 3:4; Mk. 16:16).

(For further study, see *Halbrook-Freeman Debate*, & tract & booklets by Halbrook: *Honorable Marriage; Trends Pointing Toward A New Apostasy; Understanding the Controversy*; contact Truth Bookstore, 1-800-428-0121)

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