

as a high and sacred responsibility. There may be temporary separations; there even may be permanent separations; but all separations and legal divorces must be considered in the light of New Testament teaching. When this is done, it will be clearly seen that those who have separated for any other cause than "except for fornication" must live single, or else be reconciled to each other. Since the New Testament teaches that only the sin of fornication gives the privilege of an absolute divorce and separation, all who have been "married" to one who has a living companion are living in adultery, if the scriptural cause does not exist. It is fearful to become entangled in deceptive ceremonies of marriage, so that one cannot extricate oneself from the fetters of lustful slavery. May God spare his children from such a false relationship of life, and may all divorced persons take warning and, like the leper of old, cry, "Unclean!"

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# Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

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## Introduction

The author has presented the basic teachings of the New Testament on the subject of "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage." There are many complications and tangles in the marital relationship in our complex society today; many are distressed because through ignorance they have become entangled in marriages. The author does not attempt to untangle all of these complex relationships, but he does give principles that may be applied to the conditions and gives some guidance to those who are in such distressed conditions. If the teachings presented here cannot help those who have gone so far and have become so entangled in the meshes of error on this subject, it is hoped that they will help those who have not made excursions into these unholy relationships of life. He would like to save as many of his fellow travelers to eternity from embarrassing situations and sins and unhappiness as possible. If the principles announced in this booklet will save even one, the author will be happy to know that some good has been accomplished.

An article published on marriage and divorce will arouse more interest than many other subjects. The writer and editors will immediately be besieged with all kinds of questions. This shows that our society is now greatly disturbed over this question. There are honest souls that want to know the truth and will be guided by it when they learn it; there are others who are willing to take the risk and enter into unholy relations in order to gratify the lust of the flesh; there are still others who do not care what God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit has taught on this question. They have not learned that man's happiness in time and in eternity depends upon his living in harmony with God's will. Everyone ought to want to know what the will of the Lord is, not only with respect to marriage and divorce, but with respect to every other relationship that we sustain in this life. May this booklet help many to know the Lord's will, and may it be the guide to these relationships of life, since it sets forth the will of God on these subjects.

Yours fraternally,

H. LEO BOLES.

## MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

No apology is offered for calling attention, in this permanent way, to the great subjects herein considered. Their importance is sufficient reason for asking the public to read and study what is presented. The stability of the human family, the happiness of the home, and the destiny of precious souls are involved. The eternal destiny of many may be determined by the correct understanding of, and a conformity of life to, the truth here presented. Possibly no subject has touched more lives and affected more homes than "marriage, divorce, and remarriage." The importance cannot be overestimated, neither can the far-reaching influence on society be measured.

Everyone should want truth. Truth is eternal and persistent; it can be obscured, but not annulled. The many broken homes, the multiplied thousands of orphan children, and the still greater number of unhappy lives caused by a violation of the fundamental principles involved in the institution of marriage, all help to emphasize the great importance of studying these questions and arriving at a correct solution of all the problems which are involved in them. Many churches of Christ are disturbed over this question, and many Christian lives are hindered in spiritual exercise because of ignorant disobedience to the principles involved in these subjects. There are churches whose leadership is discredited and inefficient because the leaders have become involved in erroneous marriage relationships. Many honest hearts who love the Lord are brought into relations which are not pleasing to God, but are condemned by him, because they were ignorant of the teachings of God's word on these subjects. It is with the hope that some may be saved from the unhappiness which must inevitably result after learning the truth when it is too late. It is the sincere wish of every honest heart to be spared of all the unhappiness that may result from an unscriptural marriage. It is sad for one, through ignorance, to become enslaved by unholy bonds of matrimony and false fetters of wedlock. May the Lord spare his children from such relationships, so that they may serve him in all sincerity of heart and worship him with the earnestness of soul.

### THE HOME

It is a trite, but true, statement that the home is the unit of society. The home includes the family. The history of mankind bears unmistakable evidence that the home and family determine the character of any civilization, the power of any nation. The sanctity of the home life has ever been the safeguard of the family. The importance of the home is commensurate and tantamount with the destinies of a nation. The function of the family is one of the permanent elements of the stability of the race. One great element to be preserved in all family life is the power and influence on character development. The infant's earliest world is the mother's arms. The child's life must move through the ever-widening circles of mother care, family group, neighborhood, school, city, state, and nation; it must take the first step before it is able to take the second one. The child must learn to live with the few as preparation for living with the many. In earliest infancy the child gets its first unconscious

lessons in the fine art of living with other folks as it relates itself to parents, to brothers and sisters.

The home life affords the best place for social training. The family is the ideal democracy into which the child life is born. In the home habits are formed, ideals are pictured, life itself is interpreted, and the journey is begun to success or failure. The purpose of the family is to bring lives into this world and to train them for the highest good and greatest usefulness. The home is the nursery for maintaining and developing life so that it may be what God intended it to be. In the family group is the best possible training for the life and work in the larger groups of state and the world. The home life formed in the family circle of three to even a dozen is bound by ties of love and is the one great, efficient school for training children and youth to live the fullest of life.

It is in the family that the first spiritual values are fixed. If the home is what it should be, these values will be determined by the standard of righteousness. There is an ever-increasing need for men and women who think in terms of spiritual values, who rise above the measures of dollars and cents, and who weigh life by personal qualities determined by the highest standards of spiritual values. The home is the place for all of these values to be fixed; it is the place where righteous standards are to be established. If the home neglects these, the child and citizen is robbed of some of the essentials necessary to true citizenship; if the home perverts spiritual values and erects false standards of righteous living, the child and the citizen can never recover from the injury received. Only one thing can be first in any man's scale of values. This should be the right thing, or else the life will be warped and distorted from its true bearings. The true home gives to every child that training which will enable it to evaluate things according to the standard of Christ. There is no other place for the child to get in early life these correct impressions. If the home fails to provide them, the loss is irreparable. The schools may help to impress what has been received in the home, but if the home has failed to establish true spiritual values, the child must grow to maturity and go through life without having clear conceptions of the highest values of life. As are the homes of any people, so must be the civilization of that people. Anything that disturbs the homes will mar the development of the child life. False conceptions of the marriage vows, divorces, and remarrying, all disturb, perturb, and mar the home life. It is sad to see children crippled, deformed, and disfigured in body, but it is worse to see them marred and perverted in character. No greater crime can be committed against children than to give them wrong conceptions of character and false values and ungodly standards of life.

The parents of the home must have true and just conceptions of the fundamental principles of the relations of life in order to set the example before the children and to impress upon them the true conceptions of life. In the home, domestic affections are formed, cultivated, and developed. The home is the dearest place on earth in the hearts of the children. Even when we grow to maturity we cherish the fond memories of the home life.

Such sentiments have been immortalized in song and poetry and art. The remembrance of the scenes of childhood inspired John Howard Payne to sing, "Home, Sweet Home"; the early influences of home life caused Samuel Woodworth to chant, "The Old Oaken Bucket"; the hallowed memories of home life encouraged William Cowper to write, "My Mother's Picture"; these same memories and influences of home inspired Stephen Foster to sing, "Old Folks at Home"; Lyman Beecher was stirred to deliver his best oration, "The Memory of Our Fathers," by the influences of his early life; and James McNeill Whistler was inspired to paint his masterpiece, "My Mother," by the sacred memories of the home. Anything that destroys the influence of home, that breaks the home ties, and that abolishes the sacred institution of marriage strikes at the foundation of our society and must be dealt with according to the magnitude of the crime.

#### WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

Marriage is as old as the human race. God had created man, and before his creative work was finished he created woman. Marriage was ordained by Jehovah at that time. The subject of marriage, including the various important points which immediately belong to it, occupies a prominent place on the pages of the Bible. This is only what might be expected in such a book in reference to a matter which not only so widely and universally, but which so deeply and keenly, affects the whole human race, which touches some of the most powerful springs of human life and action. Indeed, any book which professed to give an account of the origin, constitution, regulation, and destiny of mankind would not be complete if it did not make known the will of God on this subject with reasonable clearness and certainty. We may look with hope to discover in the Bible the true character of marriage, and also the regulations which God intended to govern man in this phase of his life.

Jehovah created man alone. Man was left in that lonely condition for some period of time (which is not clearly defined as to length), and Jehovah said: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." (Gen. 2: 18.) It is not necessary here to suppose that God changed his plans, or discovered by experiment, as human beings do, that his original design was not perfect. The whole process of creation was progressive, was especially a system of development from one stage to another. It is in conformity with this principle of the human race, and possibly in other members of the animal kingdom, that the male should be created first and the female produced by development from his body afterward. This is the order in which God created the race of man: "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." (Gen. 1: 27, 28.) It is the positive and emphatic assertion of the Bible that the union of the sexes in marriage, with the command to be fruitful and multiply, is God's own ordinance, and one which was given to them as a good thing, a needful thing, and a blessed thing. It should be noted that these statements are clear, universal, and permanent. They are not merely of local or temporary application. They express fundamental prin-

ciples which are of vital interest and important to all mankind. They are unchangeable and eternal, which, at any rate, will be in force as long as human nature itself shall last. They are applicable to those who are children of God today and to all others; they belong to the race of man.

Woman was created and given to man. Man, on receiving her, 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." (Gen. 2: 23.) Jehovah said in presenting her to man and in ordaining the marriage relation: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Verse 24.) Since marriage has a divine origin, since God has given regulations to govern it, it will bring to man the greatest happiness only when these regulations are observed. Marriage was ordained of God to promote the highest happiness and destiny of the human family. The blessings that accompany the institution of marriage are too numerous to mention. When people live under the influence of human refinement and Christian culture, they may constantly realize the richest blessings from the marriage relation. Its divine origin and divine regulations sanctify it to the greatest good of the race of man. Marriage should be entered with the profoundest solemnity, since God is its author and the promotion of the highest possible happiness of man on earth its design.

Various definitions of marriage have been framed; these all express some phase of the subject. It is necessary to understand God's conception of it in order to understand clearly its full significance. Marriage is an institution ordained of God for the honor and happiness of mankind, in which one man and one woman enter into a bodily and spiritual union, pledging each to the other's mutual love, honor, fidelity, sympathy, forbearance, and comradeship, such as should assure an unbroken continuance of their wedlock so long as both shall live. It finds its primary justification in the establishment and maintenance of the Christian home, in which children shall be born, nurtured, and developed in the faith of God. On the side of human government, Christians recognize marriage as a legal contract involving the moral obligations of Christian citizenship. From this conception or definition of marriage it is seen that there is a solemn engagement for the husband and wife to live together in faith and love till death. Marriage as ordained of God signifies the union of one man and of one woman to the exclusion of all others until death separates them.

Moreover, true marriage implies certain conditions. There are at least five prerequisites of genuine marriage which are generally accepted in all civilized countries. The first is that the marriage must be *intended*. A mutual contract of man and woman to render only the offices involved in marriage would not be sufficient, if only a part of these offices were fulfilled. There is an intentional determination and expression to love each other and to live together in holy wedlock. It is an agreement which is *purposely made* by both parties to be binding until death parts them. The second condition is that both parties must be physically capable of the marriage union; both parties must have reached the age of puberty

in body, and mental development to understand and purpose this union. In the third place, the consent of both parties must be free, deliberate, and informed; otherwise there can be no true contract, and hence no true marriage. An enforced consent makes no marriage, even though the union be consummated in body. The fourth condition is that both parties must be free of any and all other ties of wedlock. This follows from the unity and the indissolubility of marriage. A person already married *cannot enter a new marriage*. Lastly, persons very close akin to each other are incapable of intermarrying; brother and sister cannot be truly married. It does not come within the scope of the purpose of this author to state how close the kinship may be to render the marriage impossible. It must be clear to all that there are such close ties of kinship that marriage is unwise, unsuccessful, and impossible. These five conditions are required for a valid contract of marriage. However, marriage is much more than an agreement or legal contract.

Jehovah said when he created woman and gave her to man that "they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2: 24.) This was said in ordaining marriage. This is marriage. The two become one—a new one; neither of the old "ones," but a "new one" formed by the union of body, mind, and spirit; a blending of two personalities into one. Jesus taught that, according to this original plan of God, the husband and wife are in marriage joined together for life and should not be put asunder by man. The spiritual and moral side of marriage is incomparably more important than the physical side. Many today have recognized only the physical side of marriage; others seem to think that the physical side is the more important—in fact, some have seen no other side to marriage but the physical side. If one looks at marriage as God ordained it and as Christ emphasized it, surely one will see that the moral and spiritual side is the higher and more important side of marriage. The state or human governments usually look only at the physical side of marriage and legislate laws to regulate only that side of it.

The physical union cannot in itself constitute marriage. If this were true, there would be many marriages, even among those that are not considered married by the standards of the world. Some have contended that the first sexual connection is marriage. If this were so, a woman might find herself married to a man who was not "married" to her. Furthermore, a man might find himself "ceremonially married" to a woman when she is not "married" to him. This position, if held seriously, would find many "wives" whose "husbands" were not "their husbands," and "husbands" whose "wives" were other men's "wives." Such confusion in society would be alarming. It shows the ridiculousness of the claim that a physical union is all that there is involved in marriage in the sight of God.

What is marriage "in the mind of God"? Or what is marriage "in the nature of things"? What is it that constitutes marriage in the true sense of this institution? Those who are married are the ones "whom God hath joined together." (Matt. 19: 6.) But whom has God joined together? By what sign are we to know them? Yea, by what signs are they to know that they are mar-

ried? Those who have become "one flesh" are the ones "whom God hath joined together" in marriage. Those who are made "one flesh," "one," or "whom God hath joined together" are truly married; no others are truly married. Marriage "in the sight of God," then, unites those who should be united in harmony with the will of God, for the purpose of cooperating with God in carrying out the design that God had in ordaining the institution of marriage. Marriage "in the sight of God" is to form a union between a man and woman as God originally ordained that this union should be formed. It is entered into for the expressed purpose of each filling the mission that God had for them in wedlock. There must be the physical side, the moral side, and the spiritual side in every true marriage. There can be no marriage "in the sight of God" that does not involve all of the three sides—physical, moral, and spiritual.

Love has an all-important place in marriage. There can be no marriage "in the sight of God," or two becoming "one flesh," without love. No one should contemplate marriage where love does not exist. The love must be mutual. Love is the emotion which arises when two personalities stimulate, facilitate, attract, and reënforce each other—when they function together in progressive integration. If these personalities contradict, thwart, or oppose each other in physical function, in spiritual aspiration, or in any of the lawful activities of life, marriage cannot be consummated. If two personalities hamper, or coerce, or defraud, or enslave one another, then marriage becomes an impossibility to those personalities. God does not join them, neither can they become "one" in the sense of true marriage. In marriage the two personalities will blend and supplement each other in carrying out all of the designs which God had in ordaining marriage. Marriage is a creative union; it must progressively eliminate the thwartings and increase the points of mutual release and joint attainment. To such an end love is not merely an emotion, but also a method—the method which must underlie all permanently creative social relations.

Every boy and girl should be taught and should grow up with the knowledge that sex is a great creative impulse, and, being creative, is most sacred. They should learn that it is not a part of our lower natures, but, on the contrary, is associated with the higher forms of life, and becomes conscious, powerful, and individual, not as life sinks, but as it rises, in the scale of created things. They should recognize the significance of sex to the race and the meaning to a human progress of the prolonged helplessness of human infancy. In fact, they should understand all the responsibilities of sex love, both to each other, the home, and the race. They should know all that can be known rightly without experience. Nothing is more glamorous, nothing more deceptive than physical passion. When marriage is entered into only on the physical basis, the blessings of this institution cannot be had. With all the wisest teaching in the world, with all the good will imaginable, with the light of God's truth on the subject of marriage, men and women sometimes will be deceived and will shake the stars with mutual vows of love who have in fact nothing but passion in their hearts. In such cases failure must be regarded as the reward for such union.

## DIVORCES

Every divorce emphasizes the fact that a marriage has become a tragic failure. There have been crimes against every fundamental law of God. Murder is a crime against the laws of life; theft is a crime against the laws of the rights of property; irreverence is a crime against God; and adultery is a crime against the marriage institution. The first great crime against the laws of marriage, which is frequently mentioned in the Bible, is that of adultery. It is condemned by Jehovah, not as being an offense merely against the national laws or precepts of the Jewish law, but as an offense against the principles of marriage generally. Marriage joins together husband and wife for life. The causes for breaking this union or putting asunder that which God has joined together belong to the sins of man. God is not responsible for the breaking of the bonds of matrimony. We are not to look to God nor to the Bible for the causes of divorce; we are to look to the weakness, frailty, and rebellion of man for these causes.

The divorce evil may be considered as our greatest social peril. This evil threatens the dissolution of the family, the disturbance of society, the perversion of the institution of marriage, and the spiritual development of the people of God. It is beset on all sides with many difficulties. Since the laws of marriage are divine, they belong to the human race. Fornication and other sins of uncleanness are clearly condemned as things which are sinful and abominable before Jehovah. Adultery is sinful in its own nature, sinful at all times, and in whatever nation it may be found. Jehovah's anger was visited upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and the nations of the Canaanites because of the exceeding sinfulness in violating the marriage laws. Even the destruction of the population in the days of Noah by the flood was caused in part by the sins against the marriage institution. The fearfulness and awfulness of the sins against the marriage relation have reached to high heaven and brought down the wrath of God upon the guilty. Our present civilization need not think it will escape the just condemnation of God. Statistics compiled show an alarming increase in the number of divorces annually in our country. The number of divorces in many places is increasing faster than the number of marriages. Such conditions reveal the spirit of our age. The grounds for divorces are being multiplied, and laws are more lax, and enforcement neglected more and more as the decades come.

In a study of the law of Moses we find four distinct laws bearing upon the question of divorce, or the separation of husband and wife. A close study reveals that many of the provisions contained in these laws are purely of a local and temporal character and have no direct application to ourselves in the present day. The first of these passages is found in Ex. 21: 2-6. These provisions are clearly a part of the system of bondage or servitude which was allowed to prevail among the Jewish nations at that period. These may be dismissed at once from our present consideration of the subject of divorce. The second regulation with respect to the subject of marriage and divorce is found in Ex. 21: 7-10. In this account we have the law regulating the case of a concubine, or a

slave wife, and it may also be dismissed, as we have no such conditions prevailing today. This, like the first, has only a temporal application. The third passage bearing upon this subject is found in Deut. 21: 10-14. Here, again, we have the state of marriage, or rather concubinage, as this is generally considered to be allowed as before under certain definite regulations. This Scripture also has a temporal application and belongs to that state of the civilization of Israel; it has no reference or application to the question of marriage and divorce today. The fourth section of the law of Moses which bears upon the subject of marriage and divorce is found in Deut. 24: 1-4. This is important, because it deals with the question of divorce directly and generally, and not merely with reference to bondwomen or concubines, like those previously referred to. It is to this Scripture that Christ had reference in Matt. 19: 2-12. This will be studied later.

The common grounds or reasons for divorce are listed as follows: adultery, desertion, cruelty, imprisonment for crime, habitual drunkenness, neglect, and incompatibility. Some of our states have increased the grounds for divorce to more than a score. This makes it easy to obtain a divorce. Summing up the grounds for granting divorce in the United States, there are fifty-two. When we remember that the family is the unit of society, and we find that the number of families which are being broken up is increasing, the situation grows more alarming. History testifies that for five hundred twenty years after Rome was founded there was not a single divorce in Rome. This may be an exaggeration of the facts; however, when we study the decline of Rome, we find that family ties were loosely formed, and divorces increased so rapidly that the home life was destroyed, and Rome as a nation soon fell.

A decline in the interest of home life may be mentioned as one of the causes of divorce today. There is no stable family life in our modern mode of living. When religion is neglected in the home, when the family altar is blasphemed, the home ties are easily broken, and divorce results. Another cause for so many divorces is the growing spirit of individualism. By this is meant the spirit of self-interest which leads one to follow one's own wishes, and the gratification of one's own desires without regard to the interests and welfare of others. The rapid spread of individualism within the last two or three decades among women, commonly called the "Woman's Movement," may be put down as a cause of the rapid increase of divorces. Women have become as much "individualized" as men—in fact, they are vying with the men in nearly all of the professions of life; they neglect the home, rebel against the restraints of home life, and attempt to dodge the responsibilities of wedlock. Woman's emancipation, as it is called, has not been conducive to woman's elevation; it has rendered the family unstable, divorces anticipated, and robbed society of happiness.

The industrial conditions of our country have had their influence on the divorce evil. Woman has gone into the different professions of life, and many of these professions are unsuited for motherhood; hence, women are content to live without marrying, or, if married, they have sought to sever the marriage ties in order that they may follow "their own career." Girls have failed to learn the

domestic arts of homemaking, or they have refused to practice these arts. They are not inclined to take the responsibilities of bearing and training children. Some have thought that the high standards of living have contributed some to the causes of the increase of divorces. Many, it is claimed, are unable to meet the social demands and maintain a home because of the high cost of living. Again, there is an increasing laxity in the laws regulating married life, and a still more increasing laxity in the administration of these lax laws. Such conditions have contributed to the divorce evil in the United States. There has been a breaking down in the moral fiber of our civilization. The charm of modesty on the part of women has been lost, and loose living has supplanted the old-time chastity. There has arisen a disregard for the marriage vows. Marriage has lost much of its sanctity; young people have failed to learn the sacredness of wedlock; they do not enter the marriage relation with the high motive of doing the will of God in that relation of life. Even many are totally ignorant of the real meaning of marriage; they do not consider and recognize the moral and spiritual phases of marriage; they have come to look only at the physical side of marriage; hence, the many divorces of today.

One of the crying shames of the day, which is a blot on our civilization, is the divorce evil. "Divorce courts" have been set up in many states to accommodate those who are seeking to be released from the marriage bonds. Many states will grant divorce on many grounds. These states make it easy for those who desire to obtain a divorce. Nevada, and especially Reno, has become famous in the number of divorces granted. Arkansas and other states have passed very lax divorce laws, and are bidding for those who no longer desire to be restrained in their lascivious lives and wishing to be released from the bonds of wedlock. They are doing this for the revenue that they can get out of those who are willing to pay the price for a divorce. Such conditions add shame to those who would blaspheme the solemnity of marriage vows. By their lax laws they encourage those who may come within the borders of their state to disregard God's holy ordinance and institution of marriage. They have not annulled God's law; man cannot do that; but they have established courts in which they legalize adultery. No Christian should be deceived by such procedure. Such an attempt to abolish the laws of God and set aside the holy bonds of matrimony is a sin in the sight of high heaven. Let Christians be warned against participating in and encouraging such crimes against God and society.

One prominent justice of a supreme court tells us that "evidence in divorce cases is the most unreliable known to the courts, while perjury, subordination of perjury, and collusion are constantly used in obtaining divorces." There is nothing too degrading for those to do who are determined to get a divorce. Frequently both parties will agree to "manufacture" any kind of evidence that may be needed to satisfy the court so that a divorce may be granted. Different states have required different kinds of evidence, but those desiring divorce will furnish abundantly such evidence as meets the requirement of the judge or court. Man may properly annul that which man makes or creates, but he certainly, in the

nature of things, cannot annul that which God creates and establishes. If man had such right and power, the world would at once become the marplot of the universe. Marriage is not of man, but of God; it is a divine ordinance, not human. Our civil laws may regulate, according to the wisdom of man, those who enter into the marriage relation, but they cannot annul the divine laws regulating it. The lax laws enacted by man for granting divorces have lessened respect for the marriage relation. We must look to Inspiration for the original principle of marriage and the laws regulating it.

#### REMARRIAGE

Christians ought everywhere to be interested in what the Bible teaches on the subject of remarriage. God is the author of marriage. In the Bible he has given laws regulating it; he has instructed man how to enjoy the greatest blessings from this relationship of life. Every Christian husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter should know what the New Testament teaches on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Jesus, in teaching the Sermon on the Mount, said: "It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." (Matt. 5: 31, 32.) Jesus here refers to the practice of the Jews with their interpretation of the law of Moses. He takes the subject of marriage and places it on the original plane where God put it.

The law of Moses dealt with divorce as it did with slavery and polygamy—as an accommodation to the weakness of men. God tolerated certain practices with respect to the marriage relation which were prohibited in principle when marriage was instituted. The scribes and Pharisees, like their modern representatives, the divorce lawyers, found or made a number of loopholes whereby they could obtain their clients divorces "for every cause." Jesus, in his teaching, sweeps away all the old and false interpretations and restates the law of God as it was "from the beginning of the creation." (Mark 10: 6.) This teaching of Jesus is absolute, unqualified by but one exception, and spoken in the face of bitter enemies, whose hostility might have been softened by other exceptions had the original law of God been so stated. Jesus tells why the law of Moses granted or tolerated practices which were contrary to the original law. It was because of the hardness of their heart.

The question of divorce and remarriage was raised again later in the personal ministry of Christ. He was pointedly and directly asked concerning the privilege of divorcement and remarriage. He answered very definitely and specifically. His answer cannot be misunderstood. "And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? trying him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause

shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh: so that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house the disciples asked him again of this matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery." (Mark 10: 2-12.)

The record found in Luke is exactly the same effect. Here again we have the same stern, unqualified statement, admitting no exception whatever. "Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery." (Luke 16: 18.) The record as given by Matthew is as clear and definite as that given by Mark and Luke. In Matthew we have the same strong words as to God's law of marriage: "He who made them from the beginning made them male and female"; "The two shall become one flesh"; and "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew records the one condition upon which the original law of God concerning marriage may be annulled. Here it is: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery." (Matt. 19: 9.) Matthew differs in his record of the words of Jesus only from Mark and Luke in this single exception; in all other respects, and in the clearness and unqualified character of our Lord's condemnation of remarriage, they are perfectly agreed. Matthew states briefly and clearly the single exception, "except for fornication," that is not found in Mark or Luke.

The teachings of Jesus here are strictly in harmony with the original plan of God in the marriage relation. Jesus does not add a new principle to the fundamental law of marriage; he does not set aside or remove the regulations which the law of Moses had added to the original law of marriage. Husband and wife in marriage are joined together for life, and man cannot put this asunder, except at the peril of his own soul. Any second union, therefore, while both parties are alive, is adultery and not "true marriage," if the exception that Jesus mentioned does not prevail. Remarriage after divorce, "except for fornication," is not merely wrong, but is not "marriage" at all "in the sight of God." It is not an "unworthy marriage," nor a "loveless marriage"—it is adultery. It is clear that "in the mind of God" marriage cannot be dissolved, "except for fornication," and the state cannot put asunder that which God has joined. The state, or human laws, cannot grant liberty of divorce with the right of remarriage "in the sight of God" without running counter to the will of God. No one can follow human laws of divorce and enter into a marriage union without defying God and rebelling against the basic principle of the marriage relationship. "In the sight of God" a divorce may be allowed for adultery, and for adultery only. When the question of remarriage to a divorced person is considered, one should know that the one exception, "except for fornication," exists. If one can-

not absolutely know this, then one should never enter into the married relation with that divorced party. The divorced party may claim that the one exception as mentioned here existed when the divorce was granted, but how can another know that this claim is true? There are so many who make this claim in order to obtain a divorce, when the claim is not true, that an innocent party cannot afford to run the risk of entering into the marriage relationship with the one divorced. Divorce is, and always has been, recognized as a sad necessity at times. The only wise thing to do in the light of the New Testament, if divorce is granted, is for the ones divorced to live a single life.

It is impossible to misunderstand the teachings of Jesus on the subject of divorce and remarriage. The marriage bond is more than a mere contract, dependent for its continuance on the wish of either husband or wife. The teachings of Jesus are supplemented by the teachings of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit said through Paul to the church at Corinth: "But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife. . . . And so ordain I in all the churches." (1 Cor. 7: 10-17.) Again, through Paul the Holy Spirit wrote to the church in Rome: "For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man." (Rom. 7: 2, 3.) This makes it clear that the Holy Spirit emphasized the words of our Lord as recorded by Matthew, and did not sanction remarriage by a divorced person. This is further emphasized by Paul in writing to the church at Ephesus. There he compared the spiritual union of the church and Christ to that of the union of husband and wife. He said: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it. . . . Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies, . . . even as Christ also [loves] the church; because we are members of his body." (Eph. 5: 25-30.) Paul repeats after this Christ's republication of the primal law of marriage: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh." (Eph. 5: 31.)

The teachings of Jesus and those of the Holy Spirit restate and enforce the original principle of the marriage relation. Christ came to set things right and to teach men to respect the original law with respect to the bonds of marriage in its pristine holiness and integrity. Much confusion has arisen in the minds of people over the remarriage question. The laws of the land have recognized many causes for separation; they have granted the privilege of divorce on various grounds. Many have thought that since the laws of our country have granted divorce, they have the privilege of remarriage. In fact, they sought and obtained the divorce for the expressed purpose of remarriage. The laws of human government

on this point are in direct conflict with the laws of God. Christians should seek to know what God's will is on this question, and should follow it. The eternal destinies of at least two souls are involved in the act of divorced persons remarrying. There may be the destinies of others involved. Too much is at stake to run any risk in remarrying.

Anyone who is determined to please God will seek to be guided by his truths rather than by the laws of human government. When there is a conflict between the laws of man and the will of God as expressed so clearly in the Bible, followers of Christ must ignore the laws of men and be guided by the principle of the fundamental law of marriage. Christians should not hesitate for a moment to follow the will of God and condemn that which contradicts God's law. No encouragement should be given by anyone to cause a divorced person to violate the law of God. No "judicial separation," no "conjectures of commentators," no "decrees of council," no "lustful desires," and no "deception of lust" should cause a child of God to ignore the decrees of God on this subject. Many Christians are now in trouble because they have followed the jugglery of human laws, and are now in the quagmire of false bonds of matrimony. It does not matter what evil legislatures have enacted, neither what decrees courts may have made, nor what the man in the street would do—for Christians there is but one line of duty. God has revealed his law; Christ has re-emphasized it; there is no appeal from it. All will be judged by it in the last day.

There is much modern misinterpretation of the emphatic declarations of Jesus. Popular sentiment is opposed to this teaching; the bias and prejudice of human hearts have rebelled against the stern statements of the Savior; yet the Christian must accept his teachings and be guided by them in all of the walks of life. All hasty or prejudiced ideas as to what one thinks the teachings of Jesus *ought* to mean must be put aside, lest "the wish be father to the thought," and thus cause one to read into Christ's words what is not there. It is easy for one to put one's wishes and desires into the words of Jesus. The quagmire of legal fiction, the bias perjury, and the deceptive collusion which proceedings for divorce in our courts—a joke to the indecent and a horror to the decent-minded—must not be followed by Christians. The impulse of glamour and deceptive physical passions of lustful hearts are dangerous. Christians should flee from them; they cannot be guides on this question of remarriage after divorce.

A legal separation is an admission that a given marriage is a complete failure. When the marriage tie has been broken beyond repair, when the sanctity of the holy vows has been defiled by the sin of adultery, then let those who are involved obtain a divorce if they will, but let them remain single. The sin of adultery is the only God-recognized sin which grants the privilege of a separation in the absolute sense. If husband and wife separate for any other cause, let them remain single; they should not seek to enter into a state of legalized adultery. To fail in marriage is a great and tragic failure—tragic for the married parents, even more tragic for their children. Everyone should be taught to think of marriage



as a high and sacred responsibility. There may be temporary separations; there even may be permanent separations; but all separations and legal divorces must be considered in the light of New Testament teaching. When this is done, it will be clearly seen that those who have separated for any other cause than "except for fornication" must live single, or else be reconciled to each other. Since the New Testament teaches that only the sin of fornication gives the privilege of an absolute divorce and separation, all who have been "married" to one who has a living companion are living in adultery, if the scriptural cause does not exist. It is fearful to become entangled in deceptive ceremonies of marriage, so that one cannot extricate oneself from the fetters of lustful slavery. May God spare his children from such a false relationship of life, and may all divorced persons take warning and, like the leper of old, cry, "Unclean!"

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# Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

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