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Divorce and Remarriage

Why Didn't We See This Before?

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The research for this report began a number of years ago in an attempt to find out what God's Word has to say about divorce and remarriage. Is divorce wrong? Is the adultery in remarriage an act or a state? In what cases are divorce and remarriage permitted? What place do divorced and remarried couples have in the Church? Can the church accept them the same as any other married couple? As I look at the interesting truths that I found in Scripture on divorce and remarriage, I have to ask myself, "Why didn't we see this before?"

It is important that we know and understand what God's truth is about divorce and remarriage. The subject of divorce and remarriage has the potential to be a deciding factor of eternal life or death - Heaven or Hell for someone. One day each of us will be judged by Jesus Christ by God's Law; not the lower court's (the local church's) opinion of God's Law. If the Church has said that a particular divorce and remarriage situation is not sin and God says it is sin, it is too late on Judgment Day for the one who was in that situation to find out God's truth, repent and be saved from hell.

Therefore, divorce and remarriage is a matter of eternity in heaven or hell: a subject of utmost importance for us to understand exactly what God has to say about it. Eternity in hell is too long to risk putting faith in the opinions and reasoning of others. We need to know what the truth is, and what God says is right and wrong.

Divorce and remarriage is a significant subject which many people, as well as the church, face. Many marriages are being severed by divorce. Today, the divorce rate is no different in the church than among the ungodly. Everyone has an opinion about it, and everyone is entitled to hold an opinion about divorce and remarriage. However, the personal opinions and human reasonings that others share tend to obscure what God says about divorce and remarriage. This is particularly true when a line of reasoning (that is in error) is stated by a number of well

respected, highly educated Christian sources. When error is repeated as truth, the number of people who believe it to be truth increases. Those who believe that a particular erroneous line of reasoning is truth also see God's truth as error. God's truth on divorce and remarriage then does not make sense because it does not line up with what they have been told and with what they believe to be true.

We need to be like the Bereans and search the Bible for ourselves to see if what is being confidently stated as truth is truth. As I have checked out things that I have read or heard, I have found a lot of error being stated as truth in the church. People who I highly respected had not done the careful research that I thought they had. I also found that often they were relying on the writings of others rather than a careful study of the Bible.

The subject of divorce and remarriage has not been exhaustively studied in the Bible, even though it has been extensively studied and written about. The Bible is a rich gold mine of spiritual truth and there is even more to be learned. In fact I am still learning more as more and more of the puzzle pieces are revealed.

God Hates Divorce

On many doctrines, God speaks His will as clear, and sometimes more clearly, in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. We find this true on the doctrine of marriage and divorce. God hates divorce. God says in [Malachi 2:16](#) that "He hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment." No only does God tell us that He hates divorce, but He says that divorcing one's spouse removes a person from fellowship with Him. He will not receive the worship of a person who has divorced their spouse. God says "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." ([Malachi 2:13,14](#))

We see from this passage in the Old Testament that divorce and remarriage is a serious matter. We see that God hates divorce. Not only does He hate divorce, but when a Christian divorces their spouse, it removes them from fellowship with God and He no longer receives their worship. Because God expresses His feelings so strongly about divorce, we need to be careful to correctly discern what God is saying on the doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, lest we be guilty of removing ourselves or others from fellowship with Him.

Those who can never divorce:

A couple who committed fornication together before they were married can never divorce. In [Deuteronomy 22:28, 29](#) God says: "If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days." This passage is significant because it significantly limits what the phrase "saving for the cause of fornication" in [Matt. 5:32](#) and [Matt. 19:9](#) can mean. There is no exception for divorce and remarriage if the couple had sexual intercourse together before they were married.

How Divorce and Remarriage are separate events

and therefore are two separate, although related items for discussion.

Many people view divorce and remarriage as one and the same for purposes of discussion. For instance, the assumption is often made that if a person living in a remarriage situation cannot be accepted as a member in the church, then a person who is divorced is not able to be able to be a member in the church either. When divorce and remarriage are viewed as one and the same, it significantly hinders one from understanding what God says about both divorce and remarriage. The assumption is often made that divorce makes a person single again and that remarriage is the purpose of divorce. Because remarriage is viewed as the purpose for divorce, they view divorce and remarriage as one and the same: if divorce is permitted then remarriage is also. However, this is not the case according to Scripture.

We will see that according to Scripture, divorce and remarriage need to be viewed as two separate events, and therefore as two separate, although related, items for discussion.

God makes the man and woman one

Marriage is more than a marriage certificate from the civil government. In marriage, God makes the man and the woman one. God says about the being made one aspect in [Malachi 2:15](#): "And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."

Jesus also stated that it is God who joins a man and woman together as one flesh in marriage: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." [Matt. 19:4-6](#)

Divorce is a legal action that the civil government (not God) has established. A couple may go to the church to get married, but they have to go to the civil government to get a divorce. The Church cannot grant a legal divorce. Although divorce can end the legal aspect of a marriage, it cannot end the "one" aspect of the marriage which God has joined together. Once divorce occurs, a person is not single again in God's judgment, and therefore not free to marry another person even if their first spouse has remarried. The "one" union with their spouse can only be ended by the death of one of the marriage partners. According to Jesus, a marriage cannot be ended by the legal proceedings of the court. There will be more on this later.

In the same passage in [Malachi 2](#) where God states that he makes the man and woman one, God also clearly states that after divorce the marriage is still binding "yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." ([Malachi 2:14](#)) Divorce does not end the "one" aspect of the marriage that God joined together when they were married.

God also says, "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." [Romans 7:3](#).

What is the Act or Action that is Adultery in Remarriage?

Jesus makes it clear that adultery occurs in remarriage. This is stated clearly in the following passages:

"whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." ([Matt. 5:32](#));

"whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" ([Matt. 19:9](#));

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." (Mark. 10:11,12);

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." ([Lk. 16:18](#));

"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." ([Rom. 7:3](#))

The term "adultery" is the Greek word "moichao" *Strong's* number 3429. In all the Greek lexicons (dictionaries) I checked there was only one definition given for this word and that is "to commit adultery". *Thayers* adds, "to have unlawful intercourse with another's wife"

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary also gives only one definition for the word adultery: "Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man and someone other than his wife or between a married woman and someone other than her husband."

Jesus added to this and stated that a man can commit the sin of adultery in the fantasy of his mind without the physical act taking place. Jesus said that for a man to desire in his mind to have sexual relations with another woman, that man commits adultery in his heart. [Mt. 5:28](#): "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." According to the definition for the Greek word for adultery that Jesus used, the act or action that is adultery in remarriage is voluntary sexual intercourse with a person whose first husband or wife is still alive. Adultery is not divorce, adulterating the marriage, nor the one time act of remarriage. Adultery is the sexual relations of the remarried couple the first time, and every time thereafter.

Why divorce is not adultery

Divorce is a serious act of defilement against the spirit and every other aspect of the marriage. But nowhere in the Bible does God say that divorce is adultery. There is no definition in any dictionary or Greek lexicon that says that the action of defiling the marriage is adultery. Adultery is voluntary sexual intercourse, either mentally or physically, where at least one of those involved is married to someone else. Defilement of a marriage is a consequence of adultery. But neither defiling a marriage nor divorce is adultery. Jesus makes it clear that adultery occurs in remarriage, not in divorce. "And whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." [Matt. 19:9b](#).

What is significant about adultery in remarriage?

When Jesus said, "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" ([Matt. 5:32](#); [Matt. 19:9](#)) He said something significant that I did not see for a long time. When Jesus made that statement, He was stating that divorce does not end the first marriage. People have

always assumed that divorce ends the first marriage, but Jesus said that it is not true. The sin of adultery can only occur if one or both of the persons involved is married. If neither of the persons are married the term adultery cannot be used. When Jesus said that "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery", He was stating that when a man marries a divorced woman he is living with another man's wife and therefore is guilty of adultery. Divorce does not make a man or a woman single again. Divorce does not end a person's first marriage. That is why a person commits adultery when they marry and live with a divorced person.

Do you get the significance of Jesus' use of the word adultery? Adultery could not occur in remarriage if divorce ended the first marriage. Adultery can only occur in remarriage because the divorced spouse is still married to their first marriage partner in Jesus' judgment. (Jesus is the Judge we will stand before, for our hearing on Judgment Day and it is important that we understand our Judge's reasoning and logic if we want to enter Heaven.)

The significance of the sin of adultery in remarriage is that divorce does not end a person's first marriage! God has joined the husband and wife together as one. "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." [Matt. 19:4-6](#). Man's civil action of divorce in the court system of this earth, does not end the "one flesh and one spirit" aspect of the marriage that God has joined together.

Adultery in Remarriage: An Act or a State?

Is the adultery a one time act that occurs only on the day of remarriage or is the adultery the sexual union of the remarried man and woman throughout their marriage? This question is often phrased: "Is it (the sin of adultery) an act or a state?" Many would like to view the adultery in remarriage as a one time act because then the remarried couple can repent of their one time act and continue in their remarried state without separating or making any other changes. But is the adultery in remarriage only a one time act?

The term "committeth" (adultery) in [Matt. 19:9](#); and [Matt. 5:32](#) is in the present indicative. Spiros Zodhiates states that "The present tense represents contemporaneous action, as opposed to action in the past or the future. It normally refers to continuous or repeated action. However, in the indicative mood, it may represent punctiliar action. The indicative mood is the only mood in which distinctions can regularly be made about the time when an action occurs. Examples: he will go, they had said, she saw."¹ Therefore, the phrase "commits adultery" may refer to a specific time when adultery occurs but it may also refer to continuous or repeated action of adultery. Some have used the present indicative definition to state that the adultery only occurs one time at marriage and does not occur after that. However that conclusion cannot be decisively made from the present indicative. Every act of adultery (sexual relations in remarriage) occurs at a specific point in time and all repeated acts of adultery occur at specific points in time. At the same time the present indicative does not indicate that the act of adultery cannot or does not occur again. There is the possibility with the present indicative that continuous or repeated action of adultery does occur.

God states that the sexual intercourse of a divorced and remarried couple is adultery. Therefore each time they have sexual intercourse they commit an act of adultery. As they continue to have sexual relations and there is no repentance, it becomes a state of adultery. Therefore, adultery in remarriage is both an act each time it occurs, and a continuing state of

sinning. The action of remarriage is not adultery.

Both an act or a state of adultery, is sin. Either one bars one from fellowship with Jesus and from entering Heaven. One is guilty of sin before God until they have repented of the sin and stopped the sin. One cannot repent of the "act" adultery but continue in it and expect God to ignore the fact that they are continuing to commit adultery.

The interesting illustration of God and Israel's divorce

To gain further insight into God's position on divorce and remarriage, I did a study on God divorcing Israel in the Old Testament. I discovered some interesting things that I had never seen before, that I believe clarifies some of what we wrestle with in the doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament God uses the analogy of marriage to describe His relationship with His people - in the Old Testament with Israel, and in the New Testament of Christ and the Church.

In [Jeremiah 3](#) God states that He gave Israel a certificate of divorce. However at no point did that annul or end the covenant that He had made with the ten northern tribes of Israel even though Israel had married other gods. [Jeremiah 3:1](#) says "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD." In spite of the command by Moses in [Deut. 24:1-4](#) that a divorced woman could not return to her first husband, in [Jer. 3:1](#) God says to Israel, "Yet return again to me."

God infers that the instruction given in [Deut. 24:1-4](#) on divorce and remarriage is not a command that He gave to Moses. God says in [Jer. 3:1](#) "They say" not "I said" in referring to [Deut. 24:1-4](#). He then goes on to ignore the command that a divorced woman may not return to her first husband by saying "yet return again to me."

Jesus also implied that divorce and remarriage in [Deut. 24:1-4](#) was something that Moses permitted because the people demanded it, but it was not a permission that God gave. Jesus said that from the beginning it was not so. In [Matt. 19:8](#) Jesus said, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." Jesus at no point indicated that [Deut. 24:1-4](#) was a command that God gave to Moses. Hardness of heart is refusing to believe what God has said and is sin. Jesus could not endorse the excuse of hardness of heart as justification to do the opposite of what God had said.

In addition we see that divorce and remarriage did not end God's marriage covenant with Israel. In [Jer. 3:1-8](#) God says: "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. 2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. 3 Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. 4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? 5 Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest. 6 The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. 7 And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also."

God asks Israel to return. He says in v. 14 "For I am married unto you" (even after divorce and remarriage!) [Jer. 3:12-14](#) "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. 13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. 14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:"

Ezekiel was younger than Jeremiah. Ezekiel wrote from captivity in Babylon after Israel's divorce. He testifies that God's covenant with Israel was not ended by divorce and remarriage. Ez. 20:40-44 "For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. 41 I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. 42 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. 43 And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. 44 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD."

What is clarified about divorce and remarriage by the example of God and Israel's divorce?

1. Neither divorce or remarriage ends the first marriage. God said to Israel after He had given her a certificate of divorce, "For I am married to you" ([Jer. 3:14](#)) Therefore, in remarriage adultery occurs as if there had been no divorce.
2. God indicates, and Jesus confirms, that Moses' command allowing divorce and remarriage and prohibiting the returning to the first spouse after remarriage, was not a command that God gave to Moses. It is was something that Moses permitted because of the hardness of people's hearts, and is not one we are to follow, nor can we use it to justify divorce and remarriage. It was never God's will from the beginning. [Matt. 19:8](#) "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."
3. God's desire is that the first marriage partners leave all other marriage partners, return, and be reconciled to each other. God said, "Yet return to me" ([Jer. 3:1](#))
4. One must never give up hope that a wayward spouse will return.

Further Scriptural evidence that the first marriage is not ended by divorce

In looking at whether divorce nullifies the first marriage in God's eyes and therefore makes it permissible for a remarried couple to remain remarried, there are several additional passages of Scripture that indicate that divorce does not end a person's first marriage.

In **Malachi 2**, God indicates that even though divorce occurs that He still views them as married. In v.14 He states after the divorce has occurred "yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." God says here that divorce does not end the marriage covenant. After the divorce she is still his wife and companion.

Another passage is **Mk. 6:17,18**. This is the account of King Herod and Herodias. Even though Herod was not to marry the wife of his brother there is another observation here. The Jewish historian Josephus writing in the latter part of the first century AD tells us that Herodias was divorced from her first husband and had married Herod. This passage indicates that even though she was divorced and remarried she was still considered the wife of her first husband by God. "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." If divorce nullified the first marriage in God's eyes, then it would not matter who she married after the divorce. She would no longer be the wife of anyone and it would not be possible for her to marry her husband's brother, because she would not have a husband to marry his brother. John the Baptist was killed by Herod and Herodias because he told them they needed to separate from their immoral remarriage relationship. It was not a message they wanted to hear! The first martyr in the New Testament was John the Baptist, because of the stance he took on a divorce and remarriage situation.

If remarriage had nullified the first marriage, Herod and Herodias would not have been living in sin. But, Herodias was divorced and remarried and they were living in sin.

How remarriage does not end the first marriage

There is not any example or teaching in Scripture that the act of remarriage ends the first marriage. Nor is there any place in the Bible where the making of a covenant with a second person ended the covenant with the first person. Jesus clearly stated that remarriage does not end the first marriage when He said "Whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." The first marriage is not ended by remarriage. A person can commit adultery only with someone else's husband or wife. If both of the persons involved in sexual immorality are single it is fornication not adultery.

To say that remarriage ends the first marriage is to say that remarriage is the "divorce" from the first marriage. There is nothing that Jesus said that would indicate that remarriage was "divorce" from the first marriage. **Romans 7:3** states clearly that remarriage does not end the first marriage and that only death ends the first marriage. "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." I have not found any place in the Bible that would indicate that remarriage is the "divorce" or an event that ends the first marriage.

What does God say can end a marriage?

God clearly says that the death of one of the marriage partners ends their marriage and frees them to marry another person. "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.." (**Romans 7:3**) , Jesus also said that death ends a marriage in His response to the Sadducees. "And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of

God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven" [Mark 12:24,25](#). We see from these verses that marriage is ended at death because it does not continue into eternity. In [1 Cor. 7:39](#) God also says: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

Death is the only thing that I could find that God says ends a marriage so that the person is free to marry another person.

What does the "exception clause" mean?

There are two "exception clauses" on divorce in Matthew. One of the first things that I noticed is that they do not address the same thing. It is often implied that both "exception clauses" give permission for remarriage. I noticed that the exception clause in [Matt. 5:32](#) does not give an exception allowing remarriage. The exception only applies to whether the person initiating the divorce is responsible for causing their spouse to commit adultery. That exception does not permit divorce or remarriage. The last part of the verse, "and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" removes any question that this exception clause allows remarriage after divorce. [Matt. 5:32](#) states: "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.**"

The second clause is in [Matt. 19:9](#). Here Jesus 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.**" I discovered that modern translators have altered this verse to make it say something totally different than what Jesus originally said. The NIV (and most modern translations) reads totally different than the KJV. The first major change in the NIV is the incorrect twisting of the "translation" of the Greek word pornea as "marital unfaithfulness." By twisting the meaning of pornea, the NIV opens wide the gate for divorce and remarriage in every divorce situation. In every divorce case at least one spouse is maritally unfaithful to their spouse. The very act of one spouse divorcing their mate is a serious act of marital unfaithfulness. In many divorce cases both spouses view the other as being maritally unfaithful in some way. Therefore, the NIV wrongly gives permission for at least one spouse to get remarried in every divorce situation!

The second major change to this passage is the removing of the last third of the verse, the phrase: "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." It is wrong to remove words of Jesus from the Bible. This error has led many men and women into the sin of adultery, thinking that it was permissible to remarry. The Church can make changes in the version of the Word of God that it uses, but it can not change the true Word of God that Jesus will use to define sin on Judgment Day.

Divorce and remarriage was common in the Roman Empire in New Testament times and the centuries following; however, I was not able to find this "exception clause" in [Matt. 19:9](#) in any of the writings of the early Christians in the first 300 years A.D. The early Christians always quoted [Matt. 5:32](#), but never the reading we have in [Matt. 19:9](#). I found this significant, because these men, speaking for the early Church did not understand Jesus to be giving an allowance for remarriage after divorce.

To translate the phrase "except for fornication" as "except for adultery", giving adultery as grounds for divorce and remarriage has some problems. If a man's wife committed adultery, how would her adultery keep him from committing adultery if he divorced her and remarried? Or to

ask the question another way, is there any teaching or example in the Bible that would indicate that adultery by one marriage partner ends their marriage and makes them single again in God's eyes? I have not found any Scriptural teaching or example where adultery ended a marriage, unless the spouse committing adultery was stoned. If he or she was stoned to death, that would end the marriage. Jesus' words immediately following this exception clause make it clear that He was not giving permission to remarry after adultery. "And whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (He gave no exception). God considers the first marriage valid even after a legal divorce and remarriage.

What then does the "exception clause" mean? Jesus was speaking to Jewish men, the Pharisees, in response to their question when He spoke these words in [Matthew 19:9](#). Jesus said "Except it be for fornication and shall marry another." Fornication is sexual relations with another unmarried person before one is married. The Jews required a man to write a certificate of divorce to end an engagement. We see this illustrated in the story of Joseph and Mary. Joseph believed that Mary had committed fornication with someone else and was planning to divorce her even though they were not yet married, when God stopped him. ([Matt. 1:19,20](#))

What Jesus said to these Jewish men, the Pharisees, in [Matt. 19:9](#) is that divorce and remarriage is sin unless the divorce occurred in the engagement period. Even then the engagement could only be broken if the fiancée committed fornication with another person. Jesus said that if the man divorced his fiancée in the engagement period before marriage occurs, then it is permissible for him to marry another. The exception only applied to the Jewish custom requiring divorce to break an engagement. I could not find any evidence that the Roman law or custom required a certificate of divorce to break an engagement. We do not find the [Matt. 19:9](#) "exception clause" repeated any other place in the Scriptures.

The teaching of the Rabbis in Jesus' day

To correctly understand Jesus' response to the Pharisees in [Matthew 19](#), we need to understand the broader context and what positions the Jews had on divorce and remarriage in Jesus' day. The Pharisees were testing Jesus to see which rabbinical school of thought Jesus would side with. The Roman society around them allowed divorce for any reason. In the Oral Torah, which the Jews in Jesus' day held equal to the Old Testament Scriptures, is found three explanations (schools of thought) of what Moses meant as grounds for divorce. Usually it is stated that there were two schools of thought in Jesus' day, but when I researched it in the Mishnah (The Oral Torah) I found there were three schools of thought. The third school of thought was "no fault" divorce - Rabbi Akiba

The positions of the following three rabbis are found in the *Mishnah, Gittin* p. 90a, 90b:

1. Beth Shammai - If he has found her guilty of some unseemly conduct. (Divorce is allowed in the case of adultery)
2. Beth Hillel - even if she has merely spoiled his food. (Divorce is allowed for any reason)
3. Rabbi Akiba - even if he finds another woman more beautiful than she is. (No fault divorce)

The Pharisees were questioning Jesus to see which explanation Jesus would side with. They asked Jesus if divorce was lawful for "any reason". The disciple's response clearly indicates that in Jesus' response He did not side with any of the rabbis' explanations in the Oral Torah. Jesus' exception for divorce was much narrower than "marital unfaithfulness" (NIV). The response of the disciples tells us that Jesus' response to the Pharisees did not support any of the schools of thought in the Oral Torah. "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." [Matt. 19:10](#). Jesus' response to the Pharisees also tells us that He did not

side with any of the Rabbis interpretations of [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#) in the Oral Torah. He said that the permission allowing divorce and remarriage had never been God's will. "From the beginning it was not so."

How divorce among Christians is disobedience to God's command not to take a believer to court.

[1Cor 6:1-11](#) "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. 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."

How Divorce Removes One From Fellowship With God --The need for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

God tells us that divorce removes one from fellowship with Him. In [Malachi 2:13](#) He says, "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. 14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant."

In a divorce situation there is a lot of hurt, anger, and bitterness that occurs between the couple, the children, the extended families of the couple (their parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins) and friends. These deep wounds of a divorce affects those impacted by the divorce for the rest of their lives. God makes it clear that these wrongs and offenses need to be repented of and reconciliation needs to occur.

[Matt. 5:23,24](#) "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

God also makes it clear that one needs to forgive any offenses that the other spouse has committed. All bitterness, anger, and hatred need to be repented of and put away. This is what God says:

[Mk. 11:25,26](#)" And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father

also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." (The last sentence has been removed from the NIV!)

Matt. 6:14,15 "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matt. 18:35" So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." ("his trespasses" has been removed from the NIV. Immediately following this verse is Jesus teaching on divorce and remarriage.)

I John 2:9-11 "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

I John 4:20,21" If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Because divorce removes a Christian from fellowship with God, that person needs to be sorry, repent of the sin of divorcing their spouse, and ask God to forgive them. That person also needs to go to all the family members and tell them that they are sorry for the hurts and offenses that they have caused them through the divorce and ask for their forgiveness. In addition, that person needs to forgive all the offenses that brought about the divorce and the offenses that occurred in the divorce process, whether the other spouse is sorry and asks forgiveness or not.

"If anyone does not provide for his own"

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (**I Timothy 5:8**) God says this about providing for a person's mother to whom they have not made any vows. How much more does this apply to a man providing for his wife to whom he has made a vow to provide and care for. The same is also true for the wife. She has made a vow to care for her husband. Divorce is an abandonment of provision for one's spouse and is the same as denying the faith. It is sin. To take this one step further, it is also sin before God for a divorced man not to pay child support for his children.

God expects us to take our responsibilities to provide and care for our family members very seriously. If Christians do not provide for their own families, they deny the faith and are worse than unbelievers.

Does it make a difference if a couple is divorced and remarried before they become Christians?

It does not make a difference if a person began to commit a sin before or after they became a Christian; it is still sin. If they continue to commit the sin after they become a Christian, it is still sin. Asking God's forgiveness does not give license to continue in sin or to continue in an adulterous marriage.

Some quote **I Cor. 7:17-24** to indicate that a man and a woman who were remarried before

they became Christians should remain in the state in which they were called. This passage is not addressing remarriage, nor is it in the context of remarriage or any other sin. This passage is addressing whether one needs to become a Jew when they become a Christian or if they need to stop being a Jew, and the same with being a slave or a free man. To state that this passage is saying that every person should remain in the marital state in which they were when they became a Christian, then one would also have to state that if a person became a Christian while they were single they should not get married; persons living in homosexual situations should remain in that situation after they become Christians; and a man and a woman who are living together and not married should remain unmarried and still live together after they become Christians. This is contrary to all of Scripture. [1 Cor. 7:17-24](#) is not addressing the marriage state one is to be in after becoming a Christian, nor does it say that people should continue to remain in a situation that causes them to sin after they become Christians.

Herod and Herodias were not believers and it was wrong for them to be married. The solution was not for them to believe in Jesus and then they could continue in their adulterous relationship. Remarriage is not a sin only for Christians. Sin is sin regardless if the person committing the sin is a believer or a person who has never made a commitment to Christ.

How the marriage vow of a remarried couple does not supersede God's law

The question is sometimes asked, "What about the vow that the remarried couple has made?" God has told us that we are to keep the vows that we make. The first marriage vow is still in effect and they are still obligated to fulfill that vow. Making a second vow does not nullify the first vow. A person cannot have two covenants in effect at the same time that promises the same thing to two different people. The vow that a person makes in a remarriage situation will never nullify the way God's law applies to his life. If we say that a remarried couple should continue to live together and have sexual relations together because of their marriage vows in the remarriage, then we are saying that their remarriage vows have precedence over God's law. God's law about divorce and remarriage no longer applies to them. This is wrong.

The Pharisees used this same line of reasoning, that making a vow changed what God says is sin in the issue of Corban in [Mark 7:9-13](#). " And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. 12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; 13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye." The Pharisees said a man no longer had to follow God's law in honoring his parents by supporting them in their old age if he made the vow of Corban. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for this teaching because they were nullifying God's law. Jesus told them that they made the Word of God of no effect through their tradition (see v.13)

In remarriage the marriage vow that a man and woman make, does not nullify what Jesus said that whoever marries a divorced person commits adultery. The marriage vow cannot nullify the sin of adultery in remarriage. If it did it would supersede God's Law.

The marriage vow of Herod and Herodias did not supersede God's law that a man was not to marry his brother's wife. John the Baptist spoke out strongly after their marriage that it was sin, and indicated that the marriage needed to end. Even though Herodias had divorced her husband and made other marriage vows, the second marriage was sin.

How grace does not stop remarriage from being sin

The topic of the church granting a remarried couple grace often comes up with the subject of divorce and remarriage. The argument that the church can grant a remarried couple grace to continue in their remarriage relationship has become a stumblingblock for many.

To understand grace better, I did an in-depth study of grace in the Bible. I found some interesting facts. The main fact is that grace is from God. Most of the verses in the New Testament that use the word grace also state that it is from God or Jesus. Nowhere is there any verse that the church has any authority to grant another grace for their sins. We can bless another with God's grace, but not from us. When the church grants another person grace in a sin area so that the sin is no longer viewed as sin, the church is setting themselves up as God and making the church equal with God. This line of thinking has occurred before in [Jeremiah 7:9,10](#): "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; (10) And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" They thought they had received grace to continue in their sins but they had not.

Grace is not an allowance to sin a little more than what the Bible says. Grace is not a license from God or the church for one to continue in sin as many would lead us to believe. Grace is not God overlooking our sin as we continue to sin after we know better. [Romans 6:1-2](#) "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" [Romans 6:15](#) "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."

There is no grace for those who willfully continue to sin and don't want to stop or change because it would be "too difficult". God's grace is not a license to do what is right in one's own eyes, and follow one's own beliefs, even if it is contrary to Scripture.

Who forgives sin? Can Christians grant forgiveness for sin against God? No. We can only grant forgiveness for offences to us. We cannot grant a person grace for offences that they are committing against God when they have not repented to God and stopped their sin.

When Jesus through grace forgave the woman caught in adultery, He also told her to do something. He said "go and sin no more!" Jesus did not give the woman grace so that she could continue to commit adultery. Jesus told her she had to stop committing adultery. When a divorced and remarried couple repents and receives forgiveness from God for the adultery that they have committed, they must change so that they can also obey Jesus' command to go and sin no more. If they go on sinning and committing adultery they will not receive God's grace but rather incur His judgment. There cannot be grace and mercy without justice.

When a person realizes that they have sinned by divorcing their spouse and remarrying another, and they go to God and confess their sin and forsake the sin of remarriage, God forgives them. It is only through the grace of God that they receive forgiveness. Without God's grace none of us would be saved because we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

How the hardness of one's heart does not make the sins of divorce and remarriage right

Jesus said Moses allowed divorce and remarriage because of the hardness of their hearts. The hardness of their hearts did not make the sins of divorcing and remarrying right. There are a number of places where God said "go ahead" because they were hard hearted, but they received God's wrath or consequences because of it. Balaam is one example. Another was Israel choosing

a king. The hard heart reveals a heart that is stubborn and unwilling to receive God's Word. God reveals over and over in His Word that hard-heartedness is rebellion and is sin. Rebellion and unwillingness to obey is never a license to sin or to be free from God's law.

God made it clear through the prophet Malachi that divorce was never His will even in Old Testament times. He states stronger in Malachi than any other place in Scripture that He hates divorce. The hardness of one's heart does not supersede or negate God's Law.

Why "put away" means "to divorce", not merely "to separate" in Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9

There is a teaching that a number of people are promoting that states that the Greek word for "put away" in [Matt. 5:32](#) and [Matt. 19:9](#) does not mean "to divorce", but that "put away" means a separation without a divorce, and is something totally different from "divorce". They state that "apostasion" (Strong's #647) is the Greek word for divorce and that if Jesus had meant divorce then He would have used "apostasion" instead of "apoluo" (Strong's #630) ("put away" — which they say means to separate without a divorce). This teaching totally changes the interpretation of the passages on divorce and remarriage and some of them hold that divorce and remarriage is a gift from God. This teaching sounds very convincing and is hard to argue with as long as you accept their narrow definition for "apoluo" (put away) and do not check if their definition is correct. The entire teaching hinges on the definition of the word "apoluo" — "put away". Let me repeat, the definition of the word "apoluo" is what the teaching stands on.

The following explains what is wrong with the teaching that "put away" ("apoluo") in the Matthew passages means "to separate without a divorce, and that it is not referring to divorce", and why it is a false teaching:

1. The word "apoluo" #630 does not have only one definition or meaning. Depending on the context in which the word is used, it can have a number of different meanings just like many English words do. As you can see in the definitions in the Greek lexicons listed below, "to divorce" is one of the definitions of "apoluo". Therefore it cannot be stated, as they argue, that "apoluo" #630 cannot mean "to divorce".
2. The arguments used in this teaching show an ignorance of the Greek language. They are looking at the Greek from the perspective of English. In English, divorce can be either a verb or a noun, but in Greek "apostasiou" is a noun and can not be used as a verb such as "whoever divorces his wife". "Apoluo" is a verb and can not be used as a noun. The word, "Apoluo", found in the two Matthew passages is the verb form (example: "I divorce"), and "Apostasion" is the noun "a divorce" In [Matt. 19:9](#) "biblion apostasion" is "a certificate of divorce". There are two different Greek words used because "apostasion" is a noun and "apoluo" is a verb, not because they refer to two different things. Matthew could not use a noun #647 where a verb was needed.
3. In [Matt. 19:7,8](#) both the Pharisees and Jesus used the term "put away" (apoluo Strong's #630) in a context that implies that it means "to put away in a divorce" and is referring to the divorce process. [Matt. 19:7-9](#) "7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of **divorcement**,⁶⁴⁷ and **to put her away**⁶³⁰ 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you **to put away**⁶³⁰ your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever **shall put away**⁶³⁰ his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is **put away**⁶³⁰ doth commit adultery. "

- In V. 7 #630 "apoluo" "to put her away" is referring to the divorce, not a separation separate from the divorce.
 - In V.8 the word "apoluo" "to put away" does not refer to Moses giving permission for separation without a divorce, but to divorce and remarry. [Deut. 24:1-4](#)
 - The very context of the way #630 is used in the entire passage gives the definition as referring to separation in a divorce not separation apart from a divorce.
5. The writings of the early church fathers who knew New Testament Greek as their native language, show that they understood "apoluo" to mean divorce not separation without divorce.
 6. If #630 "apoluo" only refers to separation and not to divorce, then there is still no allowance in the New Testament that permits divorce or remarriage. One has to go to the Old Testament where Moses (not God) gave permission to divorce. Jesus said that Moses' command was not God's will from the beginning. [Romans 7:2-3](#) also states that divorce and remarriage are not permissible: "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." This passage does not give divorce any power to end a marriage.
 7. Their interpretation in allowing remarriage destroys the illustration of human marriage as being a type of the marriage of Christ and the church, and the eternal security of the believer.
 8. Sources are quoted that line up with their interpretation of the word "to put away" but they ignore sources that show that it could mean "to divorce". For example quoting from little known modern English dictionaries showing that divorce is not part of the definition for the Old English use of the words "put away". In examining an older dictionary, the 1961 Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary Unabridged Edition has divorce as one of the meanings for English use of the words "put away".

This problem of selective sources is a big problem with many teachings in the church today on various subjects. People write or speak very convincingly and lead you to the wrong conclusion, but are not giving all the facts. It may be intentional misleading, but probably is done ignorantly by relying on the research and writings of others, and not thoroughly checking things out for themselves before they pass the information along as truth. This type of sloppy scholarship is destroying the church spiritually.

The following are the definitions found in a number of Greek lexicons. The newest Greek lexicons are listed first.

apoluo

ap-ol-oo'-o

Strong's #630

- *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Editor Verlyn Verbrugge, Zondervan Publishers, ©2000
"In the New Testament apolyo has the classical Greek meaning release a prisoner, set free from disease, acquit, send people away, dismiss from the duties of life, allow to die. **It is especially used of divorcing a wife.** Apostasion means divorce."
- *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd.

Edition, Revised and Edited by Frederick Danker, University of Chicago Press, ©2000

"#5 To dissolve a marriage relationship, to divorce"

- *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, by Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, Neva Miller, Baker Books, ©2000

"#2 Of divorce — send away, dismiss, let go"

- *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. 1*, Edited by Horst Baly and Gerhard Schneider, Eerdmans Publishing, ©1990

"In the Synoptics (13 of the occurrences there) **apolyo is a (common) term for the dismissal of a woman from marriage by means of a letter of divorce (Apostasiou), so primarily in the phrase "send away one's wife." It occurs in Jesus' prohibition of divorce (Mk 10:2,11; Matt. 19:3,8,9; Matt. 5:31,32; Luke 16:18)"**

- *The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon* by Wigram-Green — Verb
"to set free, dismiss, relieve, **of divorce - let go**; fig, pardon"
- *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* by F. Wilber Gingrich
"1. Release, set free, pardon 2. Let go, send away, dismiss, Euphemistic for let die, **divorce**. 3. mid. Go away"
- Thayer's:
 - 1) to set free
 - 2) to let go, dismiss, (to detain no longer)
 - 2a) a petitioner to whom liberty to depart is given by a decisive answer 2b) to bid depart, send away
 - 3) to let go free, release
 - 3a) a captive, i.e. to loose his bonds and bid him depart, to give him liberty to depart
 - 3b) to acquit one accused of a crime and set him at liberty
 - 3c) indulgently to grant a prisoner leave to depart
 - 3d) to release a debtor, i.e. not to press one's claim against him, to remit his debt
 - 4) **used of divorce, to dismiss from the house, to repudiate. The wife of a Greek or Roman may divorce her husband.**
[Webster's defines repudiate as "To divorce or separate formally from (a woman)"]
 - 5) to send one's self away, to depart
- Strong's Greek Dictionary
"From G575 and G3089; to *free* fully, that is, (literally) *relieve, release, dismiss* (reflexively *depart*), or (figuratively) *let die, pardon*, or (**specifically**) **divorce**: - (let) depart, dismiss, **divorce**, forgive, let go, loose, put (send) away, release, set at liberty."
- Kittle's Theological Dictionary does not address "apoluo" or "apostasion"

apostasion

ap-os-tas'-ee-on

Strong's #647

- Strong's Greek Dictionary
"Neuter of a (presumed) adjective from a derivative of G868; properly something *separative*, that is, (specifically) *divorce*: - (writing of) divorcement."
- The New Englishman's Greek concordance and Lexicon by Wigram-Green — Noun
"something that separates (specifically, divorce)"
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words — Noun
"primarily, a defection, lit., a standing off, denotes, in the N.T., a writing or bill of

divorcement."

Does "not under bondage" mean a person can remarry?

The assumption that is sometimes made is that God in [1 Cor. 7:12-16](#) is giving an exception that allows remarriage. [1 Cor. 7:12-16](#) states: "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. 16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife"

There are several things that are clear in this passage. The first is that Paul states that v. 12-16 are a principle that he is giving and it is not a direct command of God - "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord."

The second is that the command from God which is given first in v.10,11 states that a woman who departs from her husband is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. Verses 10 and 11 state: " 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." Therefore to interpret "not under bondage" in v. 15 as meaning that one can remarry would contradict the command that God had given in v.11. A better interpretation of "not under bondage" is if the unbelieving spouse leaves the believing spouse, the believing spouse is not under bondage, or obligation to keep the marriage together. However, she is not free to chase him out of the house or to remarry.

Further, to interpret "not under bondage" as meaning that one is free from the marriage is to imply that the Bible views marriage as bondage. This is not true. Many people view their marriage as bondage because they desire to be free from it. But the Bible does not teach that marriage is bondage. God's way is not bondage!

How the culture in Jesus' day was very much like ours today

One of the things that I have discovered as I have researched different doctrines is that many Christian scholars often do not do the careful research that we assume that they have done. Things get repeated over and over and are believed to be true, but people don't take the time to verify that what they are repeating is accurate. We hear over and over that society was very much a male dominated, women suppressed Middle Eastern culture in New Testament times. What has happened is that they have mixed two hundred years before Christ with New Testament times. It would be like someone two thousand years from now attempting to describe society today by studying life in colonial America. There were great changes in the Jewish and Roman cultures between the last several centuries BC and the first century AD. In addition, the Roman culture had so influenced the Jewish culture by New Testament times that the New Testament was written by Jewish men in Greek rather than Hebrew. These changes in both the

Roman and Jewish cultures are not usually recognized by modern scholars.

Some time ago I went to the library of Congress to research the role of women in the Roman Empire in the first century AD. What I found was quite different than what I had always been told and what I continue to hear coming from Christian scholars. What I discovered was a society that was in many ways very similar to our society today. The following is a quote from the book *Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, by Eva Cantarella, John Hopkins University Press, 1987, p.140,141 (To the best of my knowledge she is not a Christian historian. What she states about the culture was confirmed in a number of other books as well):

"The centuries between the Principate and the Empire saw the 'emancipation' of Roman women. The new rights (except of course political rights, which in Rome as in Greece were reserved for men) allowed women, it has been said, to instruct themselves and cultivate their intellectual interests, to attempt many activities that had been for men only, and to make full use of the law to end unhappy marriages and contract new ones. They practiced birth control and abortion, formed freely chosen amorous bonds, lived outside of matrimony, and enjoyed a new liberty that had been absolutely unthinkable- sexual freedom." (emphasis added)

Several pages later she states: "Beginning in the first century AD, references to abortion become increasingly numerous... The practice of voluntarily interrupting pregnancy was evidently common. This is demonstrated by the interest in the problem on the part of physicians, such as Soranus of Ephesus (who practiced in Rome in the first decades of the second century), and astrologers, such as Maximus (also in the second century) who noted the influence of the moon on abortion and identified favorable and unfavorable periods." p.148

The Book of Acts also testifies to the fact that women had many more "liberties" than the picture often painted for us of a male chauvinistic society that was tough on women and where women were little more than men's servants. The following tells us that women as well as men had leadership roles in the Roman society. "And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." (**Acts 17:4**). "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." (**Acts 13:50**) "Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few." (**Acts 17:12**) Mars Hill (Areopagus) was a court that tried people and was a place where new ideas were shared - *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Among those who believed after Paul's address on Mars Hill, was a woman named Damaris (**Acts 17:34**). This mention indicates that women were a part of the Areopagus, which had previously been only for men.

The change in the roles of Roman woman affected the Jewish women as well. The fact that the "emancipation" of Roman women had affected the Jewish culture and Jewish women is evidenced by the fact that Jewish women were able to divorce their husbands. Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* book XVIII states that Herodias, a Jew, divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod, her husband's brother. The second is the statement by Jesus in **Mark 10:12** "And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

We can see from the above description, that society in Jesus' day was very similar to ours today in the role of women and the practice of divorce and remarriage. It is important that we correctly understand the culture in Jesus' day so that we can correctly understand what Jesus was saying.

What the early Christians wrote about divorce and remarriage

The writings of the early Christians are significant to help us to understand what God says in the Bible about divorce and remarriage for several reasons: These men lived very shortly after the writing of the New Testament. The apostles had only passed away a short while before their time. They were not separated from the writing of the New Testament by almost two thousand years like we are. They also understood the cultural setting in which the New Testament was written. What the early Christians wrote is also significant because the society in which they lived was so similar to ours today -- divorce and remarriage was very common. Many of these writings were widely circulated among the churches, which adds to the credibility of what they say. The early Christians knew Greek. The New Testament Greek was not a foreign language to them as it is for us or even a "dead" language as it is today. These men were fluent in Greek. For many it was their native tongue.

What is significant is that in all of the writings of the early Christians, I did not find any teaching that the early Church believed that Jesus' words in [Matthew 19:9](#), "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," permitted remarriage. I was not able to find remarriage allowed in any of the writings of the early Christians before 300 AD. They all speak the same thing that remarriage after divorce is sin.

The early Christians spoke clearly on divorce and remarriage. What they wrote is significant for our understanding of God's judgment of divorce and remarriage.

Justin Martyr around AD 150 writes: "And 'Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced from another husband, committeth adultery.' and, 'There are some who have been made eunuchs of men, and some who were born eunuchs, and some who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake; but all cannot receive this saying.' So that all who, by human law, are twice married, are in the eye of our Master sinners, and those who look upon a woman to lust after her."² (emphasis added)

Athenagoras the Athenian in AD 177 wrote *A plea for the Christians*. In it he writes: "For we bestow our attention, not on the study of words, but on the exhibition and teaching of action, - that a person should either remain as he was born, or be content with one marriage; for a second marriage is only a specious adultery. 'For whosoever puts away his wife,' says He, 'and marries another, commits adultery'; not permitting a man to send her away whose virginity he has brought to an end, nor to marry again."³

Clement of Alexandria writing around AD 194 on the "exception clause" states that the only exception for divorce is for remarried couples to end their sinful marriage: "Now that the Scripture counsels marriage, and allows no release from the union, is expressly contained in the law, 'Thou shalt not put away thy wife, except for the cause of fornication;' and it regards as fornication, the marriage of those separated while the other is alive."⁴

Tertullian writing around AD 200 says: "I maintain, then, that there was a condition in the prohibition which He now made of divorce; the case supposed being, that a man put away his wife for the express purpose of marrying another. His words are: 'Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, also committeth adultery,' - 'put away,' that is, for the reason wherefore a woman ought not to be dismissed, that another wife may be obtained. For he who marries a woman who is unlawfully put away is as much of an adulterer as the man who marries one who

is undivorced. Permanent is the marriage which is not rightly dissolved; to marry, therefore, whilst matrimony is undissolved, is to commit adultery."... "For in the Gospel of Matthew he says, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery.' He also is deemed equally guilty of adultery, who marries a woman put away by her husband. The creator, however, except on account of adultery, does not put asunder what He Himself joined together, the same Moses in another passage enacting that he who had married after violence to a damsel, should thenceforth not have it in his power to put away his wife. Now, if a compulsory marriage contracted after violence to a damsel, shall be permanent, how much rather shall a voluntary one, the result of agreement! This has the sanction of the prophet: 'Thou shalt not forsake the wife of thy youth.' "5

Tertullian also states, "The fact that (he) who shall have dismissed his wife, except on the ground of adultery, makes her commit adultery; and (he) who shall have married a (woman) dismissed by her husband, of course commits adultery. A divorced woman cannot even marry legitimately; and if she commit any such act without the name of marriage does it not fall under the category of adultery, in that adultery is a crime in the way of marriage? Such is God's verdict, within straighter limits than men's, that universally, whether through marriage or promiscuously, the admission of a second man (to intercourse) is pronounced adultery by Him. For let us see what marriage is in the eye of God; and thus we shall learn what adultery equally is. Marriage is (this): when God joins "two into one flesh;" or else, finding (them already) joined in the same flesh, has given His seal to the conjunction. Adultery is (this): when the two having been - in whatsoever way - disjoined, other - nay, rather alien - flesh is mingled (with either): flesh concerning which it cannot be affirmed, 'This is flesh out of my flesh, and this bone out of my bones.' A little later he states "But they (the Romans) indulge in promiscuous adulteries, even without divorcing (their partners): to us, even if we do divorce them, even marriage will not be lawful."6

We see from the above statements of the early church leaders that the early church took a clear stand that remarriage was sin and was not permitted by Christians even though society around them believed and practiced otherwise. This clear stand against divorce and remarriage by the early church removes yet another prop from those who would like to interpret the teachings of Jesus as allowing/permitting remarriage. It appears that it has only been in recent years that the church has reversed its beliefs and has permitted remarriage.

How the inaccuracy of the NIV has changed the way the church views divorce and remarriage.

If you take one lie and add it to the Bible it will kill people spiritually just like any other poison. It is crucial that we use an accurate edition of God's Word that has not been altered by words being removed and mistranslated. In studying the doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, it has become clearer and clearer to me that the translation that one studies from usually affects one's understanding of what God says about divorce and remarriage. I had always assumed that the NIV (New International Version) and the KJV said the same thing. They don't! Through the choice of words and the removal of words, the NIV leads a person to a different conclusion than what God said. My observation is that those people and churches who have changed what they believe on divorce and remarriage have done so after studying this doctrine in the NIV or other modern translations that are based on the same incomplete Greek text as the NIV.

How the NIV changed the Bible in Jeremiah 3:1

"They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD." [Jeremiah 3:1](#) (KJV)

The NIV reads the exact opposite of what God said. The NIV removed the words "They say" and changed the command "yet return to Me" into a question: "would you now return to me?" The NIV reads like this: "If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers — would you now return to me?"(NIV). In this verse God refers to the passage in [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#) where Moses gave permission for divorce and remarriage, and prohibited a remarried person from returning to their spouse. By using the words "They say" (the words the NIV removed), God stated that [Deut. 24:1-4](#) on divorce and remarriage was not a command that He had given. The NIV by removing words and changing a command into a question has God saying that He gave the command in [Deut. 24:1-4](#). The NIV then has God contradicting Himself later on in verses 12, 14, and 22 asking Israel to return to Him after Israel was divorced and remarried to idols.

How the NIV changed the Bible in Matthew 19:9

" 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" [Matt. 19:9](#) (KJV)

This is the main verse that Christians today use to justify divorce and remarriage. The NIV seriously corrupts what Jesus said about divorce and remarriage, using the words "marital unfaithfulness" (Which is not what the Greek word means. See the section on the exception clause.) making Jesus say that divorce and remarriage is permissible for any infraction of the marriage vows by the other spouse. The NIV then removed the last part of the verse, "and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." The shortened version of this verse by the NIV reads like this: "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." (NIV) This is a serious corruption of Jesus' words by the NIV. With that last phrase removed, the NIV has Jesus saying that remarriage is allowed for at least one spouse after every divorce. In every divorce at least one and usually both spouses commit acts of marital unfaithfulness. The very filing for divorce is marital unfaithfulness.

How the NIV changed the Bible in Matt. 5:32

"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" [Matt. 5:32](#) (KJV) The NIV again used the inaccurate translation of "marital unfaithfulness" instead of fornication: "But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery." (NIV)

How the NIV changed the Bible in Mark 10:29

The NIV removed the words "or wife". "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's," (KJV) The NIV has: "'I tell you the truth' Jesus replied, 'no one has left home of brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for

me and the gospel!" With the words "or wife" removed there are some who use the NIV who teach that there is nothing in Scripture that says that a couple in a remarriage situation should separate. However, this is a passage that applies directly to a remarriage situation. Because remarriage is sin, a man needs to leave his "wife" in remarriage (she is legally his wife in the civil judicial system but not in God's judicial system). The reason for a man to leave his wife of remarriage is for Jesus' sake and the Gospel's. As a Christian, he must turn his back on sin and go and sin no more. God promises in the next verse that He will abundantly bless a person who has turned their back on the things of this world for Jesus' sake and the Gospel's, and in the age to come eternal life.

How the NIV omitted an entire verse from the Bible in [Mark 11:26](#)

"But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" [Mk. 11:26](#) (KJV)

The NIV omitted this entire verse on forgiveness. The NIV has verse 25 and verse 27, but there is no verse 26! This is a significant verse that applies to many people who have divorced or who are going through a divorce. Many divorces are a result of the marriage partners being unwilling to forgive each other. Jesus said in this verse that if a person does not forgive, they are lost, they are not a Christian!

How the NIV changed the meaning of the Bible in [I Corinthians 7:15](#)

This is a very subtle corruption. The words here appear at first to be saying the same thing. However the NIV's use of the words "is not bound" indicates that the believing spouse is freed from the marriage. The KJV says that "a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases." Scripture nowhere indicates that the marriage covenant should be viewed as being under bondage, but rather as a commitment and a responsibility. To interpret "under bondage" to mean that one is freed from the marriage and can remarry contradicts what God says in verse 10.

Lest one think that these are isolated verses that have been corrupted in the NIV, I have personally documented over 400 passages where the NIV has changed something significant, like in the above verses, in the words of the Bible. In most of those passages something significant was omitted.

In the past almost 20 years as the NIV has become the top selling Bible in the U.S. the church has had a dramatic change in its position on divorce and remarriage. The corrupt reading of the NIV has undermined the foundation of the convictions of many of our church leaders. There are a growing number of church leaders who are stating that they are no longer completely sure what the truth is on divorce and remarriage.

A person studying the NIV and a person studying the KJV will tend to come to two different conclusions on divorce and remarriage. The corruption of God's words on divorce and remarriage in the NIV is so significant that the NIV cannot be used to study the doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Every time you read these verses in the NIV you read error.

When I first began studying the doctrine of marriage, divorce and remarriage, I was still using the NIV. I soon discovered in doing word studies that the NIV's words "except for marital unfaithfulness" were a wrong translation of the Greek. However, because it was there in my Bible, I continued to write it down in my research as if it was a valid phrase. I discovered that a person can know something is error, but unless we get rid of it, it will mislead us into believing error. Do not use the NIV, NASB, or any other modern translation that is based on the modern United Bible Society's Greek text. The corruption in them will kill you and those under you spiritually.

How children do not get a true father when the divorced mother remarries.

One of the reasons used to justify remarriage after divorce is because the children need a father. However remarriage after divorce is different than remarriage after the death of a spouse. After divorce, the former lover who fathered the children is still living and visits his children. In that second marriage, the children are to the new husband as illegitimate children by another lover. There is no way that he can love those children as he should, or as he would his own children. He therefore does not discipline the children as sons and daughters and the children end up without proper love, discipline, and training. The children do not get a true father. This principle is found in several passages of Scripture and explains one reason why God hates divorce: God desires Godly children.

Heb. 12:6-8 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

Mal. 2:15,16 " And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth **violence** with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. The truth of God's words is being painfully illustrated in the lives of young people today with the high percentage of juvenile delinquents who come from broken homes. Several years ago, a judge informed community leaders that he had to grant two divorces that morning. He told the couples to whom he had granted the divorces: "I am required by the law to grant you a divorce, but I am aware that 80 percent of our juvenile delinquents come from broken homes. If your children become delinquents, I am going to charge each of you with contributing to the delinquency of a minor."⁷

What if the Remarried Couple has Children by the Second Marriage?

The question arises: should a remarried couple separate if they have had children by the second marriage? The fact that a couple has children in the second marriage does not end the first marriage. The responsibilities that they have to their children in their second marriage does not change the fact that if they continue in the remarriage situation it is adultery. In addition, the responsibilities they have to the children in the second marriage are not more important than the vows and covenant that they made in their first marriage and the responsibilities they have to any children in the first marriage.

God gives us some examples where children from a wrong relationship had to be sent away:

Abraham did his own thing rather than following the Lord, and took Hagar and had a son by her. After Isaac was weaned, because of Ishmael's scoffing, Sarah asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Sarah did not feel that Ishmael deserved to receive an inheritance with Isaac. Abraham was very displeased by Sarah's request because Ishmael was his son. However, God told him to not let it be displeasing to him and to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Abraham arose early the next morning and obeyed God's command promptly and sent them away. **Gen. 21:8-21**

Another account is in [Ezra 9:1-15](#) and [10:1-44](#), where many of the Israelites were involved in wrong marriages. They had married foreign wives and many had children by those wives. They recognized that they had sinned against God ([10:2](#)). The solution to the situation of the wrong marriages was that they needed to put away the wives and the children that they had by those wives. It was a difficult situation and one that was very difficult to have the courage to deal with. It was so difficult that the Godly Ezra had to be prodded to take his responsibility as spiritual leader and deal with the situation. In [Ezra 10:4](#) he was told, "Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it" (See also [Neh. 13:23-31](#))

[Ezra 10:1-4](#) "Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, [one] of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. 3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4 Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it."

Parents have a responsibility to provide for every child that they bring into the world, regardless of the marriage situation when they were conceived. We are told in [1 Timothy 5:8](#) "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Not only are they responsible to provide for their physical needs, they are also responsible to train all their children in the ways of the Lord. A parent can not teach their children to keep all of God's commands, if the parent has willfully chosen to continue to live in sin in an adulterous remarriage relationship. More is caught than taught, and the children will not learn to keep all of God's commands as they should.

The children receive a greater spiritual training if they see their parents willing to make whatever sacrifices and hard, hard decisions that are necessary to be in a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Remaining in a remarriage situation for the sake of the children, and living in sin, will not in the long run be a benefit for their children. The children will grow up with the perception that one can do what is right in their own eyes.

Why a remarried couple needs to separate

Jesus' command to the woman caught in adultery after He forgave her was "Go and sin no more" ([John 8:11](#)). Because remarriage is the living of one or two married persons with someone other than their spouse (in God's judgment), the remarried couple needs to separate. They need to repent of their sin and they need to remove themselves from their sinful adulterous situation if they are to obey God's command to go and sin no more. To look at it from a different perspective, it would be wrong for a man to live with and care for another man's wife while the other man is still alive. A man has no business making commitments to another man's wife and providing for her needs. It would be a violation of her marriage covenant to her husband to live with and care for another man even though they did not have sexual intercourse.

Because in divorce and remarriage the first marriage is not dissolved, the remarried couple needs to dissolve their remarriage situation and separate.

What if a couple was divorced and remarried before they became Christians?

This question is actually a rephrasing of the question if a person becomes a Christian does their becoming a Christian stop what would otherwise be sin from now being sin? The answer is no. It makes no difference if a couple was divorced and remarried before they became Christians or after they became Christians. In fact Jesus clearly told us that there will be many professing Christians who think they are a Christian but who are living in sin (iniquity) that will not go to heaven. [Matthew 7:21-23](#) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (22) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The need to work at reconciliation with the first marriage partner

Jesus told us, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." ([Matthew 5:23,24](#)) God further tells us "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." ([1 John 4:20,21](#)) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." ([1 John 3:14,15](#))

It is important that repentance and sorrow for all wrongs against one's first spouse be expressed to him or her. It is also necessary that the former spouse be told that they are forgiven for every wrong. Full reconciliation may not be possible if the other person is not willing to forgive.

It is of utmost importance that a person who is divorced goes to their spouse and tells them that they are sorry for all the offenses they committed to them and ask their forgiveness. If a person does not do this or is not willing to ask forgiveness, according to the above verses, God says they are not a Christian. In addition the person who has gone through a divorce must forgive their spouse regardless of whether their spouse asks for forgiveness or does not ask for forgiveness.

I have found in my personal life that deep wounds by another needed to be forgiven over and over in my mind. Every time bitter thoughts came into my mind I had to forgive them again and focus on thinking about something else.

Is a previously single person who married a divorced person free to remarry?

There are some who have taken the position that since God does not recognize the remarriage as a valid marriage, then a previously single person who married a divorced person and then divorced that person is free to remarry. Here are some points to consider:

- "Free to remarry" is not good phrase to use because of responsibilities and consequences that result from the first wrong marriage do not give complete freedom in a second marriage. For example children from the previous marriage do not give freedom in another

marriage. It is not the same as if he/she had never been married. Talking to the previous spouse, visiting rights, child support, discipline and training of children, etc. all affect the second marriage.

- In the case of a single person marrying a divorced person, it is a legal marriage by United States laws, and requires a divorce to end it. There are vows of commitment that are made in that adulterous relationship and legally binding commitments that are not present in other adulterous relationships. Some people state that since God does not recognize the marriage, that it is the same as if they were not married. But neither Jesus nor the Bible states that it is the same as if they had never been married. There is a legal marriage and divorce that exists. Emotionally and otherwise, that previously single person will never be the same or free as if he/she had never made those adulterous vows of commitment and entered into that wrong marriage relationship. Both [Matt. 5:32](#) and [19:9](#) state "and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." This is stated after the "exception clause" and does not have any exceptions. The previously single person is now a legally divorced person. Do these verses apply in to this person? I believe that they probably do because it is not stated otherwise. God is the final Judge. Just because we cannot fully explain God's command with logic does not mean that we do not need to follow it in this situation and give people "freedom" to remarry.
- Not everyone who knows the person will know the marriage, divorce and remarriage details. They will only know that they were divorced and remarried. It poses a potential stumbling block to others who are facing difficulties in their marriage to justify divorce and remarriage or for those who are divorced to remarry.

I believe that it is very unwise for a person in this situation to remarry. However, I cannot state confidently that it is sin for them to remarry, but there is a check in my spirit about saying that it is not sin and that they are free to remarry.

Marriage is only of this earth and is temporary

It is helpful to keep marriage in proper perspective. Often in discussions about divorce and remarriage, someone will imply that it is unfair, a curse, or being doomed for a person not to remarry after a divorce or to separate after remarriage. However, a marriage relationship only exists while a person is alive on earth. Jesus tells us in [Matt. 22:23-23](#) that there will be no marrying or giving of marriage in heaven. The only marriage will be of Christ and the Church.

Because the marriage relationship is only on this earth, we need to keep it in similar perspective as earthly possessions. God does not owe us a marriage relationship any more than He owes us money, a house, a car, or any other earthly possession. Just as a person can be blessed by God and be poor, so one can be blessed by God and be single. In fact, God tells us that it is best for a person to be single. ([I Cor. 7](#))

The role of Grace in Remarriage situations

Many Christians advocate that the Church should grant remarried couples grace rather than say they must separate and stop sinning. The church frequently misapplies the term grace to mean a catch all license that the church gives a person that allows them to acknowledge something is not God's ideal, but if it is difficult or inconvenient to follow God's way in that area, to disregard it (do what is right in their own eyes). This wrong application of the term grace is used in many areas of the Christian life, not just divorce and remarriage. This philosophy has

been very harmful to the church. Statistics show the beliefs and practices of many Christians are basically the same as those of non-Christians. The Church does not have authority to grant grace to a person in an area of sin and grant them permission/freedom to continue to sin. Over and over the Bible states "grace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ"

Jesus called remarriage sin. Therefore as Christians we do not have authority to grant a remarried couple grace to continue to live together. To grant grace to a remarried couple is rebellion against God. In granting grace, the church sets itself up as equal with God.

God grants grace in a divorce and remarriage situation when a person repents of their sin to God and to others, asks their spouse and others involved to forgive them, and forsakes the adulterous remarriage relationship. God totally forgives them. They do not have to earn "brownie points" or do a certain amount of good deeds to receive God's forgiveness. They are freed from eternal punishment in hell and are granted eternity with Jesus in heaven. That is God's grace, not a license to continue in sin or to do what is right in one's own eyes.

How dating prepares more for divorce than for marriage.

The American practice of viewing dating as a social activity where a person dates one person for a period of time and then breaks the relationship and dates someone else, tends to prepare people more for divorce and remarriage than for a lifelong marriage relationship. A couple that is dating gives their hearts to each other and then they break off the relationship and give their heart to someone else. When problems come in marriage, the tendency is to want to break off the relationship and find someone else because that is how they learned to handle things in their dating years.

A much better model than dating is to get to know persons of the opposite sex in group settings, and then for a guy to only approach a girl to court her if he and his parents think that God would have him to do so in preparation towards engagement and marriage.

How having a personal secretary can lead to divorce and remarriage

There is a tragedy that is happening today where men are leaving their wife to live with their secretary or a woman that they work closely with at work. This is even happening with pastors and outstanding Christian leaders. In a work situation, a personal secretary does what God intended for a wife to do, be a help meet for the man ([Gen. 2:20](#)). He provides leadership, she supports him in his leadership. She serves him without talking back, arguing, or complaining. She is diligent in carrying out his wishes. If she does not, she will lose her job. Each day both the man and woman arrive dressed up usually better than they would have when they were dating their spouse. They treat each other with kindness and courtesy, probably better than they treat their spouse. There is potential for more interaction in the work place than with their spouse at home. Little by little, a man and his secretary's hearts are drawn toward each other romantically.

There is something wrong with a woman giving that much personal attention to another woman's husband. God designed the wife to be the help meet for her husband, not another woman. A man having a personal secretary is not patterned after God's way or direction in the Bible. It is patterned after the world just like dating is. Both have their tragic pitfalls. God's design is for a man to have a younger man as his assistant, and to train the younger man to be a

leader like himself.

For years, we have heard that God's ideal is for a wife and mother to be in the home and not in the work place. God has been impressing upon me that we need to go one step further. It is God's ideal for both the husband and wife to be at home and not out in the work place. God states this in **I Thes. 4:11,12** "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." This was given as more than a suggestion, it was a command "to do your own business." The husband should be at home where his heart is not drawn towards a young attractive secretary or another woman at work. The father should be at home where he can help his wife discipline and train their children in the ways of the Lord. A family farm is more God's ideal for a husband and wife than separate corporate jobs in the city.

A person who is in a boss/secretary situation needs to make some hard decisions to protect themselves and their family from tragedy. It may mean needing to make a financial sacrifice and leave that job. Any sacrifice here on earth whether great or small is worth it compared to falling into sin and spending eternity in hell. There is no salary big enough to make it worth spending eternity in hell! One of the most important things that parents can do in giving their children career advice, is to steer them into a job where they won't be tempted to fail morally. That includes needing to travel alone or with someone of the opposite sex on business trips.

The Marriage of Christ and the Church

The marriage of Christ and the Church is a fascinating study. It helps us to get a bigger picture of God's design for marriage and what Jesus meant in the "exception clause" in **Matthew 19:9**. In the Old Testament there is the marriage covenant of God the Father with Israel which even divorce has not annulled it. In the New Testament, there is the marriage of Jesus, God the Son, and the Church. The marriage of Christ and the Church will never end. It will never be tainted with divorce, nor any other separation from Christ.

However, the marriage of Christ and the Church has not yet occurred. The Church is still only in the engagement period with Christ. There are some interesting passages of Scripture that point this out. In **II Cor. 11:2** it says that we are Christ's fiancée, that the marriage is yet to come: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." In **Eph. 5:22-33** human marriage is given as a type or foreshadowing of the marriage of Christ and the Church. I had always viewed this passage as if the Church was already married to Christ. However, in verse 27, it indicates that the marriage is yet to come by using the future tense. It is not the past tense: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." The fact that the Church is not yet married has some very interesting implications. It has opened up some new insights that I had never seen before.

The marriage of Christ and the Church occurs after the whole Church is gathered together in Heaven at the end of the world. God gives us a glimpse of this in **Rev. 19-7-9**: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed [are] they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

There are some very interesting things about the marriage of Christ and the Church:

1. There must be death first from Satan, sin, and self so that we can be remarried to Christ, a

divorce is not sufficient. Death is the only thing that can end a marriage and free a person to marry another. This is true in human marriage as well as in marriage in the spiritual sense to Christ. In [Romans 7](#) where God states that death frees a person from the first marriage so that they are free to marry another person, He also says in verse 7: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." This death occurs in the spiritual sense so that we can be espoused to Christ. However, it also seems that there may need to be a physical death and the destruction of the world and the "death" of Satan (bound and but in hell) before the marriage of Christ and the Church.

2. The marriage of Christ and the Church will never, ever end. There cannot, and never will be, a divorce of Christ and the Church. It is eternal security!
3. Human marriage is a type of Christ and the Church. We are told marriage is a type in [Ephesians 5](#). As a type, human marriage can not violate what it is a type of. Therefore, if Christ would have been allowing divorce and remarriage in the "exception clause" in [Matthew 19:9](#), He would have destroyed the type. Human marriage would no longer have been the illustration of the marriage of Christ and the Church. If Jesus had stated that divorce would free a person in a human marriage to marry again, it would not illustrate the eternal security of the believer in which there cannot be, and will not be any separation from Christ.
4. Any other explanation of the "exception clause" than it referring to fornication with another during the engagement period, does not line up with the marriage of Christ and the Church. Any other interpretation removes marriage from being a true type of Christ and the Church.
5. Because the time on earth is the engagement period of Christ and the Church, it is possible for a person to loose their salvation here in this life before they die.
6. Marriage, where the only thing that can end the marriage is death, is an illustration of absolute eternal security. In Heaven there will be no more death. Therefore, there can never be a divorce, annulment, or an ending of the marriage of Christ and the Church.
7. If God permitted divorce and remarriage, marriage would no longer illustrate eternal security with Christ.
8. The marriage of God the Father with Israel in the Old Testament and the marriage of Christ and the Church in the New Testament, both illustrate the permanence of marriage. Divorce does not end marriage. Only death can end a marriage and free one to marry another.

We can believe whatever we want on divorce and remarriage, but...

on the Great Judgment Day, we will be judged by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for what we have done and what we have encouraged others to do. Each person is entitled to have an opinion on divorce and remarriage. However, having an opinion, even a very strong opinion does not make it truth or make it right. Even if there are millions of people who have the same opinion, as were Israel and the prophets of Baal in the days of Elijah, it does not make the opinion truth. There is only one thing that is truth, and it is what God says is truth. If we bring an opinion on the doctrine of marriage, divorce and remarriage to Scripture and find verses to back up and prove our opinion, we will not discern God's truth and God's judgment. We will lead ourselves and others into sin.

We must ask God what His judgment is on divorce and remarriage, and search the Bible so that we know what the truth is. All of Scripture needs to agree. We dare not reinterpret the Scriptures to make it line up with our opinion. If someone brings a new interpretation that you have not heard before, be like the Bereans, and check it out in the Scriptures. If it is correct, receive it. If it does not line up with the rest of Scripture, reject it as heresy.

How the Church is wearying God

In addressing divorce in Malachi chapter 2, God concludes with a statement that describes what is happening with the doctrine of marriage, divorce and remarriage in the Church today. Verse 17: "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Today many churches are saying that divorce and remarriage is not sin and that God delights in those who are divorced and remarried. However, our saying that it is okay or that it is not sin does not change it from being sin in God's eyes. In fact it causes God to become weary not only with the divorced and remarried person, but also with us and with what we say. We want God to delight in us not be wearied by our lack of obedience.

Is the way too narrow, too hard?

In the pamphlet "People Call Us Mennonites" Stephen Ebersole makes a statement that is worded so well. It applies well to the divorce and remarriage situation. "Sometimes people ask us, ' Why do you make the way so narrow, so hard?' Here is the reason. We believe a church ought to make it as easy as they can for each other to get to heaven. If we tell you that sin is all right, and it bars you from heaven, we have made it hard; but if we tell you what is wrong, although you may think it is hard now, one day you will surely be glad you listened."

Everyone will not accept what Jesus said on divorce and remarriage

At the end of his teaching on divorce and remarriage in [Matthew 19](#), Jesus said that not everyone will be willing to accept what He said: "But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given." [Matthew 19:11](#). The hardness of people's hearts has affected their willingness to accept what God commands about divorce and remarriage since the time of Moses. When their passion rises, they follow passion rather than God. Jesus told us that there will always be some who are not willing to accept God's words on divorce and remarriage. It does not mean that some are automatically doomed to hell. Each person has a choice: to make Jesus first, or to make self and passion first. What is your choice?

What if this article makes you mad?

God has called me to be a watchman (Ez, 3:17-21) and to tell you what He has shown me. He has not asked me to force you to change your mind. You have freedom to do and believe whatever you want to, but if on Judgment Day you discover that remarriage is sin and it bars you from Heaven, you cannot tell God that no one told you the truth. If when we get to heaven we find out that God permitted remarriage, those who never remarried will lose nothing in all

eternity because there is no marriage in heaven. If we find out that yes, remarriage is sin, it will mean eternity in hell for everyone who was remarried. The "few years" of remarriage on earth would be a terrible price to pay for eternity in hell! **I Corinthians 6:9** "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolater, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuser of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous nor drunkards, nor reviler, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

For more information on divorce and remarriage:

I encourage you to visit MarriageDivorce.com.

Videos on Divorce and Remarriage

A video discussing several questions about marriage, divorce and remarriage according to the Bible: is the adultery in remarriage an act or a state? Do the marriage vows of the remarriage invalidate the vows taken with the first partners? And what if the remarried couple got married prior to becoming Christians?

An overview of the New Testament teachings on divorce and remarriage.

End Notes:

¹Spiros Zodhiates, The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1991) p.1588

²Ante-Nicene Fathers (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) vol. 1 p.167

³Ante-Nicene Fathers (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) vol. 2 p.146,147

⁴Ante-Nicene Fathers (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) vol. 2 p.379

⁵Ante-Nicene Fathers (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) vol. 4 p.405

⁶Ante-Nicene Fathers (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) vol. 4 p. 66

⁷Institute in Basic Life Principles Newsletter July 1997 p.2

To read this article on the Internet, visit [http://www.biblicalresearchreports.com
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