

Thought Provoking Questions
Lesson Two – Marriage and Divorce

1. Introduction.
 - A. This is a sensitive subject – very few families that have not been touched by divorce.
 - B. Over the years, I have found that the greatest support for teaching on the subject of marriage and divorce comes from those whose lives have been touched by it.
 1. Keep our children out of it if possible.
 2. At one congregation I taught junior and senior high school students a class on preparation for marriage; it was complimented by both students and parents whose children told them about the class.
 - C. Undoubtedly, prevention is the best medicine.
2. But once it is too late to prevent divorce, what does the Bible teach on divorce and remarriage?
3. Basic passages on which most agree:
 - A. Matthew 5:27-32.

²⁷ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸ But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. ²⁹ And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³¹ It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: ³² But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.
 - A. Matthew 19:3-9:

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?

⁴ And he answered and said unto them, 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.

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: but from the beginning 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.

B. Mark 10:2-12:

² And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him.

³ And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

⁴ And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away.

⁵ And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

⁶ But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

⁷ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

⁸ And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

⁹ What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

¹⁰ And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*.

¹¹ And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, **and marry another**, committeth adultery against her.

¹² And if a woman shall put away her husband, **and be married to another**, she committeth adultery.

C. Romans 7:1-3.

¹Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

³ So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4. Principles from these passages:
 - A. God ordained and established marriage in the beginning.
 - B. Man is not to change God's rules.
 - C. Moses interim permission was set aside by Christ to return to as it was "from the beginning."
 - D. Christ's statement of that law is:
 1. Whoever puts away his or her spouse;
 2. Except it be for fornication;
 3. And marries another;
 4. Commits adultery.
 5. Whoever marries the one put away;
 6. Commits adultery.
 - E. Paul tells us that death terminates the marriage bond.
5. Application of these principles:
 1. Divorce for other than fornication plus remarriage equals adultery.
 2. Divorce minus fornication minus remarriage equals no adultery.

BODY: Questions on divorce and remarriage that have been asked may be resolved by the consistent application of these principles. (keep in mind that God has made clear His attitude toward divorce – He hates putting away. Mal. 2:16.

1. If a husband and wife obtain a legal divorce in the absence of fornication, are they still married in the eyes of God: in other words, does God recognize divorce in the absence of fornication?

A. This is the same as asking whether God permits divorce in the absence of fornication; if he does not permit it, it stands to reason that he would not recognize it, and if he does permit it, it stands to reason that he would recognize it (that is, that he would consider as unmarried the person who has been divorced in the absence of fornication).

B. 1 Corinthians 7:7-15.

⁷ For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

⁸ I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

⁹ But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

¹⁰ And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband:

¹¹ **But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, 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: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

¹³ And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace.

C. Observations:

1. The verb used here is the same as in Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9 there translated “asunder”; thus it is not merely a “separation” that is involved.

2. Two alternatives are available:

a. Remain **unmarried**.

b. Be reconciled.

- D. But does not Paul refer to the ex-spouse as her “husband”?
1. Remember that the same Greek word means “husband” and “man,” with the context determining which is appropriate.
 2. Moreover, what better word could be used to identify the only individual to whom she could be married – the one who was (had been) her husband.
 3. Jesus identified a string of men married to one woman as her husbands. John 4:16-18.
- E. Conclusion: God recognizes and permits a divorce in the absence of fornication, but remarriage is prohibited.
2. My spouse committed adultery in his heart by making a pass at another woman; am I free to remarry?
- A. The Greek word for “fornication” means “illicit sexual intercourse.”
1. Jesus teaching on controlling the heart and the mind in Matthew 5 does not change the ground for scriptural divorce and remarriage.
 - a. Jesus comparison was not with the Mosaic law’s “writing of divorcement (Deut. 24:1), but with its corruption by the Scribes and Rabbis (except for the school of Shammai).
 - b. The expression “something unseemly” means literally “a matter of nakedness”; thus, it more than likely meant something more than the school of Hillel taught, which included the finding of one that the husband found more fair.
 - c. On the other hand, some suggest that it means something less than adultery for which the punishment was stoning. Deut. 22:22.
 - d. It may be, however, that divorce was simpler than the process required for stoning which required the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:2-7).
 - e. But even if the husband “suspected” the wife was guilty of adultery, there was a “law of jealousy” (Numbers 5:11-31) to help.

- i. If a “spirit of jealousy” came over him he could take his wife to the priest with a sacrifice and request the “law of jealousy.”
 - ii. If she was found to be innocent, she was free and her husband had to pay a penalty.
 - iii. If she was guilty of the sin of lying with another man she was “a curse among her people.”
 - iv. Evidently, this test was for the protection of women from a hasty and groundless suspicion on the part of husbands, yet the suspicions of a jealous husband were sufficient to produce it in the absence of witnesses.
 - v. There is no mention of corporal punishment, but adultery discovered and proven was to be punished with death.
 - vi. If the law of jealousy was proof of adultery, then the one guilty was to be stoned.
 - vii. This law made provision for conviction of the guilty and protection of the innocent when there were no witnesses.
- f. Here Jesus was attacking the “front end” of the transgression, not the end result.
 - i. If you keep your eye (heart, mind) right, you never reach the point of adultery.
 - ii. The Jews may have thought that the preliminary acts and thoughts were not prohibited by “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”
 - iii. Jesus says that the “look” (a continuous gazing upon) is against the will of God; our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.
- 2. In this case the asserted ground is “making a pass” at another woman.
- 3. Moreover there is insufficient information to render a judgment if one were so inclined; there is no definition of what “making a pass” means.

1. Who is to judge when a “pass” is serious enough to be “adultery in the heart”?
 2. Would there not be a different viewing of the same act by a jealous husband or wife and one who was not?
 3. Would such judgments not be subject to bias on the part of a mate who wanted out of a marriage?
 4. Under such circumstances the exception would soon swallow the rule.
- B. The act of fornication is not a subjective act in the mind of the one who observes and claims to be able to read minds, it is an objective act that literally occurs; it can be determined to have occurred without reading minds.
3. May one in an adulterous relationship prior to conversion remain in that relationship after conversion?
 - A. The responsibility of the church in teaching the gospel to any person is the same – proclaim the teaching of scripture without fear or favor.
 1. Thus, the question really inquires concerning:
 - a. the teaching of scripture on divorce;
 - b. the teaching of scripture on conversion; and
 - c. whether there is some different standard for the person who is unscripturally divorced.
 2. Subpart One: The New Testament’s teaching on divorce is found in such passages as Matthew 5:21-32; Matthew 19:2-9; Mark 6:17-18; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-15; and Hebrews 13:4.
 - a. From these verses it is clear that there is only one basis for divorce and remarriage in the sight of God – fornication.
 - b. Absent fornication, remarriage by a divorced person constitutes adultery.
 - c. The Scripture also clearly teaches that adultery and fornication are sins that bring upon one the judgment of God.
 - d. In addition to the scriptures above, see Romans 1:28-32; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:9-11, 15-18; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy

1:9-10; 1 Peter 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:9-14; Jude 7; Rev. 2:20-22; Rev. 9:1.

3. Subparts Two and Three: The real thrust of this question addresses the nature of repentance required on the part of the divorced person.
 - a. Stated differently, can an unscripturally divorced and remarried person who is, according to scripture, living in adultery, become a Christian and remain in the adulterous relationship?
 - b. To address these parts of the inquiry, we must study the nature and requirements of repentance.
 - i. It is absolutely possible for past unscriptural marital entanglements to be forgiven, but that is a different question than whether those past unscriptural marital entanglements may be maintained.
 - ii. The Bible clearly teaches that a person may so violate God's teaching concerning marriage that his or her own life will be so entangled maritally that the relationship in which one is involved cannot be maintained if God's forgiveness is to be received.
 - c. Bible teaching makes clear that people can so sin in the marital relationship that no choice exists but to live single and celibate.
 - d. But there are children. If the first marriage was dissolved because the man was caught making a pass at another woman but not actually in the act of adultery (which was viewed by the wife as adultery in his heart, therefore her reason for divorce) and then she remarried and had children, would she be considered to be in an unbiblical marriage and would divorce be required because now she has been in a happy marriage with 2 children for 13 years.
 - i. That is neither a reflection on the mercy of God nor a reflection on God's forgiveness.
 - ii. It is an indication of the nature of sin – its devastating, destructive effects.

- iii. Even more, it is a reflection of man's own stubborn disobedience and rejection of what God designed for our good.
- d. Is there any other unscriptural relationship where people argue that it can continue after conversion?
 - i. What about the homosexual relationship or an incestuous relationship?
 - ii. What did repentance and baptism mean to the Corinthians who had been practicing adultery, homosexuality, male prostitution, thievery, or swindling (1 Cor. 6:9-10)?
 - iii. Was the adulterer permitted to continue in an adulterous union while the homosexual had to leave his or hers?
 - iv. To ask the question is to answer it for reasonable people.
- e. But, some argue, adultery is like murder.
 - i. A murderer may repent but it is impossible for him to bring the dead back to life.
 - ii. So with adultery it is suggested, an adulterer may repent but it is impossible for the prior marriage to be "raised."
 - iii. This is a false analogy.
 - a) First, severing an illicit relationship is not an attempt to rectify past divorces or restore past marriages; rather, it is what is demanded by repentance and God's laws of marriage.
 - b) Second, the basic principle that does apply to both murder and adultery is that repentance demands that the individual cease committing murder and cease living in adultery (See Col. 3:7; 1 Cor. 6:9-11); just saying "I'm sorry" doesn't change an illicit state or relationship into a righteous one so that it may be continued.
 - c) Nowhere has God ever dealt with sin in such a manner; God has always demanded the cessation of the sinful

practice or relationship before He abundantly pardons. (See Ezra 10, esp. vv. 3, 12, and 44.)

B. Conclusion.

1. There is only one answer that can be given to this question – the answer of scripture. Based upon the question, the inquirer knows and understands what the scripture teaches, but seeks some answer in addition or beyond what scripture says.
 2. This we cannot do.
 3. Any other answer would be the answer of man and not God; any other answer would not change the word of God, and it is that word by which we shall be judged. John 12:48.
 4. The honest answer is that “we must obey God rather than men.” Acts 5:29.
 5. One cannot continue in an adulterous relationship after baptism any more than a thief could keep stolen goods after baptism.
 6. Baptism must be preceded by repentance. Acts 2:38.
3. But David did not have to give up Bathsheba. Does that not demonstrate that God does not require the new convert to give up an adulterous relationship?
- A. When a question is asked, the Inquirer should consider it carefully to determine if it has any underlying assumptions.
1. First, this question assumes there is no difference between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ.
 - a. This is especially important here, because in the very context in which Jesus reinstated the original law of God for marriage – one man and one woman – he stated that under Moses’ Law it had been different.
 - b. 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? ⁴ And he answered and said unto them, 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. 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: but from the beginning it was not so.” Matthew 19:3-8.

- b. That alone should answer the question.
2. But the question has another underlying and unfounded assumption – that God did not punish David at all for his sin with Bathsheba.
 1. ⁷ And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; ⁸ And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. ⁹ Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. ¹¹ Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. ¹³ And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath

put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. ¹⁴ Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die. ¹⁵ And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. ¹⁶ David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. ¹⁷ And the elders of his house arose, *and went* to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. ¹⁸ And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? ¹⁹ But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. ²⁰ Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed *himself*, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. ²¹ Then said his servants unto him, What thing *is* this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, *while it was* alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. ²² And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? ²³ But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” 2 Samuel 12:7-23.

2. David’s sin was grievous and his punishment was great all the days of his life.

3. Study carefully to follow the second punishment through David's life; his travail was unending.
- B. Since we are living under the New Testament in Christ's blood (Matt. 26:28), you need to turn to it to learn God's law of marriage in this day.
1. Beginning with the teaching of the New Testament, the preparation of John and the ministry of Christ, that law is clear.
 “³ For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. ⁴ For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. ³ For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. ⁴ For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.” Matthew 14:3-4.
 2. “⁹ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

4. Justification Questions:

- (1) If there is a divorce for other than fornication and one of the spouses remarries thus committing adultery, is the other spouse free to remarry?
- (2) **What is the status of an adulterer in an unscriptural marriage after first spouse dies?** I read your answer relative to marriage, divorce and remarriage. If your teachings are correct, in that the only reason the bible authorizes divorce is in the case of physical fornication, then what is the state of a baptized Christian who divorces and remarries another when one of them dies, and what is the state of a spouse that remains

alive? Can the spouse that remains repent or are they still in a state of adultery?

- (3) Variant A) Can a person, married scripturally, having a wife that commits adultery, and he not willing to put her away but follows her in this sin and commits adultery also with another woman, then claims that in his mind his marriage was over and thus divorce had occurred and therefore his sin was one of fornication and not adultery. They finally do legally divorce. He also says that this sin of fornication will be forgiven upon his baptism, and his upcoming marriage will not be adulterous because he retained his scriptural right to remarry. Can you baptize such a one?

Variant (B) If both parties in a marriage have committed adultery (fornication) and they reconciled, then one of the parties committed adultery after the reconciliation. Does that free the one who has not committed the act of adultery after the reconciliation, to divorce the one who committed adultery after the reconciliation and remarry? I need to know if reconciliation between husband and wife dissolves the adulterous act and gives them a clean slate as if it had never been committed. The reason I need to know this is because if I ask the once married individual who committed adultery, reconciled, and divorced for adultery, if they committed adultery during the marriage and they say yes, I need scripture saying it is alright for me to marry them. My thoughts are that rights are only extended to individuals as long as they are re-reconciled, such as the rights believers have in Christ. The rights are no longer extended to us the moment that we leave Christ. Please help with the aforementioned question in lieu of Matt 18:23-35.

- A. First, let me say that I make every effort to be certain that the answers provided are the teaching of scripture – not my teaching.
1. If I provide a personal opinion I try to label it as such.
 2. My opinion is binding on no one, though it may be followed by those who agree with it.

3. Christ's opinion is binding on all, whether they agree with it or not. My opinion may be disregarded with impunity; the Lord's opinion is disregarded at one's eternal peril.
- B. These questions pose either real life or hypothetical circumstances that are often not directly addressed in scripture.
1. Most hypotheticals are surmised by those who are seeking to justify their circumstance even if it is not exactly the same as the hypothetical.
 2. They feel, unjustifiably so, that if they can come up with some circumstance in the same general area where they fall short of God's will, then God would surely not be dissatisfied with their condition.
 3. Fortunately, God does give us some principles by which we may address these situations.
 - a. The hypothetical – Rom. 7:1 ff. teaches that, upon the husband's death, the wife is freed from the law of the husband; it also clearly teaches that the only justification for divorce and remarriage is fornication.
 - i. In the hypothetical two persons divorce for a cause other than fornication and both remarry. Both are thus in adulterous unions. Ultimately one of the two dies.
 - ii. Is the surviving spouse free to remarry and, if so, is the surviving spouse free to continue in a union that all agree was adulterous at its inception?
 - iii. A variant of the question inquires whether, the first spouse having died, the surviving spouse can end the adulterous union and then marry a third person.

- iv. To respond to these inquiries there is yet another question that must be answered – did God recognize the second marriage even though it was adulterous?
 - a) The answer to this question is “Yes.” Matthew 19:9ff.
 - b) The Lord clearly calls the second union a marriage.
 - c) This being the case, the surviving spouse was married, though adulterous.
 - d) The second union may cease by divorce, but there is no justification for remarriage.

- b. But after the first spouse dies cannot the surviving spouse repent and remain in the second marriage?
 - i. First, the sincerity of a repentance that comes only after the first spouse dies is questionable.
 - ii. Obviously, man cannot know the heart, but God can.
 - iii. But surely questions can be raised when one has willfully violated God’s law by entering into and staying in the second union, and repenting only after a fortuitous circumstance occurs that enables the surviving spouse to lawfully retain that which was unlawfully obtained.
 - iv. Additionally, nothing was hypothesized concerning the person whom the surviving spouse married.

- v. That person would also be in adultery for marrying the surviving spouse.
 - vi. Did that person also divorce for a cause other than adultery; is that person's first spouse still alive?
- c. Finally, some suggest that 1 Corinthians 7:39 teaches that a Christian widow (and by implication a widower) may only marry a Christian.
- i. While I do not believe that is necessarily what the passage teaches, it is certainly the safe path to follow because that path is right and cannot be wrong.
4. Given the above, the scripture teaches that the surviving spouse in the hypothetical should leave the second marriage and remain unmarried.
- a. It would seem that if the repentance is true this would be the inevitable result.
 - b. One truly penitent would seek the way that will most certainly lead to life everlasting and not gamble with the soul.

C. It is always easier to discuss general principles than it is to apply them to specific situations. Specific situations are always clouded by emotional considerations. It has led elders in the church to accept as not erroneous principles that they had earlier condemned as unscriptural. It has led preachers to teach error because of members of their family who have divorced and remarried contrary to their prior teaching on marriage and divorce. **In truth and in fact, personal conduct does not determine Biblical principles; Biblical principles always govern personal conduct.** Thus, we must first determine the Biblical principles that govern marriage and divorce.

- 1. God's plan has always been one man and one woman for life. Matthew 19:3-8.

2. Jesus taught that the only basis upon which remarriage could occur following divorce was in the case of fornication on the part of one mate, leaving the innocent party free to remarry. Matthew 19:9; Mark 2:10-12.
3. The “putting away” must be *for* fornication.
4. *Fornication* and *adultery* do not follow our commonly understood distinctions. *Fornication* is from a Greek word meaning *illicit sexual intercourse*. *Adultery* is from a Greek word meaning *to have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife*. Thus, all adultery is fornication, but not all fornication is adultery.
5. God permits divorce for causes other than fornication. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. In such cases, however, there can be no remarriage. They must remain *unmarried* or be reconciled. Thus the case is that divorce for whatever reason ends the marriage. If it did not Paul could not have said that those who divorced for causes other than fornication were to remain *unmarried*.
6. The act of fornication does not end the marriage. If it did the putting away would occur automatically. The adultery occurs upon the remarriage. Who so puts away his wife *and marries another*, except it be for fornication, commits adultery. The one who marries the one put away for fornication commits adultery. Where there is a putting away, even for fornication, and no remarriage, there is no adultery. Moreover, does it not follow that if an illicit relation involving a married person ends a marriage that illicit relations between single persons constitutes marriage? If not, why not?
7. That act of fornication does not require divorce; it permits it. The parties clearly may reconcile. Matthew 18:23-35 does not prevent divorce. The aggrieved spouse may forgive the guilty spouse but still be unable to live with him/her. Forgiveness does not require the continuation of the marriage; it permits it. We clearly

understand this in other contexts where sin, though forgiven, has detrimental consequences. A criminal may be forgiven by a victim, but the forgiveness does not mean that incarceration is not justified.

8. If the parties reconcile, *i.e.*, forgive one another, they should not charge one another with that act again. Further, they may seek and obtain God's forgiveness for their indiscretion. An important factor here is that there is no third party involved in the marriage. Unlike where there is an adulterous marriage (one who was not eligible to marry because of prior adultery had in fact remarried) repentance here does not require the putting away of a spouse (third party) thus ending an adulterous marriage.
 9. Where reconciliation has occurred, a divorce subsequent to the reconciliation cannot be *for* fornication unless it is *for* fornication that occurred subsequent to the reconciliation. If the divorce has been for incompatibility, *e.g.*, "I don't love you any more," 1 Corinthians 7 applies – remain unmarried or be reconciled. This means that where there has been reconciliation, it is over between the parties to the marriage, but not necessarily over as between those parties and third parties with whom they may seek marriage. The fact that the guilt is no longer borne as to the spouse does not mean that what has once been forfeited, the right to marry another, has been regained. Once that right has been lost, it cannot be recovered any more than a young man or woman can regain virginity lost through indiscretion.
- D. If these principles are followed and applied, most, if not all questions on marriage and divorce will be answered. In the questions considered here, they will lead to the conclusion that the Scripture teaches that none of the persons involved in these questions is eligible in the sight of God for remarriage.

1. Sometimes the application of these principles produces results that may be considered a harsh, but harsh results often follow wrong decisions.
2. Over the years, those who have supported the clear teaching of God's word on marriage and divorce have always included many of those who have made poor marriage decisions.
3. Like the rich man who ignored Lazarus, and in torment he pled with father Abraham to send Lazarus to his brethren that "they come not to this place," divorced persons want to help others avoid their mistakes.
4. Let us join together to restore marriage to its rightful place and train and assist our children to make wise decisions for their future married happiness.
5. God commands us to get out of the adulterous relationship, at which time we can be forgiven if we have truly repented. But the one who was adulterous in the relationship is not free to marry again.

CONCLUSION:

The Scripture plainly says, "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.*" (Matthew 19:9.) The language of the New Testament on marriage and divorce is not nearly as complicated as some make it. Generally, those who seek to avoid it are themselves or have family members who are caught up in unscriptural relationships. The family is important to God. He requires that it be respected and kept pure by man. Many are the tears and regrets that could have been avoided if people had thought about the teaching of Scripture before they married instead of after they had gotten into an untenable situation. Once they find themselves in that situation and a marriage is terminated for reasons other than fornication or adultery, only two alternatives are available – remain unmarried or be reconciled to the one from whom they are separated. (1 Cor. 7:11.)

To avoid this conclusion some teach that God does not recognize earthly divorce. To the contrary, they argue, divorce in God's eyes occurs when one of the parties commits adultery either with or without marriage. Such, however, does not seem to be the teaching of Scripture. Notice that the person who got a divorce in Matthew 19:9 "married" another. If a man was still married to the first wife in spite of an earthly divorce, and God recognized the second state as "married," which He plainly does, then He must endorse polygamy. True, it may just be for a short time until the second union is consummated, but it remains polygamy until God recognizes the second union. It does seem strange that one would take the position that God does not recognize the dissolution of a marriage until an unscriptural marriage occurs. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 clearly establishes that such thinking is erroneous. "10 And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife." When one who is married departs from the spouse, the departing spouse must remain *unmarried*. If God did not recognize the departure ("to leave a husband or wife: of divorce, 1 Co. vii, 11, 15," Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament), how could the departing spouse be referred to as "unmarried"?