

Divorce And Remarriage

Matthew 19:1-9

Pastor John Miller

We're going to read all nine verses of Matthew 19. I want you to follow with me in your Bibles. Starting in verse 1, "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; 2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. 3 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?"—"put away" being a euphemism for the idea of divorce his wife for any and every reason.

Verse 4, "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read,"—I've always loved that Jesus goes right Himself back to the Scriptures, the Word of God, and says, "Your problem is you're not reading your Bibles." ". . .that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain,"—or two—"shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain,"—two—"but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Verse 7, "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives,"—notice Jesus' words at the end of verse 8—"but from the beginning,"—where He'd just been in the book of Genesis—"it was not so. 9 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."

The following letter to Ann Landers from a man who looked back at his own life and the impact of the divorce that he had initiated. He said these words in his letter. He said, "Years ago I walked out of a twelve-year marriage. My wife is a good person, but for a long time she was under a lot of stress. Instead of helping her, I began an affair with her best friend. This is what I gave up: 1) seeing my daughter grow up; 2) the respect of many long-time friends; 3) the enjoyment of living as a family; 4) a wife who is loyal, appreciative, and who tried very hard to make me happy. Ann, tell your readers that anyone who is married and has his/her next mate all lined up is looking for trouble. People don't know what they are giving up until they no longer have it. Then, it is too late."

In all my years of pastoral ministry I think one of the greatest pains that I've ever seen is the pain of divorce. When infidelity is involved in a divorce as well, you add to that, it's one of the greatest sources of pain and hurt that I've ever witnessed in my life. This is a very sad, very difficult, and very important subject, the subject of divorce. As Christians, we want to know what the Bible teaches about it. We should have a desire to want to know what the Bible teaches about it, come what may, let the chips fall where they will. Even though I may come under conviction or maybe I not like what I hear, we always are at an advantage if we hear the Bible and are ready to obey.

I love that story of Samuel the prophet, the little boy when he was taken by his mother Hannah and left in the temple. When the Lord was calling him, he was instructed, when he heard the voice of the Lord, to say, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." I love that. Whenever we gather to read the Bible or to study the Bible, that should be our prayer. We should say, "Speak, Lord, thy servant is listening." We don't want to be thinking or living like the world or acting like the world. In Romans 12, remember Paul said that we should present our bodies as a living sacrifice, that we should not let the world press us into its mold, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." So let's not follow the world, let's follow the Word of God and let the Lord speak to us through His Word.

We start in Matthew 19. The series has been called, and we've tried to do just that, what the Bible teaches about marriage. Tonight is what the Bible teaches about divorce and remarriage, so we want to look at some of the key verses. It is not exhaustive, but we cover the important passages that we should look at to want to know about this subject. Go back with me to Matthew 19. Matthew 19, particularly the first nine verses, are very crucial and important when it comes to this subject of what Jesus taught or the Bible teaches about divorce.

The stage for this encounter where the Pharisees try to trap Jesus in this controversy goes back to verses 1-3. "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan." It's interesting, at the end of Matthew 18, He had just finished teaching a parable about the need for forgiveness, and the need from our hearts that we need to forgive one another. I think it's kind of interesting that He goes from forgiveness to the subject of divorce, although the subject was brought up by the Pharisees who came tempting Him or trying to trap Him to get Him in a controversy so that they could turn the popular crowd against Him and maybe pit him against the law of Moses. We know that they were constantly trying to do that.

In verse 1 Jesus is beyond, "...the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan," that's what's called Perea, which is on the east side of the Jordan River. It's across the Jordan River which is Jordan today or the West Bank would go up to the Jordan River, but the area of Jordan. He's there preaching and teaching and healing. He's healing all those who came to Him, and the Pharisees decided to go on the attack, verse 3.

The Pharisees were a sect of Jews who were religious in nature. The word "Pharisee" literally means separate ones or separated ones. They came into existence during the intertestamental period, and they were famous in the Bible for being legalistic and having an outward show but very little inward reality. There were a few Pharisees, no doubt, as we saw with Nicodemus, that were sincere, wanted to really know God.

Verse 3, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him,"—that's the important point. What they were trying to do was trap Him. We know that they can't trap the Son of God, right? They think that He's just a carpenter from Galilee, a peasant, and of course they being from Judea were no doubt despising Him and where He's from. They thought, Okay, we got this all figured out.

Even in Jesus' day there were some controversial teachings on the subject of divorce, and there were basically two denominations or two views about divorce. They were going to get Jesus to take one position or the other so that they could cause a rift and people would turn against Him. They come, "...tempting him," or trying to trap Him, "and saying unto him,"—here's their question—"Is it lawful for a man,"—in that culture and time, only a man could divorce a woman—"to put away his wife for every cause?"—or we would translate that for any reason. So, "Jesus, we want to ask You a question," they didn't really want to know the answer, they wanted to embroil Him in a controversy, "is it okay for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?"

The problem is that they were focusing on divorce, and that's a problem today. A Christian couple should never use the "divorce" word. They should never think about it, they should never talk about it, they should never focus on it. It should be struck from your vocabulary altogether. By all means, you should never, in your marriage relationship, get into an argument and say, "I just want a divorce. We need a divorce," or use the "divorce" word. It shouldn't be something that we think about, talk about, or even bring into the equation or consider at all. That's one of their problems.

They said, "Is it lawful,"—is it legal or according to the law is it okay—"for a man to put away his wife,"—divorce his wife—"for every cause?" I don't want to go into too much depth, but quickly, the two main schools of interpreting divorce in the time of Jesus was based on, and we're going to go there in just a minute, Deuteronomy 24, where Moses gave instructions to the children of Israel about 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 send her out of his house." We're going to go there in just a minute to find out what it's all about.

There were two ways to interpret this concept of "uncleanness" in his wife. First of all there was the school of Hillel, which is a very broad, liberal interpretation of an "uncleanness" in his wife; that is, anything and about everything could be considered an "uncleanness" and he could divorce his wife. This was the popular view, much like the view today. I do believe that easy divorce laws are detrimental to our culture. Shame on the United States of America for many things, but for making it easier to get a divorce. It's not a good thing. It's not a helpful thing.

They had this view that if a man found a woman more beautiful than his wife, they actually said you found a blemish in her and you could divorce your wife and marry the other woman. If your wife talked too loudly in public, or talked in public at all, you could divorce her. If she burned your falafel and you tried to eat it and felt awful after eating your falafel, then you could divorce your wife. I mean, if she wasn't a good cook or she didn't clean the house or whatever you wanted to just concoct, and we today pretty much have the same kind of concept. All we need to do is use the term "irreconcilable differences," right? What married couple doesn't have some "irreconcilable differences"? You have two human beings in a marriage relationship, they're not always going to see eye to eye. Marriage is about dying to self and serving the other person's needs.

The Hillel school of thought was very liberal, and no doubt they were coming from that perspective and wanted Jesus to commit to that school, or maybe they assumed most likely that He would be more conservative and that He would uphold the permanency of marriage and then pit Him against the law of Moses, which gave instructions for divorce. We'll see that in just a moment.

The second school of thought is that of Shammai. The two rabbis were Hillel and Shammai. You could almost think of them as two denominations within the Jewish religion, but Shammai was a very strict conservative limited view, which if I were there at the time I would hold that view today, that it's a moral uncleanness and that the word "uncleanness" actually speaks of nakedness. We don't know for sure. Even the greatest of Hebrew scholars can't be sure what that word means, but it seems, based on what we're going to see Jesus said, to indicate some kind of sexual sin or sexual immorality or adultery that would be discovered in your wife's case, then you could give her a writing of divorcement. That's what's going on there in verse 3, they're trying to trick Him to get into a controversy over the issue of, "Can you divorce for any reason or is it just for moral reasons or sexual impurity that you can divorce your wife?"

I want you to note that Jesus, in verses 4-6, endorsed the permanence of marriage. Though they asked Him the question, then Jesus affirms the permanence of marriage. I love these verses. Go back there with me in Matthew 19. "And he answered and said unto them,"—notice where He started—"Have ye not read." I almost can see a little smile on His face, a little glimmer in His eye like, "You Pharisees, you separate ones, you need to know your Bible. Have you not read your Bible?"

One of the problems in the church today with so many is they have not read. Biblical illiteracy is rampant in the church. This is why I'm committed to teaching the Bible, and it's so important for the people of God to know the Word of God. You cannot live the Christian life without a knowledge of God in His Word. It's important.

So, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 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? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." When I taught Matthew 19, actually I was in Mark 10 and went to Matthew 19, I spent two weeks on these nine verses, so I went a lot deeper, if you want to go a little deeper by listening to that on the website, but let me make a couple of observations. Jesus goes back to the book of Genesis, "Have ye not read," and quotes first of all from Genesis 1:27, "that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female." That's a direct quote by Christ from Genesis 1:27, and notice that Jesus only believed in two genders—male and female. They had no gender confusion at that time. They knew what a man was; they knew what a woman was.

One of the greatest attacks on marriage today and because it's a divine institution and reflects the Godhead itself of the Church and Christ is against gender identity. That is an attack from Satan himself. It's demonic, it's evil, it's destructive. We cannot survive as a culture unless we

understand there are men and women, and women are women and men are men, and that marriage is between one man and one woman. Amen? That's what Jesus says in verse 4.

Then, He knows that marriage is the divine institution, "...he which made them at the beginning,"—alluding, no doubt, to God the Father and that He created them—"...male and female,"—and said—"...and they twain shall be one flesh." He says that they are one man and one woman. Thirdly, He says the marriage has three foundational building blocks, and we looked at this many weeks ago when we studied Genesis and the foundation for marriage. Notice the three, verse 5, "leave. . .cleave. . .one flesh." These three are the most foundational building blocks for marriage, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother,"—this is what you might call severance. You leave dependence and reliance upon your parents, you honor your mother and father, you respect them, you can help provide for them and take care of them, but your commitment, your devotion, the priority of your life is your spouse, not your parents.

Notice you have "cleave." This is a very important word. It literally means to be cemented or glued together. It speaks of a bond that's closely bound together, "...and shall cleave to his wife," glued together. This is permanence. Severance, leave; permanence, cleave, "...and they twain shall be one flesh," which is intimacy. We talked about intimacy in marriage last Wednesday night. So, they become one and the consummation of their marriage in the marriage act as they come together as one in Christ.

Notice also that is from Genesis 2:24. In verse 4, Jesus quotes from Genesis 1:27. In verse 5, He quotes from Genesis 2:24. Then, in verse 6 of our text, He says, "Wherefore they are no more twain,"—two—"but one flesh." All of this that Jesus is answering to these Pharisees is to give them a foundation from Scripture to be able to answer their question, "Is it okay to just willy-nilly, for any reason, we're incompatible, it doesn't work out, you're not meeting my needs, I'm not happy, I want out of my marriage. Is that okay?" Jesus said, "No, they're one. They've been glued together."

Notice what Jesus adds. It's nowhere else to be found in the Bible, and remember Jesus is the Son of God, "What therefore God hath joined,"—the word "joined" means to be bound together, used of a yoke of oxen joined together with a yoke—"together, let not man put asunder." That's really the end of the discussion right there. That's where He dropped the mic, actually, this is it. I'm sure that at this point they're thinking, Well, we have plan B that we're going to have to pull into action. We're going to go to Deuteronomy 24. But Jesus knew where they would go, right? He's omniscient. Jesus, the Son of God, gives us His prohibition.

If you're taking notes, the end of verse 6 is Christ's prohibition on divorce, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." You want to get a divorce? God put you together, you have no right to put yourself asunder. That's how I think we should view that statement, Christ's prohibition against divorce. There's a plan that we focus on, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Notice, secondly, in verse 7, the Pharisees asked their trap question. They started with their

lead question, then they had a backup question ready where they would actually try to get Jesus to speak contrary to the law of Moses. Here's what they thought was going to seal the deal and trap Him and pull it out of their pocket. "They say unto him, Why did Moses,"—they loved quoting from Moses—"then command,"—and that's their problem, he didn't command, and we're going to see that in a moment—"to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" They thought, Aha! We got Him! He just said, 'What God has joined together, let no man put asunder,' but Moses told us that he could give her a writing of divorcement and send her out of the house, so this so-called Prophet is actually speaking against the law of Moses. They thought they had Him.

Now, I want you to keep your place here in Matthew 19 and turn back to Deuteronomy 24. You have to bring Deuteronomy 24 into this passage to understand what's going on. We'll come back to Matthew 19 in just a moment. Follow with me as we begin in verse 1. It says, "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,"—that's the key word there. What does it mean he sees an uncleanness in his wife? As I said, the literal rendering of that is nakedness in her. ". . . then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." It's interesting, if he were to divorce her for some flippant reason, she was free to go and become another man's wife.

Verse 3, "And if the latter husband hate her,"—that's her second husband, after she's been divorced she's remarried and her second husband hates 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,"—even just dies—"which took her to be his wife: 4 Her former husband,"—the first husband that divorced her—"which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife." I believe that that is the important optimum statement in this passage. What Moses is trying to establish is that you can't marry and divorce, marry and divorce, marry and divorce, marry and divorce, or that if you divorce a woman, you cannot have her back. So, you need to think about it, make sure you know what you're doing because you're never going to get her back. If she was a good cook, think twice about your decision, okay? You can't just flippantly get a divorce.

Notice verse 4, "Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife,"—that's the commandment. Moses isn't commanding them to get a divorcement, he's allowing them, and Jesus will tell us why. ". . . 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." I don't want to get bogged down in Deuteronomy 24, but let me make some observations. Moses gave only one commandment in verse 4, that the divorced wife could not return to her first husband if her second husband divorced her or died. The tenor of what Deuteronomy is saying is that you can't just get a divorce and get back married, and get a divorce, and marry and divorce. You can't just do it willy-nilly. That's what he's saying, it will defile the land.

Notice that Moses' law did not command a divorce. Nothing in the passage here or in the words

of Jesus indicates that Moses commanded them to divorce. As a matter of fact, nowhere in the Bible—listen to me very carefully—are we commanded to get a divorce. There is an allowance for divorce. There's what I'm going to call a divine concession to human sin or weakness where we can divorce, but we're not commanded to get a divorce. You don't say, "Well, I found an uncleanness in my wife. The Bible commands me, I've gotta divorce you." That's not true at all. Then, the husband would hopefully, in light of this law in Deuteronomy 24, think twice before just divorcing his wife since he could not get her back again. Fourthly, the law of Moses was the divine concession to human sin. I think that's one of the best descriptions of what divorce is, it's a divine concession to human sin.

Go back with me to Matthew 19. We see, thirdly, in this text, verse 8, Jesus answers their question. Their question in verse 7, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" As I said, Moses didn't command them to do anything like that at all. Jesus answers them in verse 8. "He saith unto them, Moses because,"—He's giving us the reason for the Deuteronomy passage—"of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but,"—again—"from the beginning it was not so." I love what Jesus says there in verse 8, "Moses because of the hardness,"—we get our word "sclerosis" from that word hardness. The word "hardness" we get our word cardiac from. It's the literal sclerosis of the heart, "It's because your hearts are hardened," so it's a divine concession to human sin.

Christians, do not let your heart become hardened. I've told married couples for many years in their counseling sessions, "Guard your heart from getting hard. Be sensitive to God. Always be willing to repent. When God convicts you of your sin, get right with God, and then be willing to seek forgiveness from your spouse."

One of the problems is we harden our hearts and we're not yielding to the Holy Spirit. We grieve the Spirit. We quench the Spirit. We resist the Spirit. I believe if you have a married couple, both born again, both indwelt by the Holy Spirit and they are sensitive to the Spirit's conviction and work in their hearts, that there will be repentance, there'll be forgiveness, there'll be restoration. If one or both hardens their heart, all it takes is one in the relationship, a husband with a hard heart or a wife with a hard heart, it only takes one in the relationship for that relationship to be destroyed. Don't allow your heart to be hardened.

Again, the foundation for wanting to stay sensitive to the Spirit is the fear of the Lord. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." If you want your marriage to survive, fear the Lord. You don't want to do anything to dishonor Him, to grieve Him, or to break His heart. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."

Write down Ephesians 4:31-32. Paul says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Again, even if there is something as horrible as infidelity in a marriage, there can be forgiveness and restoration. That by no means is a license to commit sexual immorality, that would be the most foolish thing you could ever do because even though there can be forgiveness and

restoration, when trust is violated, it's very difficult to regain, and the scars and the wounds and the hurt will last a lifetime.

I've been a pastor for 50 years and have almost lasered in my brain...I can recall visually individuals over years of ministry who just destroyed their relationship because of sexual immorality and infidelity in their marriage. I can still see a husband on my front porch at 4:30 in the morning on Sunday with tears just streaming down his face. He just found his wife the night before in bed with another man, and they came to our church. I have never seen pain so severe, and I could go on and just mention all kinds of scenarios. But where there's repentance and forgiveness and a softening of the heart, it's amazing what God's Holy Spirit can do. I've also seen those same hurts and wounds healed, restored, forgiven, and marriages that even sometimes ended in divorce God brought back together and restored because of forgiveness. It's a marvelous thing. Take that Scripture to heart, "And be ye kind. . .tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

You say, "Well, Pastor John, is there no exception? Are we supposed to just let sin be rampant in a spouse and accept it or facilitate it?" The answer is no. There is an exception, and it's in verse 9. Look at it with me. Jesus speaking, "And I say unto you,"—so He's not finished in verse 8. He says, ". . .but from the beginning it was not so." He said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. . .but from the beginning,"—as designed in Genesis—"it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife,"—and here is the exception clause—"except it be for fornication,"—the Greek word is *porneia*—"and shall marry another, committeth adultery:"—if you don't have that situation, then you divorce and remarry, you are living in adultery—"and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." This is the verse that good Christians wrestle, debate, and argue over.

Let me make some points from this verse. I want you to know that Christ speaks with authority. Notice the phrase in verse 9, "And I say unto you." He's debating the interpretation of the Mosaic law which is Scripture, and then He speaks with His own authority. Only God can speak with this kind of authority, so it actually implies the deity and full authority of Christ, "And I say unto you." As He did on the Sermon on the Mount, "Ye have heard that it was said,"—and He would cite the interpretation of the popular view of the law and then would say—"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." "Ye have heard that it was said. . .Thou shalt not kill. . .But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother,"—or hatred in his heart has already committed murder. Jesus speaks with authority. Why do I emphasize that? Because He gives an exception clause that some feel is not to be in the Bible.

It's always convenient when people say, "It's not supposed to be in the Bible," and you need to be careful when you do that because then you become the authority of what belongs in the Bible and what doesn't belong in the Bible—you can pick and choose what you want to obey by what you think is legitimate and what is not legitimate. The reason they say that, one of many reasons, is because they say it's not in Mark and it's not in Luke. The same passages appear, but the exception clause is omitted. It's only found in Matthew. I'm by no means what could be

considered a New Testament textual scholar, but I've done a lot of reading over the years on this subject, and the best scholarship that I could find, and most conservative, all agree and affirm there is no basis at all for rejecting this exception clause. There is no reason to reject Matthew 19:9 when Jesus gives an exception clause. Just because it's not in the parallel of Mark or Luke doesn't mean it's not legitimate and to be found and accepted here by believers. I believe that it's an authentic exception clause.

What does fornication in the Greek, verse 9, *porneia* mean? You hear me mention this a lot. The word *porneia*, we get our word pornographic from it, was a generic term that encompassed all sexual immorality. We, in our English language, will use the word adultery for a married individual that has sex outside their marriage. We use the word fornication for a person that is not married and has premarital sex. We also have homosexuality and all the other things that go down the line, but any sexual relationship outside the covenant of marriage comes under this umbrella of this Greek word *porneia*. The Bible says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication,"—*porneia*, sexual immorality. It is not okay as a child of God to be practicing sexual immorality. Again, let's not lower the standards in the church because the world is so crazy and gone berserk out there. We are to be living by a higher standard. Sexual immorality is the word, so you people can debate and discuss what that might mean, but that's what the word means. It means sexual immorality.

I want you to note the important point in verse 9 is that this is not mandatory. The exception clause of sexual immorality that gives you the ability to divorce your spouse is not mandatory. That's so very important. If you have a spouse that's unfaithful and say, "Oh, well, I guess there's nothing I can do. I just gotta divorce you." No, you can pray, you can wait, you can ask God to soften their heart and make them truly repentant. If it's ongoing, which is habitual, I've seen that happen so commonly, it's over and over and over, at what point do you say, "Enough is enough. God is holy, marriage is holy, and I believe the Bible indicates the sanctity of marriage that even for the honor of God and obedience to the Word that we have to say, 'I'm going to divorce you. I'm not going to allow this to go on. This is not acceptable.'" You shouldn't rush into divorce for any reason. Even if this takes place, you should pray, seek the Lord, ask for wisdom, ask God for help, and ask God to soften hearts, bring true repentance, and healing, forgiveness, and restoration into the marriage relationship, but it's not mandatory. We should seek reconciliation by being repentant and praying, praying, praying for God to bring back that guilty person.

Now, I'm going to try to wrap this up. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 7 because there's also what I believe to be one more reference in the Scriptures to divorce when Paul addresses it in 1 Corinthians 7. A lot of Christians believe there's no exception clause; some believe that there's only one exception clause. They believe that when the exception clause is applied that you cannot remarry, the guilty party cannot remarry. I believe that wherever the Bible allows divorce, it equally allows remarriage. If there's an allowance for divorce, there's an allowance for remarriage.

Here's the second reason for divorce or an allowance in the Scriptures. So we have what Jesus

taught, now I want to look at what Paul taught. Again, we're not doing a study of 1 Corinthians 7. You can check that out on the website. Notice he speaks in verse 10, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord," so "I want to speak to those that are married, and I'm commanding this is something the Lord spoke about." I think he's alluding to Matthew 19 when he says, "The Lord spoke on this subject." "Let not the wife depart from her husband,"—he's endorsing again the permanence of marriage—"But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried,"—so if they bail out on the marriage, then they should remain single—"or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. 12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord,"—don't misunderstand what Paul is saying there in verse 12. Paul isn't saying, "This is just me speaking off the top of my head, and I'm anti-women and anti-marriage. I'm a male chauvinist, and I don't like women, so I'm going to say this." Paul is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

I remember years ago I had a woman come up to me after a study on 1 Corinthians 7. She said, "I just don't agree with Paul." I thought, Well, you can debate it with him when you get to heaven. "I don't agree with Paul?" How does that work? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." You can't just say, "I don't agree with Paul," and pick the apostles you'll agree with and ones you won't agree with.

Paul says, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord:"—the Lord didn't address this scenario. The problem with this subject is that there's so many scenarios and variations and issues that arise that we can't exhaust all of them, and usually a study like this creates more questions than it does answers. Notice verse 12, "If any brother hath a wife,"—so a Christian man who has a wife—"that believeth not,"—so here's the scenario, you have a man who is a Christian married to a woman who is not a Christian—"and she be pleased to dwell with him,"—she's okay with him being a Christian. She wants to stay married to him—"let him not put her away." What was happening in Corinth, they were getting saved out of paganism and maybe one got saved and the other didn't get saved. The Christian would say, "I'm a Christian now. I'm married to this heathen. I don't want to get cooties, I want a Christian husband," or "I want a Christian wife," so they were divorcing their unsaved spouses. There's no basis for that at all. If you're married to an unbeliever, you're not to divorce him or her because they're unbelievers. You're not to get a divorce.

Verse 13, "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not,"—so he turns it around, you got a Christian woman married to an unbelieving man—"and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." So, ladies, you don't say, "Well, my husband's a heathen, and I want one of those good Christian men at church down there at Revival. I have my eye on one that has a beautiful Bible. He seems pretty spiritual, drives a nice car. I think I'll divorce this heathen bum and get me one of those Christian guys down there at Revival Christian Fellowship." No, no, no, no, no. Notice verse 14. He gives us the reason why, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife,"—it doesn't mean he's saved, it means the Christian spouse has a sanctifying influence for good upon that individual.

Some of you found that you became a Christian because your spouse got saved and you saw

the change in their life and you came to Christ. There are many people that say, "My wife got saved, and I saw the change in her, and I came to Christ;" or "My husband got saved, and I saw the change in him, so I came to Christ." So, don't divorce them, they're sanctified by you. ". . .and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy," which indicates that if one spouse in the marriage is a Christian, it brings the sanctifying influence of Christ into that home for those children, so don't give up on your marriage.

Notice verse 15, "But if the unbelieving depart, let him,"—or you might twist it around, her—"depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace." That's the point I want to make. If they want to depart, they're not pleased to dwell with you because you're a Christian and they abandon you, you are not under bondage in such cases. It's a very strong word, by the way, "bondage." It was used for the marriage bond. You're not bound anymore to your spouse. God says you're free to divorce, and I believe that you are free to remarry. Let me go into more detail on this, "but God hath called us to peace."

Notice verse 16, "For what knowest thou, O wife,"—how do you know—"whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" If you have an unsaved spouse, read 1 Peter 3, ladies, it's written in the context of a woman having an unsaved husband, let them, ". . .be won by the conversation,"—manner of living—"of the wives." It's not by your preaching, not by your hen pecking. It's not by you preaching to them, but by the way that you live, and the same way should a husband win his wife by the way that he lives.

This is the point I want to make. I admit there are good Bible scholars that are in the same camp. I'm not alone. But I believe that this is the second biblical basis for divorce—permanent abandonment. In the context, it's an unbeliever that doesn't like the fact that you're a Christian, doesn't want to be married, and abandons you. You're not getting a divorce, you're not the one instigating that. They want the divorce. They abandon you, they leave you permanently, and you can get a divorce. I use the term "permanent abandonment." Again, that could be a little subjective. How do you determine whether or not you've been abandoned.

I had a woman in the church years ago. Her husband literally went to the grocery store and never came back. Eight years later she's still waiting in tears as she talked to me, "How long do I wait? My husband just left and never came back. I raised the children on my own, paid the mortgage on my own, had to take care of the family on my own. How long do I wait?" That's a good question, and I would never try to tell somebody a timeframe. All I would say was pray, seek the Lord, ask Him to give you wisdom, ask Him to give you peace, and you determine whether or not they've left because they're not pleased to dwell with you. Now, sometimes they don't leave, and this is where it gets difficult, but they just treat you in a way that they're evidently saying, 'I'm not pleased to dwell with you.' That's a decision that you have to make. I can't make it for you, but if they permanently abandon you.

Now, if you send your husband to the grocery store, and it normally takes 15 minutes, and it's been 25 minutes, you don't file for divorce. You're not like, "Okay, okay. Five more minutes and

this marriage is over.” I’m being a little ludicrous but to make a point. You pray, you’re patient, you wait. If your unbelieving spouse is pleased to dwell with you, then you do your best to serve the Lord and to bring that sanctifying influence into the home. I believe that there’s two biblical basis for divorce—not commands, not mandates, not something you have to do—but sexual immorality, primarily in thinking in the terms of adultery, and then also permanent abandonment.

Now, three closing comments by way of questions. What if you were divorced before you were saved? The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” I believe that when you are born again, you literally have a brand new beginning. I realize that sins can be forgiven and scars remain, this is why I just plead with young people, “Live in all purity. Don’t practice promiscuity. Keep yourself for a godly husband, for a godly wife. Live in purity. Don’t buy the goods the world is selling. I promise you, you’ll be glad you did.” I never met anyone that said, “Oh, I’m glad I fooled around before I got married.” I never met anyone say that as a Christian. It always brings a wound and a scar and affects your life. But if you have been born again, “. . .old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,” God has forgiven. Divorce is not an unpardonable sin, and we shouldn’t treat people like they have a plague if they’ve got divorce in their background.

Secondly, what if you were divorced for the wrong reasons? Write down 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Again, this is not a license to sin in any area. You should never presume upon the grace of God. “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Paul says, “God forbid,”—perish the thought.

Thirdly, if you’re not saved, turn to God in true repentance and be born again. Amen? Let’s pray.