

Key to accompany "Letter to the Pastor"

The Hosea Project is a division of TFM Theological Foundations Ministries, an international, nondenominational effort by volunteers to contact each Pastor and leader of the Christian Church worldwide with this message of repentance and restoration. Even though many other doctrinal understandings may vary, all true Christians, regardless of affiliation, share the same moral and ethical standards commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ. No individual church or denomination stands alone in this particular time of crisis with marriage, divorce and remarriage. The actions of one effect the reactions of all, for both good and for evil.

Hosea Project Team Members

Our team members come from different walks of life, vary in age, marital status, and denominational or independent persuasion. Each one loves the Lord, and has made a personal commitment to stand up and reach out to their brothers and sisters along side them in the church. They are all busy with their own lives and in many cases careers. Each is unpaid, individually bearing the costs both financially and socially for the efforts they make on behalf of the Hosea Project. Please pray for them for they are doers of the Word and not hearers only. These are the people who sacrificed the time to research, find you and send you this letter with hope and in prayer. They are His salt and light and work directly for Him. May God bless them for their toil and service on His behalf.

We hope you become involved with the Hosea Project by using the resource materials at hoseaproject.marriedivorce.com. You may write us at hoseaproject@marriedivorce.com. We encourage pastors to write us at chaplain@marriedivorce.com

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Biblical References

Malachi 2:13 - 17

"...You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because He no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant."

"Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He is seeking Godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel, "and I hate a man covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the Lord Almighty. "So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith." (NIV)

Malachi's teaching:

1. Breaking faith with a covenant marriage partner is breaking faith with God.
2. The breaking of the covenant by a wayward spouse results in a severing of their relationship with God as He refuses to hear or pay attention to offerings or prayers, no matter how sincere. Obviously repentance must be sincere and restorative.

3. God was party to the marriage covenant as witness and an active participant by making the man and woman His own personal possession.
4. Faithfulness to the marriage covenant is necessary to produce Godly offspring. Without it the future of God's people is threatened.
5. The covenant relationship belongs to the wife or husband of the youth, the first one. This is the union that God is a witness to and the enforcer of.
6. Even though one of the parties may be unfaithful, as described here, to the original covenant, it remains in force for God says that the betrayed one remains the partner. This dispels the notion entirely that adultery dissolves the marriage covenant.
7. God twice warns specifically not to break faith with the spouse of your youth, the original union. These are direct warnings against divorce and remarriage.
8. Divorce is a spiritual attack with spiritual results and lasting spiritual consequences.
9. Divorce is a violent ripping away of the cloak covering the husband provides for his wife, and the wife for the husband.
10. God Hates Divorce! He truly does. That's why He never severs the covenant bonds and punishes those who violate them.

This is God's final word on marriage and divorce in the Old Testament. Those hoping to apply some earlier Old Testament provision allowing divorce and remarriage should be careful. God was increasingly leading people closer to the New Testament age in which we live.

This is the immediate Biblical backdrop to the arrival of the Messiah. Jesus' own teachings closely follow the same principles given here. He then takes it several steps farther.

Matthew 5:31, 32

"It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a letter of divorcement: 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." (KJV)

Jesus' Teaching:

1. A man must not divorce his wife, if she is not guilty of fornication. If she marries again, he will have helped cause her to become an adulteress.
2. Any divorced woman not put away for "fornication" can not remarry without becoming an adulteress.
3. Any man that marries a divorced woman who was not put away for "fornication" becomes an adulterer.
4. Jesus abrogated Moses' Deuteronomy 24:1-4 allowance for remarriage of a woman not put away for "fornication."

In this passage on marriage and divorce, the first book in the New Testament, which was written primarily to the Jews, Jesus sets the standard for His Church to follow. Whatever the exception clause means, "saving for the cause of fornication," it has little active, or direct bearing on either the husband, or the wife or the third party so narrowly described here. It is as important to understand what is not taught here, as well as what is. Otherwise, it would only be too easy to take untaught lessons and try to apply them elsewhere.

Jesus referred directly to a man who divorced an innocent wife. Jesus did not refer to a man who divorced his wife for fornication. Jesus referred directly to an innocent woman who remarried. Jesus did not refer to a guilty woman that remarried. As this passage is gender specific, it also does not deal with reverse sexual roles, where the woman divorces her husband, and he remarries, therefore committing adultery by doing so.

Jesus, in Matthew 5:31-32, prohibits an innocent woman, who has been divorced by her

husband, from remarrying. If she does remarry, according to Jesus, she is guilty of adultery. Jesus did not put any kind of qualifier on His statement, nor is any implied. He did not say that she would not be an adulteress if her husband sinned, or remarried, or for any other reason. He said that if she marries after being divorced she would become an adulteress. This innocent woman, legally divorced from her husband, can not remarry. Jesus went on to say that any man that marries this woman is guilty of the sin of adultery as well. He has in this passage of Scripture, abrogated the Moses allowance for divorce and remarriage, which allowed the woman to remarry after divorce if she wished to do so (Deut. 24:1-4).

By this teaching our Lord shows that God's original standard is now being enforced. He indicates that marriage is a binding covenant relationship as described by God Himself in Malachi 2:14, and not just a human contract that can be broken. Here the validity of the marriage covenant is considered by Jesus to survive any act of divorce, thereby precluding any remarriage.

Jesus' use of the exception clause indicates that there is a difference in circumstances involving "porneia", or fornication than those that do not. The Greek root word "porneia" is different here than adultery, which is always translated from the Greek root word "moiceia". In this passage, and the one to follow, Jesus was referring to the Jewish betrothal process. After all, He was speaking to Jewish lawmakers on legal matters.

This tradition, based upon Jewish law and custom provided a way for the husband to back out of a marriage if it was proved that the woman being married was not a virgin upon sexual consummation. Joseph considered putting away Mary, the mother of Jesus, when he found out she was with child, thinking she had been guilty of "porneia", but an angel revealed to him that The Holy Spirit was the father, not another man.

A translation of verse 32 could be written as follows:

"But I tell you, anyone who puts away his wife, except for fornication (porneia), causes her to become an adulteress (moiceia), and anyone who then marries the woman put away in such a way, commits adultery (moiceia)."

Unless she is dismissed on grounds of "porneia" (fornication), which means having sexual relations while unmarried, she cannot rightfully and morally be put away. If she is put away, or divorced, and subsequently remarries, then she now becomes an adulteress herself, guilty of "moiceia" (adultery), having sexual relations with someone other than her spouse. In addition the man who marries her also enters into "moiceia"(adultery), since he has not really married her at all, but instead, having sexual relations with another man's wife.

John Gill, in his historic commentary stated:

"that is, as much as in him lies: should she commit it, he is the cause of it, by exposing her, through a rejection of her, to the sinful embraces of others; and, indeed, should she marry another man, whilst he is alive, which her divorce allows her to do, she must be guilty of adultery (moiceia); since she is his proper wife, the bond of marriage not being dissolved by such a divorce."

In the New Testament, fornication (root Greek word "porneia") refers generally to illicit sex of unmarried persons outside of a marriage covenant or its spiritual counterpart. Fornication (porneia) may also be used to describe sexual sin in an overall sense that includes any and every form of sexual vice including adultery (moiceia), but if so, that occurs specifically only in 1 Cor. 5:1. That case involved a form of incest, which is not considered adultery (moiceia), but rather fornication (porneia). That is not the case in Matthew's two accounts involving marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Jesus was teaching that the man in question who divorced his wife would cause his wife to commit adultery when she is forced to remarry in order to survive, and that any man that subsequently marries her is also in sin. The point Jesus was making is that it is a sin for a man to put his wife into that position. Jesus is condemning divorce and remarriage for all the parties involved, not defining an exit clause.

Matthew 19:3-12

“The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause? 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.

They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 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. 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.

His disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men, and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." (KJV)

Jesus' teaching:

1. A man is to leave his parents and cleave to his wife.
2. When a man and a woman marry God makes them one flesh. No one may separate them. Anyone attempting to do so will fail, as well as pick a fight with God.
3. By Divine Decree God declares that no man has the authority to alter a supernatural unifying act of God, and consequently God neither recognizes any human decision to the contrary nor obligingly cuts the one flesh body in half.
4. A man who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, by sinning against her, in contravention of the covenant union.
5. Some will choose not to marry, for some good physical reasons, or for spiritual choices, or for other reasons. But for those who do marry, Jesus tells them to receive these teachings.

In Matthew's account of this confrontation, also recorded in Mark, Jesus restores the standard concerning marriage. He also gave an insider's view of what God's standards are, and affirms that they are unchanged since the beginning. Since Matthew's Gospel was written as a witness to the Jews he emphasized certain points not found in Mark's account, since Mark was writing primarily to the Romans.

As in Jesus' earlier recorded teaching, the exception clause 'except it be for fornication,' uses the Greek word "porneia", or rendered properly in English as "fornication". It refers only to the Jewish betrothal custom of the time, backed by the law. That was when a bride was found upon marriage consummation not to be a virgin; the bridegroom could divorce her for "porneia" and then marry another.

A literal original Greek translation of verse 9 is as follows:

“And I say to you, whoever puts away his wife, except for fornication (porneia), and marries another, commits adultery (moiceia); and whoever marries her who is put away commits adultery (moiceia).”

Matthew Henry quoted Dr. Whitby as follows:

“Dr. Whitby understands this, not of adultery (moiceia), but (because our Saviour uses the word porneia (porneia)- fornication) of uncleanness committed before marriage, but discovered afterward; because, if it were committed after, it was a capital crime, and there needed no divorce. He disallows it in all other cases: ‘Whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication (porneia), and marries another, commits adultery (moiceia).’ This is a direct answer to their query, - ‘that it is not lawful’.”

All those listening to the debate expected Jesus to side with either the "Hillel" school of thought that believed that divorce was legal for any and every reason, or the "Shammai" group, that taught adultery was the only legitimate reason for divorce. He surprised His hearers with a new, uncompromising position, disallowing divorce and remarriage at all.

Mark 10: 2 –12

“Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with a question: ‘Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?’ ‘What did Moses say about divorce?’ Jesus asked them. ‘Well, he permitted it,” they replied. He said a man merely has to write his wife an official letter of divorce and send her away.”

“But Jesus responded, ‘he wrote those instructions only as a concession to your hard-hearted wickedness. But God’s plan was seen from the beginning of creation, for; “He made them male and female.” This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” Since they are no longer two, but one, let no man separate them, for God has joined them together.”

“Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again. He told them, ‘whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and remarries, she commits adultery.’” (NLT)

Jesus' teaching:

1. The old covenant allowed divorce only as a concession to hard - hearted wickedness.
2. God changes a man and woman’s status upon marriage and unites them into one.
3. Jesus declares that no one must separate a husband and wife.
4. If a man divorces his wife and marries another, he is committing adultery.
5. A woman who divorces her husband and remarries commits adultery.
6. Jesus treats both males and females the same insofar as marriage and divorce.

This is Marks' account of the same conversation recorded in Matthew 19. Being written to Roman gentile Christians, he provides us further understanding of Jesus' teaching and the interpretation intended for us to take. As we know from both accounts, the disciples were shocked and disturbed by Jesus' answer to the Pharisees.

They waited until they could get Him alone to ask Him for verification and clarification. He confirmed what He meant by firmly slamming the door on divorce and remarriage forever. Giving them the bottom line, He declared:

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery (moiceia) against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and remarries, she commits adultery (moiceia)." (Mark 10: 11 – 12 NLT)

As with the disciples, there is great dismay and shock when the words of Jesus, recorded here, are spoken to the Church today. It was difficult to accept and obey back then, just as it is now. In having this private meeting recorded for us, the Holy Spirit has clearly detailed God's stand on marriage and divorce and remarriage.

Luke 16: 15 - 18

"Then He said to them, "You like to look good in public, but God knows your evil hearts. What the world honors is an abomination in the sight of God. Until John the Baptist began to preach, the Law of Moses and the messages of the prophets were your guides. But now the good news of the Kingdom of God is preached, and eager multitudes are forcing their way in."

"But that doesn't mean that the law has lost its force in even the smallest point. It is stronger and more permanent than heaven and earth. Anyone who divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery and anyone whom marries divorced woman commits adultery" (NLT)

Jesus' teaching:

1. It is irrelevant what the world thinks or does or what its opinions are. God does not agree with the world and what the world honors is an abomination to God.
2. The words of Jesus Christ are to be our instructions from that time to this.
3. The moral law is still in force and being enforced. It is more permanent than heaven and earth; not even the smallest part is changed. It will be in effect forever. Obedience to the law does not produce salvation, but disobedience is sin, and punishable by God.
4. Anyone who divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery.
5. Anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

This passage of scripture makes the teachings of Jesus rather clear-cut. He states that whatever the worlds standards are, they are not to be adopted by his followers.

He declares that the law of God is permanent, and righteous. He then gives an example of what He meant by declaring the permanence of marriage. Anything to the contrary is a violation of His law, and therefore is forbidden as adultery.

There is a comprehensive unity throughout the Gospels in regard to marriage that dovetails perfectly into his commands on forgiveness and faithfulness. This may be best expressed in the Lord's Prayer that removes all possible reasons for divorce: "Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us." (Matthew 6: 12 NLT)

Matthew 14: 3-4 NIV, Mark 6: 17-20, Luke 3: 18-20

"Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Phillips wife, for John had been saying to him: 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'" (Matthew 14: 3-4 NIV)

"For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Phillip's wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'

“ So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man...” (Mark 6: 17-20 NIV)

“And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them. But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.” (Luke 3: 18-20 NIV)

John the Baptist’s teaching:

1. The moral laws of God apply to all, the Godly and the ungodly equally.
2. The divorce of Herodias from Phillip was unrecognized by God, as John declares that she was still Phillip’s wife.
3. The sexual relationship of Herod with Herodias was adultery in God’s eyes, as she belonged still, to Phillip.

John the Baptist, contrary to the teachings of corrupted religious leaders and the prevailing culture of the day, was compelled to properly apply the word of God. He confronted Herod for marrying his brother’s wife while his brother still lived. Herod and Herodias were breaking the commands of God, and John, not being a respecter of persons, confronted him accordingly. It was not improper or considered incest for Herod to marry Phillip’s wife, if Phillip had died. In Mark we find the Sadducees quoting Moses:

“...Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother.” (Mark 12: 19 NIV)

The problem was that Phillip was very much alive and ruling the adjacent territories of Iturea and Traconitis. (Luke 3:1) Paul explained the difference between divorcing and remarrying instead of having your husband or wife die, and then remarrying. He wrote in Corinthians:

“A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes...” (1 Corinthians 7:39 NIV)

and in Romans:

“... so then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress, but if her husband dies, she is released from that law, and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.” (Romans 7:3 NIV)

The serious nature of the transgression of Herod and Herodias is underscored by the high cost of John the Baptist’s stand against it. Herodias had John beheaded by taking advantage of and manipulating Herod’s lust for her daughter. Most people, when confronted with their sin and convicted by the Holy Spirit lash out in denial and rage.

The standards of God are high, and the people of God are commanded to obey them, regardless of personal cost. John’s obedience to God cost him his life. Herod and Herodias’ disobedience has probably cost them much more.

Romans 7: 1 - 3

“... You who are familiar with the law - don’t you know that the law applies only to a person who is still living? Let me illustrate. When a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her.”

“So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries” (NLT)

Paul's' teaching:

1. Marriage survives remarriage and precludes it.
2. Marriage is binding as long as both husband and wife are still living.
3. Remarriage while the spouse lives is the sin of adultery.
4. The marriage covenant ceases upon the death of the spouse.
5. When death breaks a marriage, the living spouse may remarry.

This reference by Paul is extremely important in a number of ways that are different from other scriptures on marriage, divorce and remarriage. What we have here is a description of what the first century Christians believed in regard to these subjects.

It is not being taught as doctrine, but referred to as a commonly held principle of morals and law. It is a key to understanding what the apostle and the Church understood as right and wrong.

What is even more remarkable is that Paul hinges on this principle, as an illustration, the doctrine of grace, the forgiveness of sins and the empowerment by the Holy Spirit. The apostle, using this statement of belief to illustrate the core covenants of the blood of Christ underscores both its common knowledge and its importance.

Here in the first letter after the Gospels in the New Testament is a summary of what Jesus taught, the disciples understood, and the early Christians believed. Here is no less than a written witness of what was and remains the foundational understanding of Christianity insofar as morality is concerned.

1 Corinthians 7: 10 - 11

"Now for those who are married I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else go back to him. And the husband must not leave his wife." (NLT)

Paul's' teaching:

1. This command has the full authority of the Creator and is the fundamental principle and interpretive device to understanding all that God has instructed us on Marriage, divorce and remarriage. It binds Paul, the early Church and we today to its overriding command, and it is not negotiable, conditional or non applicable in all matters pertaining to it. This is not simply a statement of what God considers to be an ideal, but a direct command.
2. A wife must not leave her husband.
3. A provision is made for those who have had to be separated from their spouse for any reason whatsoever - Singleness.
4. Remarriage for divorced or separated spouses is strictly forbidden.
5. Upon separation or divorce the spouses can (and should) be reconciled.

It is difficult to imagine how Paul could state any clearer what the Christian doctrine, as defined by the Lord Jesus himself, is and forever will be. He goes into greater detail in the rest of the chapter to illustrate how it is put into practice and how to apply the principle in the situations faced by real people in the real world who are called by His name. In every single application described in the rest of this chapter, Paul uses this command of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only plumb line of truth. We can do no less.

1 Corinthians 7:12 - 17

"Now I speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command of the Lord. If a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. And if a Christian Woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him."

"For the Christian wife brings Holiness to her marriage, and the Christian husband brings Holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not have a Godly influence, but now they are set apart for him. (But if the husband or wife who isn't a Christian insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is not required to stay with them, for God wants his children to live in peace.)"

"You wives must remember that your husband might be converted because of you. And you husbands must remember that your wives might be converted because of you. You must accept whatever situation the Lord has put you in and continue on, as you were when God first called you. This is my rule for all the Churches. " (NLT)

Paul's Teaching:

1. This doctrine and practice is given not only to the Corinthian Church, but to us as well.
2. A Christian husband is to treat his unchristian wife the same way he would if she was a Christian. A Christian wife is to treat her unbelieving husband the same way she would if he was a Christian.
3. God compensates for the ungodly influence of the unbelieving spouse by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit through the Christian spouse, setting apart the children for himself.
4. As long as the unbelieving spouse wants to live together, the Christian must not leave.
5. If the unchristian spouse wants to leave or divorce, let them go in peace, don't try to force them to stay.
6. The Christian husband or wife must bear in mind that they may be able to lead their unchristian spouse to the Lord because of the way they handle these matters.
7. Christians in unfavorable marital circumstances are commanded to accept the situation they are in and specifically instructed not to try to change it by separation or divorce.

Paul's instructions are in conformity and obedience to the direct command of the Lord expressed in verses 10 and 11. He instructs the Christians to act like Christians regardless of the actions of their spouses. We must bear in mind everything we do is a testimony to our children and our unbelieving or wayward spouses. Nowhere in this passage is there the slightest allowance for divorce and remarriage.

The message, not a word for word translation, but a paraphrase designed to say things the way we would say them today, renders verses 15 to 17 as follows:

"On the other hand if the unbelieving spouse walks out, you've got to let him or her go. You don't have to hold on desperately. God has called us to make the best of it, as peacefully as we can."

"You never know wife; the way you handle this might bring your husband not only back to you, but also to God. You never know husband: The way you handle this might bring your wife not only back to you, but also to God" (THE MESSAGE)

1 Corinthians 7: 25 - 30

"Now about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord about them. But the Lord in his kindness has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you. Because of the present crisis, I think that it is best to remain just as you are."

"If you have a wife, do not end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not get married. But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married it is not a sin. However I am trying to spare you the extra problems that come with marriage."

"Now let me say this, the time that remains is very short, so husbands should not let marriage be their major concern. Happiness or sadness or wealth should not keep anyone from doing God's work." (NLT)

Paul's teaching:

1. Paul is giving his best advice on how to handle particular applications of the previously stated principles.
2. During a time of trouble it is easier not to be married.
3. If a man has a wife, do not end the marriage. If a man does not have a wife, don't get married.
4. If an unmarried woman wants to get married, let her.
5. If a man does not have a wife it is not a sin to marry.
6. Don't let marriage be your major concern, it's not first in importance, God is.
7. Christians must do God's work and obey him, no matter what the marital circumstances. Personal happiness or sadness must not alter our obedience in decisions and activities.

Paul does not have a direct command from the Lord regarding the unmarried, so again he applies the Lord's command given in verse 10. Although he advises that being single is easier, as stated throughout the letter, he declares that if there is an unmarried man or woman, it is not a sin if they get married.

The word for young woman implies a maiden or virgin, and applies to the masculine gender equally. If a man or woman is virginally unmarried, they may marry. If on the other hand, anyone is already married, stay married as per the Lord's command.

The modern incorrect misunderstanding of the word "loosed" in verse 27 (Greek *luisis*) or "unmarried" in English has provided considerable false comfort for those seeking loopholes to run divorce and remarriage camels through. However, in order to do so, they ignore the reference to the virginal unmarried precondition by changing the meaning of "loosed" to refer not to those who are virginally unmarried, but to those that had previously been married, but subsequently divorced.

With a blind eye to the Lord's command that if separated or divorced they are to remain single, many rationalize away the rest of the restraining teachings and proceed to do what seems right in their own eyes. Even a cursory look at the subject matter disallows such liberties. But in case any misunderstood him, Paul again explains what he meant in the verses to follow.

1 Corinthians 7:35 - 40

"But if a man thinks he should marry his fiancée because he has trouble controlling his passions, and time is passing, it is all-right, it is not a sin. Let them marry. But if he has decided firmly not to marry, and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry. So the person who marries does well, and the person who doesn't marry, does even better."

"A wife is married to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wishes, but this must be in a marriage acceptable to the Lord. But in my opinion it will be better for her if she doesn't marry again, and I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this." (NLT)

Paul's teaching:

1. Those who have never been married are free to marry if they wish.
2. Those who have never been married are free not to marry if they wish.
3. A person is married to their spouse as long as they both live and the covenant bond is unbreakable while both live.
4. A person is released upon death of a spouse to remarry.
5. The new marriage has to be acceptable to the Lord.
6. Some second marriages after the death of a spouse are not acceptable to the Lord.

As Paul prepares to turn to other matters he ties up loose ends by summing up his instructions on marriage, divorce and remarriage. Again all his advice conforms to the command of Christ given in verses 10 and 11:

"Now for those who are married I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. But if she does leave him, let her remain single, or else go back to him. And the husband must not leave his wife." (NLT)

With this teaching Paul closes off the subject, no doubt satisfied that his teaching is plain enough to settle all the questions the Church may have on the subject. He addressed every question he considered important enough to deal with, and he was right, He did. The problem is that many disagree with his statements and have tried to subvert them or redirect their obvious applications.

Over and over again Paul states and restates the same themes, without variation, in obedience to the Lord's instructions given him. It matches up perfectly with what Jesus commanded us in the Gospels: "Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together." (Matthew 19: 6 NLT)

Ephesians 5: 21-33

"And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of His body, the Church; he gave His life to be her savior. As the Church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything."

"And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the Church. He gave up His life for her to make her Holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead she will be Holy and without fault."

"In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man actually loves himself when he loves his wife. No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for His body, which is the Church. And we are His body."

"As the scriptures say, 'a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the Church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (NLT)

Paul's teaching:

1. Mutual submission of both husband and wife to each other is an act of worship and obedience to Christ.
2. Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands and respect them in the same way they are to submit themselves to the Lord.
3. The Church is to submit to Christ in the same way that wives are to submit to their husbands. He laid down His life for those who are in His Body, the Church.
4. The husband is the head of the home in the same way as Christ is the head of the Church. He is to lay down his life for his wife in the same way Christ lived and died for the Church.
5. The husband is required to love and forgive his wife in the same way as Christ loves and forgives the Church. Regardless of her faults he is to see her through Christ as spotless and pure.
6. A husband and wife are actually one flesh, not in some sort of flexible symbolic way, but in another, more substantial but mysterious way, as a divine act of God, just as Christ is united into one with those who are part of His Body.

Paul again repeats his other teachings on marriage, further giving us insight on just how central it is to the message of Jesus Christ and the law of love in the New Testament. It is clear here that marriage is not just another ideal given by God, but a mystery that symbolizes and models the very nature of the relationship He has chosen to have with us. He binds both husband and wife together in the same way as He binds himself to us.

The very nature of this entire scripture and its context underscores the permanence of marriage and the one flesh relationship of husband and wife. Each is to extend the same kind of commitment, forgiveness and longsuffering to the other that Christ extends to us.

Hebrews 13: 3 - 8

"Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery. Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

"Remember your leaders who first taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives and trust the Lord as they do. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. So do not be attracted by strange new ideas." (NLT)

Hebrew's teaching:

1. Marriage must be upheld with honor and safeguarded.
2. Husbands and wives are to remain faithful to each other.
3. God will judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery by violating the sanctity and Christian understanding of marriage.
4. We are to live our lives as the first Church leaders lived theirs, being faithful and trusting God to be our helper in times of need and trial, regardless of opposition or resistance from others.
5. Do not be attracted to mutations or alterations to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but follow the original leaders because the Gospel, like its head, Jesus Christ, does not change with time. Refute and resist doctrines that are either departures from or additions to the message already received.

The author of Hebrews adds his voice to the chorus of witnesses to Christ's plan for marriage within Christianity. As in Jesus and Paul's commands before him, he enforces the strict obedience to the covenant of marriage by repeating the command for absolute fidelity to the

marriage partner. He goes even further by teaching that failure to do so by husband or wife is the sin of adultery that will be judged and punished by God. We are reminded that God will meet all our needs and will never abandon us or forsake us.

1 Peter 3:1 – 7

"In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands, even those who refuse to accept the good news. Your Godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over by watching your pure godly behavior."

"Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God."

"That is the way the Holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, when she called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do."

"In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard." (NLT)

Peter's teaching:

1. Wives must accept the husband as the head of the home and recognize his authority. They are to treat their unbelieving husbands in the same way they would if they are fellow believers, becoming living epistles of Godliness by allowing their lives to witness to the power of God.
2. There is a promise here that when a woman remains faithful to God and to her unbelieving husband, he will be won over by the Holy Spirit working through the example of her life and the intercession of her prayers.
3. Women that let God give them a quiet, gentle spirit need not adorn themselves with all the latest worldly clothes, makeup and jewelry. The Spirit of God within them will be pleasing to God and through him wives will be made beautiful to their husbands too.
4. Wives are to obey God without fear of what their husbands may or may not do. They have a covenant with God who will protect them and bless them as God protected and blessed the women of old. If the husband is dangerous to the safety or welfare of his family a separation is in order so that the decks are cleared for God to work a miracle.
5. Husbands must honor their wives in the same way that wives are instructed to honor their husbands. They are also to understand their wives and the differences between them. Wives are equal partners with the husband in family and in life. God does not deem one to be superior to the other.
6. It is strongly implied that husbands that do not treat their wives as they should, will have their relationship with God severed. God will not answer the prayers of a man who betrays his wife. Such an evil attitude also leaves him naked and exposed to the disciplining arm of God – a fearful thing indeed!

Peter closes off the New Testament revelation on the subject by independently commanding the same adherence to the law of Christ that Paul did. Marriage is sacred and to be held in the strictest regard. Failure to do so will result in the active displeasure and judgment of God. Abuse of one's covenant partner is considered as serious a breach of God's laws as adulterous unfaithfulness. As in all the other teachings given in the New Testament by our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles, marriage is upheld and divorce is disallowed. Expressly stated here is a direct connection between dishonoring marriage and spiritual apostasy.

The early Fathers of our faith were much more personally familiar with the culture and context of New Testament times than we are today. I do not, however, hold to the belief that the authority of the Church Fathers can be equal to that held by the Apostles who were personally appointed and taught by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Their doctrinal position statements were based on the same Biblical sources we use today, as well as additional direct interpretations and clarifications passed on to them by the Apostles and their immediate successors. Even though not first hand, they give an accurate portrayal of what Jesus taught, early Christians practiced, and what the Apostles believed and enforced throughout the Body of Christ.

Those Church Fathers who were in positions of responsible authority, called and appointed by God to serve His Church, were required as shepherds of His sheep, to walk as He walked, and to talk as He talked. Their words are good counsel, and should be weighted most heavily in today's court of Christian opinion, but in no wise should their teachings be considered infallible or without possible error. They were after all, as we are, privileged to be standard bearers and light holders for the God of the Universe in their generations, but who were, like us, faulty sinners saved by Grace.

However, those first Christians were close to ground zero, at the very epicenter of the Christian earthquake that shook the world. This proximity in time and place to the ministry of Jesus Christ and His personally appointed Apostles gave them a much clearer vantage point than we ourselves enjoy. We can only look back through their writings, to evaluate their legacy by the lives they lived, and the fruit of their labors.

These men of God had the initial responsibility to accurately define and defend what the teachings and redemption Gospel of Jesus Christ meant, not only to the millions of lost in their world, but also to the billions in ours. They had their theology rooted in Christ, their lives poured out in their present, and their minds looking to the future.

Complete Agreement

Of all the early recognized Church Fathers who ever wrote, all who were written about, concerning every discussion and every debate, in thousands of surviving documents, over hundreds of years, there is not a single dissenting authoritative voice, with slight variations, on the essential core doctrines of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Each taught essentially the same doctrines, each held the same opinions and each enforced the same morals standards you read here:

Hermes
A.D. 90

Hermes was sold into slavery and sent to Rome as a boy. He was later set free by his owner, a woman called Rhoda. He became known as one of the authoritative Fathers of the Church and an influential Christian writer, noted for his detailed description of early Christianity. His surviving book, "The Shepherd", was considered to be an inspired book of the Holy Bible until the fourth century A.D. To quote the translators: "The Shepherd of Hermas is in form, an apocalypse. It consists of a series of revelation made to Hermas by the church, who appears in the form of a woman, by the shepherd, the angel of repentance, and by the great angel who is in charge of Christians. Each revelation is accompanied by an explanation, and from these it can be seen though the form of the book is apocalyptic and visionary, its object is practical and ethical."

Hermas wrote:

"I charge you," said he, "to guard your chastity, and let no thought enter your heart of another man's wife, or of fornication, or of similar iniquities; for by doing this you commit a great sin. But if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin. For if this thought enter your heart, then you will sin; and if, in like manner, you think other wicked thoughts, you commit sin. For this thought is great sin in a servant of God. But if any one commit this wicked deed, he works death for himself.

Attend, therefore, and refrain from this thought; for where purity dwells, there iniquity ought not to enter the heart of a righteous man." ... And I said to him, "What then, sir, is the husband to do, if his wife continue in her vicious practices?" And he said, "The husband should put her away, and remain by himself. But if he put his wife away and marry another, he also commits adultery."

And I said to him, "What if the woman put away should repent, and wish to return to her husband: shall she not be taken back by her husband?" And he said to me, "Assuredly. If the husband do not take her back, he sins, and brings a great sin upon himself; for he ought to take back the sinner who has repented...In this matter man and woman are to be treated exactly in the same way. –The Shepherd 4:1-10

Hermas taught:

1. If a wife persists in adulterous behavior the "innocent party" may, divorce in order to separate away from the sins of the offender.
2. If a husband divorces his wife for such a reason he must remain single and not remarry.
3. If a wife repents of her offence the husband must forgive her and receive her back as wife.
4. If the husband does not forgive his repentant wife he brings a great sin upon himself.
5. Men and woman are to act and be regarded exactly the same in this matter.

Justin Martyr
A.D. 151

Justin Martyr was one of the great, early theologians and apologists for the Church. He had the distinction of presenting a defining explanation and defense of Christianity to Caesar and the Imperial Roman Senate. His "Apology for the Christians", written to refute charges of sedition to the Roman state, is a magnificent legal testimony of the power of early Christians to live Holy and pleasing lives in an evil and corrupted society. Justin was beheaded for refusing to sacrifice to pagan Gods.

Justin Martyr wrote:

"In regards to chastity, Jesus has this to say: 'If anyone look at lust at a woman, he has already before God committed adultery in his heart.' And, 'Whoever marries a woman who has been divorced from another husband, commits adultery.' "

"According to our teacher, just as they are sinners who contract a second marriage, even though it is in accord with human law, so also are they sinners who look with lustful desires at a woman. He repudiates not only one who actually commits adultery, but even one who wishes to do so; for not only our actions are manifest to God, but even our thoughts." (First Apology 15) (a)

Justin Martyr taught:

1. To indulge in lust is to be guilty of adultery of the heart.
2. Whoever marries a divorced person commits adultery.
3. Whoever contracts a second marriage is sinning against God. (while a former spouse lives)

4. God does not, and the Church must not, take into account human law when it is in violation of God's law.
5. God judges motives and intentions, private thought life and actions. All is known and exposed to the God with which we have to do.

Clement of Alexandria
A.D.208

Titus Flavius Clemens, known as Clement of Alexandria, was a Greek theologian who served as head of the famous Catechetical School in Alexandria. His writings were designed to guide mature Christians to a more perfect knowledge of God and a pure moral character. His defense of the faith exhorted morals, kindness and patience. He taught that the thoughts and will of God in the Scriptures exhorts, educates and perfects the true Christian. Many scholars believe he founded the great Alexandrian School of Theology. He is listed as a martyr for his faith.

Clement of Alexandria wrote:

That scripture counsels marriage, however, and never allows any release from the union, is expressly contained in the law: "You shall not divorce a wife, except for reason of adultery." And it regards as adultery the marriage of a spouse, while the one from whom a separation was made is still alive.

"Whoever takes a divorced woman as wife commits adultery," it says; for "if anyone divorce his wife, he debauches her;" that is, he compels her to commit adultery.

And not only does he that divorces her become the cause of this, but also he that takes the woman and gives her the opportunity of sinning; for if he did not take her, she would return to her husband."(Miscellanies 2:23:145:3) (a)

Clement of Alexandria taught:

1. The Scriptures encourage Christians to enter a marriage relationship.
2. The marriage union covenant is permanent and does not allow anyone to be released from the union.
3. The only legitimate reason for divorce is adultery, otherwise separation is prohibited. A remarriage while a former spouse lives is living in the state of adultery, therefore expressly forbidden in Scripture.
4. A man who divorces his wife violates and corrupts her, for if she remarries, for any reason except for the death of her husband, she becomes an adulteress.
5. The one who marries a divorced spouse sins not only by committing adultery with another's spouse but also sins against God by acting as an impediment to reconciliation of the original marriage.
6. If the divorced spouse had remained single she would have, if possible returned the first union.

Origen
A.D. 248

Origen is known as the most accomplished and significant theologian of the early Church. As a student and exegete of the Old and New Testaments, he influenced the critical thinking of the Church in his day to such an extent that his works still have major impact on doctrine and practice. He was the first teacher known to use the "allegorical" method of Scriptural interpretation. It is estimated that he wrote some 5,000 thesis, tracts, epistles and books in his lifetime of service. Much of his work concentrated on refuting dangerous error and heresy. Origen was imprisoned during the reign of Emperor Decius. He was tortured to such an extent that he died from his ordeal after being released.

Origen wrote:

For confessedly he who puts away his wife when she is not a fornicator, makes her an adulteress, so far as it lies with him, for if, "when the husband is living she shall be called an adulteress if she be joined to another man;" and when by putting her away, he gives to her the excuse of a second marriage, very plainly in this way he makes her an adulteress...

Just as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seems to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry who has been divorced does not marry her, but, according to the declaration of our Savior, he commits adultery with her. (Commentaries on Matthew 14) (a)

Origen taught:

1. A man that divorces his wife who is not guilty of fornication causes her to become an adulteress if she remarries, and the man that marries her is an adulterer.
2. The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is permanent, as long as both husband and wife are alive.
3. No matter what the legal circumstances may appear to be to the contrary, a remarriage relationship when either or both parties are divorced, while a former partner lives, is adultery.
4. The intimate relations between the man and the woman remarried while former spouses still live are adulterous, and considered sin.
5. A remarriage is not an actual marriage whatsoever, but disguised adultery.

Basil the Great

A.D. 375 Basil was born in Caesarea and educated in Athens. He is considered one of the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church. His writings include "On the Holy Spirit" and "Moralia." He was asked by the Church to help defend against the Arian heretical doctrines and subsequently became Bishop of Caesarea in 370. Basil became Basil the Great because of his outstanding personal integrity and holiness as well as his brilliance as a theologian and defender of the faith.

Basil the Great wrote:

The man who has deserted his wife and goes to another is himself an adulterer because he makes her commit adultery; and the woman who live with him is an adulteress, because she has caused another woman's husband to come over to her...The woman who lives with an adulterer is an adulteress the whole time...The woman who has been abandoned by her husband, ought, in my judgment, to remain as she is. The Lord said, "If any one leave his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, he causes her to commit adultery;" thus, by calling her adulteress, He excludes her from intercourse with another man. For how can the man being guilty, as having caused adultery, and the woman, go without blame, when she is called an adulteress by the Lord for having intercourse with another man? A man who marries another man's wife who has been taken away from him will be charged with adultery... - Amphilochius 199 (a)

Basil Taught:

1. A man that deserts his wife and she remarries another makes his wife commit adultery.
2. The woman who a divorced man marries is guilty of adultery.
3. The second woman is guilty of taking another woman's husband.
4. An adulterous relationship is continuous adultery, not a onetime sin.
5. An abandoned wife is to remain as she is and not remarry.

6. An abandoned woman that takes another man and has sexual intercourse with him is committing adultery.
7. If a man is guilty of adultery, so is a woman.
8. It is a serious offence for a woman to take another woman's husband and will be charged with adultery.
9. It is a serious offence for a man to take another man's wife and will be charged with adultery.

Ambrose of Milan
A.D. 387

Ambrose is known as one of the four original Doctors of the Church. Born in Germany and educated in Rome, he was asked to be Bishop of Milan because of his extraordinary kindness and wisdom, earning him the love and esteem of his people. History records that he publicly confronted rebuked and led to repentance Caesar Theodosius over the slaughtering of thousands of Thessalonians. He wrote major treatises on Christian morality and personal Holiness, warning against adopting the world's standards. He was by all accounts a most extraordinary man, equal to his times. He was influential in bringing Augustine into a saving personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and receiving him into the Body of Christ.

Ambrose of Milan wrote:

But what shall I say about chastity, when only one and no second union is allowed? As regards marriage, the law is, not to marry again, nor to seek union with another wife. It seems strange to many why impediment should be caused by a second marriage entered on before baptism, so as to prevent election to the clerical office, and to the reception of the gift of ordination; seeing that even crimes are not wont to stand in the way, if they have been put away in the sacrament of baptism.

But we must learn, that in baptism sin can be forgiven, but law cannot be abolished. In the case of marriage there is no sin, but there is a law. Whatever sin there is can be put away, whatever law there is cannot be laid aside in marriage. - On the duties of Clergy:1:257 (a)

And what else did John have in mind but what is virtuous, so that he could not endure a wicked union even in the king's case, saying: "It is not lawful for thee to have her to wife."¹¹⁸ He could have been silent, had he not thought it unseemly for himself not to speak the truth for fear of death, or to make the prophetic office yield to the king, or to indulge in flattery. He knew well that he would die as he was against the king, but he preferred virtue to safety. Yet what is more expedient than the suffering which brought glory to the saint. - On the duties of Clergy, 3:89 (a)

No one is permitted to know a woman other than his wife. The marital right is given you for this reason: lest you fall in a snare and sin with a strange woman. "If you are bound to a wife do not seek a divorce," for you are not permitted, while your wife lives to marry another." – Abraham 1:57:59 (a)

You dismiss your wife, therefore, as if by right and without being charged with wrongdoing; and you suppose it is proper for you to do so because no human law forbids it; but divine law forbids it. Anyone who obeys men should stand in awe of God. Hear the Word of the Lord, which even they who propose our laws must obey: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." – Commentary on Luke, Sec. 8:5 (a)

Ambrose of Milan taught:

1. Sex is a marital right that is limited to one's own husband or wife. Legitimate sexual relations with one's spouse protects from sexual sin.

2. Extramarital sex is sin and a snare that will catch and kill.
3. It is forbidden by God for a spouse to divorce and to remarry another.
4. Ambrose interprets Paul's writings in Corinthians to mean that it is forbidden for a man or woman to remarry another while a former or earlier spouse lives.
5. It is a wrong understanding to believe that it is simply one's right to divorce a spouse. Even though human law may permit such a thing, God strictly forbids it.
6. Anyone who follows human customs and laws regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, instead of Divine laws should stand in fearful awe of God.
7. All lawmakers, in and out of the Church are warned, to their peril, to hear and obey the Word of the Lord.
8. Jesus' command is reaffirmed: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."
9. Conversion to Christianity forgives past sin but does not nullify or set aside God's laws.

Jerome
A.D. 396

Jerome was another great Father and Doctor of the early Church whose most important work was the translation of the Bible into Latin (The Vulgate). He wrote works defending the Church from Jovinian, Vigilantius and Pelagianism heretics that were threatening the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jerome wrote:

In explaining the testimony of the apostle, "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise, also, the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife," we have subjoined the following: "The entire question relates to those who are living in wedlock, whether it is lawful for them to put away their wives, a thing which the Lord also has forbidden in the Gospel.

Following the decision of the Lord the apostle teaches that a wife must not be put away saving for fornication, and that, if she has been put away, she cannot during the lifetime of her husband marry another man, or, at any rate, that she ought, if possible, to be reconciled to her husband. In another verse he speaks to the same effect: "The wife is bound ...as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband; she is at liberty to be married to, whom she will; only in the Lord.

I find joined to your letter of inquiries a short paper containing the following words: "ask him,(that is me,) whether a woman who has left her husband on the ground that he is an adulterer and sodomite and has found herself compelled to take another may in the lifetime of him whom she first left be in communion with the church without doing penance for her fault." As I read the case put I recall the verse "they make excuses for their sins."

We are all indulgent to our own faults; and what our own will leads us to do we attribute to a necessity of nature. It is as though a young man were to say, "I am over-borne by my body, the glow of nature kindles my passions, the structure of my frame and its reproductive organs call for sexual intercourse." Or again a murderer might say, "I was in want, I stood in need of food, I had nothing to cover me. If I shed the blood of another, it was to save myself from dying of cold and hunger."

Tell the sister, therefore, who thus enquires of me concerning her condition, not my sentence but that of the apostle. "Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 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. So then, if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress." And in another place: "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."

The apostle has thus cut away every plea and has clearly declared that, if a woman marries again while her husband is living, she is an adulteress. You must not speak to me of the violence of a ravisher, a mother's pleading, a father's bidding, the influence of relatives, the insolence and the intrigues of servants, household losses. A husband may be an adulterer or a sodomite, he may be stained with every crime and may have been left by his wife because of his sins; yet he is still her husband and, so long as he lives, she may not marry another.

The apostle does not promulgate this decree on his own authority but on that of Christ who speaks in him. For he has followed the words of Christ in the gospel: "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." Mark what he says: "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Whether she has put away her husband or her husband her, the man who marries her is still an adulterer.

I have not been able quite to determine what it is that she means by the words "has found herself compelled" to marry again. What is this compulsion of which she speaks? Was she overborne by a crowd and ravished against her will? If so, why has she not, thus victimized, subsequently put away her ravisher? Let her read the books of Moses and she will find that if violence is offered to a betrothed virgin in a city and she does not cry out, she is punished as an adulteress: but if she is forced in the field, she is innocent of sin and her ravisher alone is amenable to the laws.

Therefore if your sister, who, as she says, has been forced into a second union, wishes to receive the body of Christ and not to be accounted an adulteress, let her do penance; so far at least as from the time she begins to repent to have no farther intercourse with that second husband who ought to be called not a husband but an adulterer. If this seems hard to her and if she cannot leave one whom she has once loved and will not prefer the Lord to sensual pleasure, let her hear the declaration of the apostle: "ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils," and in another place: "what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? –Letters 55, 58 (a)

Jerome taught:

1. The Lord has forbidden divorce and remarriage in the gospel.
2. Christians must stop making excuses for and trying to find justification for divorce and remarriage. None of it stands before God, and must not be considered at all when applying the Word of God in the Church or to our individual lives.
3. A marriage is for life, and no matter what a spouse turns out to be, or how they may act, or the sins they commit, the covenant remains fully in effect. God does not divide the one flesh relationship.
4. A spouse that is separated or divorced for any reason, no matter how provoked, or how circumstances came to be as they are, is still bound to the marriage covenant, and cannot be remarried to another, as long as both live.

Augustine
A.D. 419

Augustine is widely regarded to be the single greatest Church leader and theologian between the time of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and the reformation period, and perhaps beyond. His personal testimony of seeking and finding God after an early life of sin is as fresh and new today, and as transparently Spirit filled as it was then. His place in the Church, among his peers, can be compared to what Paul's was among the Apostles. He rigorously and effectively defended the faith from enemies on all sides. His writings are credited with influencing to an enormous extent the thinking of the great leaders of the reformation.

Augustine wrote:

This we now say, that, according to this condition of being born and dying, which we know, and in which we have been created, the marriage of male and female is some good, the compact whereof divine Scripture so commends, as that neither is it allowed one put away by her husband to marry, so long as her husband lives; nor is it allowed one put away by his wife to marry another, unless she who have separated from him be dead.

Our Lord, therefore, in order to confirm that principle, that a wife should not lightly be put away, made the single exception of fornication; but enjoins that all other annoyances, if any such should happen to spring up, be borne with fortitude for the sake of conjugal fidelity and for the sake of chastity; and he also calls that man an adulterer who should marry her that has been divorced by her husband. And the Apostle Paul shows the limit of this state of affairs, for he says it is to be observed as long as her husband liveth; but on the husband's death he gives permission to marry.

For he himself also held by this rule, and therein brings forward not his own advice, as in the case of some of his admonitions, but a command by the Lord when he says: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." I believe that, according to a similar rule, if he shall put her away, he is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to his wife. -Commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels (a)

For whosoever putteth away his wife except for the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery. To such a degree is that marriage compact entered upon be a holy Sacrament, that it is not made void even by separation itself, since so long as her husband lives, even by whom she hath been left, she commits adultery in the case where she marries another, and he who hath left her is the cause of this evil. But I marvel, if, if it be allowed to put away a wife who is an adulteress, so it be allowed, having put her away, to marry another.

For holy Scripture makes a hard knot in this matter in that the apostle says, that, by commandment of the Lord, the wife ought not to depart from her husband, but, in case she shall have departed to remain unmarried, or to be reconciled to her husband...I can not see how the man can have permission to marry another, in the case where he left an adulteress, when a woman can not be married to another when she left an adulterer.

Seeing that the compact of marriage is not done away with by an intervening divorce, so that they continue as wedded persons one to another, even after separation, and commit adultery with those with whom they be joined, even after their own divorce, either the woman with the man, or the man with a woman.

Neither can it rightly be held that a husband who dismisses his wife because of fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. For there is also adultery on the part of those who, after the repudiation of their former wives because of fornication, marry others...

No one is so unreasonable to say that a man who marries a woman whose husband has dismissed her because of fornication is not an adulterer, while maintaining that a man who marries a woman dismissed without the ground of fornication is an adulterer. Both of these men are guilty of adultery. -Adulterous Marriages 1:9:9 (a)

A spouse, therefore, is lawfully dismissed for cause of adultery, but the laws of chastity remains. That is why a man is guilty of adultery if he marries a woman who has been dismissed even for this very reason of adultery. -ibid., 2:4:4 (a)

A woman begins to be the wife of no later husband unless she has ceased to be the wife of a former one. She will cease to be the wife of a former one, however, if that husband should die, not if he commit adultery. –ibed, 2:4:3 (a)

Therefore to serve two or more (men), so to pass over from a living husband into marriage with another, was neither lawful then (in the Old Testament), nor is it lawful now, nor will it ever be lawful. To apostatize from the One God, and to go into adulteress superstitions of another, is ever an evil. –On the Holy Spirit; Doctrinal Treatises; Moral Treatises. (a)

Augustine taught:

1. It cannot be rightly held by those wishing to believe so that anyone who divorces their spouse for adultery and then marries another is in the will of God and avoids the sin of adultery.
2. It is adultery to marry another if someone is divorced and then chooses a new husband or wife.
3. Whether or not a spouse commits adultery or fornication does not matter insofar as remarriage is concerned. Whoever remarries while a divorced spouse lives is in the state and sin of adultery.
4. When a spouse remarries according to the law of the land, after a divorce, they are still married to the former spouse as long as that spouse lives. Therefore the sexual and intimate relationship they have with a new spouse is simply engaging in a forbidden relationship by sinning with a person they are not married to in the eyes of God and the Church. Chastity refers to sexual abstinence. To have sexual relations with a remarried spouse is to be living in sin, in direct disobedience to God's Word.
5. A spouse can if they must, divorce their husband or wife who is guilty of adultery, but must not have a relationship with another as long as the original partner lives, for they are still in a binding life long covenant with them.
6. It is forbidden for a man or woman, even if they themselves were never previously married, to marry or have sexual relations with a divorced person whose spouse is still alive. They would be guilty of having sexual relations with another person's spouse, which is the very definition of the sin of adultery.
7. It never has been lawful, it is not now lawful, and it never will be lawful to divorce and remarry. To say and do otherwise is to adopt the adulterous superstitions of a different God than the one to which we have to do.

Summary of Teachings:

1. If a spouse persists in adulterous behavior and there is no other alternative, the marriage relationship can be terminated by the innocent party. (Hermes, Clement, Jerome, Augustine)
2. Spouses that are divorced for any reason must remain celibate and single as long as both spouses live. Remarriage is expressly prohibited. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)
3. To indulge in lust with the mind is to be guilty of adultery of the heart. (Justin Martyr)
4. Whoever marries a divorced person commits adultery. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)
5. Whoever contracts a second marriage, whether a Christian or not, while a former spouse lives is sinning against God. (Justin Martyr, Ambrose)
6. God does not, and the Church must not, take into account human law when it is in violation of God's law. (Justin Martyr, Origen, Ambrose)
7. God judges motives and intentions, private thought life and actions. (Justin Martyr)
8. The marriage covenant between a man and a woman is permanent, as long as both husband and wife are alive. (Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)
9. It is a serious offence against God to take another person's spouse. (Basil)
10. The Church must charge all persons who are in possession of another living person's former husband or wife with adultery. (Basil)

11. Sexual relations are a marital right that is limited to one's own husband or wife. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)
12. Sexual relations with one's legitimate spouse protects from sexual sin. (Ambrose)
13. Marriage and sexual relations with a remarried spouse while a former spouse lives is the sin of adultery. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)
14. It is a serious mistake to believe that it is simply one's right to divorce a spouse and take another. Even though human law may permit such a thing, God strictly forbids it, and cannot, and will not honor it. (Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)
15. Anyone who follows human customs and laws regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, instead of God's Divine instructions should stand in fearful awe of God Himself. (Clement, Ambrose)
16. All lawmakers, in and out of the Church are warned, to their peril, to hear and obey the Word of the Lord in regard to His commands on marriage and divorce. (Ambrose)
17. Christians are to stop making excuses and trying to find justification for divorce and remarriage. There are no valid reasons acceptable to God. (Jerome, Augustine)
18. A marriage is for life. No matter what a spouse turns out to be, or how they may act, what they do or don't do, or the sins they commit, the covenant remains fully in effect. A remarriage while a former spouse lives is not marriage at all, but sinful adultery. God does not divide the one flesh relationship except by physical death. (Hermes, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine)
19. Marriage is a lifelong covenant that will never be invalidated by God while both parties live. (Hermes, Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine)
20. It never has been lawful, it is not now lawful, and it never will be lawful to divorce and remarry. To say and do otherwise is to worship and adopt the adulterous superstitions of a different God than the one to which we have to do. (Augustine)

Things Have Changed

The understanding of our Christian forefathers was substantially different as regards to the relationship between claiming to be a Christian and strict separation from worldly corruption.

These doctrines, taught by the early, authoritative leaders of Christianity are in serious disagreement with those being commonly taught and modeled to Christians today. Millions of Christians over hundreds of years lived and died by these laws of God. Many of them were martyred for their faith, sealing in blood their obedience to the Word of God.

If these faithful servants relayed these same commands into the current western Church today, they would find themselves reviled as being not in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ handed down to us through them.

The Gospel being taught today in many "Bible believing" Churches, insofar as the moral standards required by Christianity are concerned, is diametrically opposed to that taught by Jesus Christ and His early Church.

The modern Church is now presenting a different, powerless version of Christianity that denies the essential Truth of God and the complete transforming power of the Holy Spirit to regenerate degenerate man.

In this generation most denominations we recognize as evangelical, along with more traditional Churches have lowered the same moral standards that were universally held by the Christian Church for all of its nearly 2,000 year history. Until recently it was considered "Anathema" for anyone professing to be any type of Christian to divorce and remarry.

In a recent survey of Pastors and evangelical Church leaders only 4% believed that remarriage is a sin that the Church should refuse to either participate in, or to recognize. A full 96% believed that remarriage while a spouse lives could be acceptable under at least certain conditions.

Many of these believe that the “understanding” of the Church should be broadened to allow more acceptances of those living in such states of sin. Acceptance to them means full fellowship, with no real distinction being made between those that are rightfully married and those that are not. A common sentiment seems to be “Since we are all sinners anyway, why should they be singled out and made to feel guilty or condemned for their actions?”

No longer part of the debate is the notion that such relationships made contrary to New Testament stipulations that are contrary to the will of God be forsaken. To their credit, some at least give a vague recognition that God is “concerned” and hope against hope that once the divorced and remarried, while still practicing their sin, are accepted and blended into the Body, a new line can someday be drawn in the sand that will be respected in the next generations to come. Some don’t care very much one way or the other.

Others believe the falsehood that it is futile to try to separate the sin from the sinner in any case, so any further attempt at maintaining required Biblical holiness standards in the face of such demonic pressure will fail, the Church will fold, and the whole point will become redundant anyway.

As the Church begins to flounder like the fish out of water it is, thinly disguised polygamy becomes sanctified. Homosexuals are next in line to have their marriages sanctioned by virtual of their same need for Christian community. “Why not?” it will be said, “what’s the difference anyway? The New Testament does not make any real distinction between practicing adulterers and practicing homosexuals anyway.” -So the doors are thrown wide open, and in comes all the horrors of Hell.

The Corrupted Church

Vs.

The Word of God

As the deterioration of standards in marriage and divorce works itself through the Church it is steadily gaining momentum. Christian divorce, once a rare and curious dichotomy, now defines normality in the Church. A large metropolitan Church is not considered well rounded if it does not have a ministry to provide divorce care and recovery programs. As more professing Christians walk from their marriages, there is less moral support holding together the remaining unions. As pastors and leaders in the Church who succumb to the same tide, freely divorce and subsequently remarry, it becomes conditionally acceptable by nearly all. These same leaders often stay in or return to ministry with their new mates. The denomination, colleagues and Church members are quick to defend their leader's decisions and speedy rehabilitation, redefining doctrine as necessary to comfortably accommodate the circumstances. Biblical teaching that cannot be twisted away is explained away as falling within God's permissive will, or unconditional grace, providing a slippery slope for those left standing. The leaders beat a wide path through the wilderness for whosoever will to follow in their footsteps. Consequently, The walls carefully erected and maintained by the Church for nearly 2000 years are being professionally pushed down from the inside.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is often mistakenly used to sanction an adulterous remarriage. Those believing as such maintain that a first marriage covenant is broken by divorce, and replaced by a new marriage. At the same time they will readily admit that according to Scripture, God blesses marriage and condemns divorce and remarriage. This impossible contradiction of terms is often mere expediency at the cost of fundamental Biblical principle, but sometimes it is as a result of confused theological understanding. Let us examine the issue most closely:

Look at the verses in Question. Deut: 24:1-4

"Suppose a man marries a woman but later discovers something about her that is shameful. So he writes her a letter of divorce, gives it to her, and sends her away. If she then leaves and marries another man and the second husband also divorces her or dies, the former husband may not marry her again, for she has been defiled. That would be detestable to the Lord. You must not bring guilt upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as a special possession." (NLT)

In the Third chapter of Jeremiah, God personally showed us how to properly regard Deuteronomy 24: 1-4. In verse 1 God says: "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?" In verse 8 God divorces Israel in accordance with the Deuteronomy code: "I gave Israel her certificate of divorce, and sent her away because of all her adulteries." Next, in verse 9, divorced Israel took other Gods (husbands): "Because Israel's immorality matters so little to her, she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stone and wood." (NIV)

God then demonstrated His perfect example of marriage law, despite Moses' regulations, pleading with Israel to come back to Him. In verses 12-14 we read: "Return faithless Israel," declares the Lord, "...Only acknowledge your guilt - you have rebelled against the Lord your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign Gods," declares the Lord. "Return faithless people...for I am your husband." (NIV)

Jesus himself addressed the purpose of the Deut 24 passage in both Matthew 19 and here in Mark 10, 2-12: Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?" "What did Moses say about divorce?" Jesus asked them. "Well, he permitted it," they replied. "He said a man merely has to write his wife an official letter of divorce and send her away." But Jesus responded, "He wrote those instructions only as a concession to your hard-hearted wickedness. But God's plan was seen from the beginning of creation, for 'He made them male and female.' 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together." Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again. He told them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and remarries, she commits adultery." (NLT)

In the above teaching Jesus explained that the Deuteronomy code had been put there by Moses to regulate sinful Israel. Jesus went on to explain that this passage was intended to regulate the sin of the hard hearted. He told us that God's standard has been in force from the beginning to the ending. Jesus pointed out the difference. He explained its inapplicability by saying: "But, I say unto you..." declaring the divine marriage law that God commanded but Israel corrupted into a license to sin and remarry.

Regarding Deut 24:1-4 in particular, John Wesley had this to say: "Some uncleanness - Some hateful thing, some distemper of body or quality of mind not observed before marriage: or some light carriage, as this phrase commonly signifies, but not amounting to adultery. Let him write - This is not a command as some of the Jews understood it, nor an allowance and approbation, but merely a permission of that practice for prevention of greater mischief's, and this only until the time of reformation, till the coming of the Messiah when things were to return to their first institution and purest condition."

This entire section of Deuteronomy consists of ancient Israel's internal legislation, defining laws, statutes and regulations issued by Moses. It outlines systems of basic law, property rights and social justice. Legal procedures, regulations, punishments and sanctions were codified to enable the government authorities to impose the rule of law.

These are not God's regulations for us, and were never written to be so. Except where they happen to coincide with modern institutions of law and justice, these regulations are not found in either church or state government. God's moral and spiritual laws were, and remain far above the standards of the law of the land. To attempt to argue that any particular one of these laws has authority over Christians today while the others do not is completely theologically and rationally unsupportable. We can not just pick the ones we like and disregard the ones we do not like. If anyone adopts one of the marriage regulations contained within it, then they must also adopt all the others with equal conviction, including the following examples:

"If two brothers are living together on the same property and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Instead, her husband's brother must marry her and fulfill the duties of a brother-in-law. The first son she bears to him will be counted as the son of the dead brother, so that his name will not be forgotten in Israel." Deut. 25: 5-6 (NLT)

"If a man's testicles are crushed or his penis is cut off, he may not be included in the assembly of the Lord. Those of illegitimate birth and their descendants for ten generations may not be included in the assembly of the Lord." Deut. 23:1-2 (NLT)

"And suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you are attracted to her and want to marry her. If this happens, you may take her to your home, where she must shave her head, cut her fingernails, and change all her clothes. Then she must remain in your home for a full month, mourning for her father and mother. After that you may marry her. But if you marry her and then decide you do not like her, you must let her go free. You may not sell her or treat her as a slave, for you have humiliated her." Deut. 21: 11-14 (NLT)

"If a man is caught in the act of raping a young woman who is not engaged, he must pay fifty pieces of silver to her father. Then he must marry the young woman because he violated her, and he will never be allowed to divorce her." Deut. 22: 28-29 (NLT)

This same section allows multiple wives, buying and selling slaves, having your son killed if he drinks too much or is too fat. It commands the stoning of folk for various assorted reasons while women can not even wear pants without being killed! Who of us would force a widowed sister-in-law to marry her husband's brother in order to produce children, or condemn a man because of an injury to his private parts? Treating innocent illegitimate children as commanded here violates everything we know about the mercies and justice of Jesus Christ.

Taking a kidnapped woman and forcing her to marry the captor who can then divorce her without penalty if he does not favor her anymore is beyond comprehension. Forcing a raped young woman to marry her violator is opposed to every legal and moral principle we agree on. Just as reprehensible is for a woman not to be permitted reconciliation with the husband of her youth after leaving an adulterous remarriage.

Brothers and sisters, don't go poking around in these old statutes, shopping for something to justify what Jesus Christ clearly and repeatedly condemned. God has not reinstated a small subsection of Jewish civil law so that a man who has stolen another man's wife; or a woman who has seduced a husband away from his wife and children; who talked some disobedient pastor into performing a God condemned wedding ceremony, can keep legal hold of their sin. If you have any doubt as to what God thinks of that idea just read Malachi 2:7-8 and 2:1-18:

"The priests' lips should guard knowledge, and people should go to them for instruction, for the priests are the messengers of the Lord Almighty. But not you! You have left God's paths. Your 'guidance' has caused many to stumble into sin."... Here is another thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings, and he doesn't accept them with pleasure. You cry out, "Why has the Lord abandoned us?" I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the marriage covenant you and your wife made with each other on your wedding day when you were young.

But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage covenant. Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. "For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the Lord Almighty. "So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife." You have wearied the Lord with your words. "Wearied him?" you ask. "How have we wearied him?" You have wearied him by suggesting that the Lord favors evildoers since he does not punish them. You have wearied him by asking, "Where is the God of justice?" (NLT)

Those following the Jewish civil law must not pick and choose which ones to follow, while conveniently forgetting the rest. For those who choose to remain under these laws, it is still an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, while murder is still only by the knife and not in the heart. As John the Baptist said: "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' ...every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." Matt. 3, 8-10

John Wesley was right - these were interim steps, civil law for a lawless ancient Israel, put forward by Moses and permitted by God, only until Jesus Christ came and delivered the His Blood Covenant. In any case they were never intended for gentiles as whole divisions of them were excluded in Deuteronomy 23-3: "No Ammonites or Moabites, or any of their descendants for ten generations, may be included in the assembly of the Lord." (NLT)

God Himself and His suffering, heart sick prophet Hosea demonstrated by example the path we are required to take in protecting the covenant of marriage and dissolving adulterous unions, no matter what the different parties have done, legally or otherwise. Hosea was commanded by God to go and bring his wife back to him even though she was loved by another man, contrary to Moses' regulations, and love her in the same way God loves Israel, even though they chased after other gods (Hosea 3:1)

All these old laws are just a shadow, a dim reflection of the love and truth of the Living God as shown to us through the Glorious life of Jesus Christ and His gospel. His marriage standards are the only ones to seek to understand and to teach our people. Their eternal lives depend upon it, as does ours. God will not break the "unbreakable" in order to make the "unmakeable."

Wayward Pastors - Misguided Leaders

Pastor, many men and women, choosing to grasp the nettle of obedience in their own personal circumstances, have been opposed and undermined by their pastors. In most case a legalistic theology has been used to justify the betrayal of those whom the church should be supporting. Allow us to introduce three individual witnesses:

1. "My husband . . . went to our pastor, told him of the affair 6 years ago, and basically got his blessing for the divorce. Our pastor never even contacted me or tried to discuss this with us together at all. I have been devastated and angry at how this was handled in our church. I'm not angry anymore as much as I am saddened. I just can't seem to get past that if our pastor had handled this in a biblical way, I probably wouldn't be divorced right now."
2. "My wife started attending Divorce Care meetings within a month of leaving our home. It seems that somewhere in the course is the idea that the "exception clause" for divorce can be further expanded to include just about any kind of misdeed that a spouse might commit. . . . It is a very lonely and painful road to follow. Almost everyone tells me to just get on with my life. That I am justified in seeking a new relationship because she left me - even from men who are elders in the church."

3. "I have found myself pleading my case before my husband that he might see the true repentance and changes God has made in my life, because he also believes that because of my unfaithfulness he should divorce me . . . My husband was raised in a "Bible believing church" that his father pastored. His father and mother are divorced because of her unfaithfulness, and yes his father is remarried to a woman who is also divorced. My husband now faces the huge task of not only forgiving me and rebuilding our marriage, but in order to do that he has to see his fathers actions in the light of Gods word."

These three represent countless similar stories. Standing behind them are millions more who can validate their experiences. These are victims of false doctrine taught within the Church

Jesus Said

Jesus said: "I'm talking to any faithful, sensible servant to whom the master gives the responsibility of managing his household and feeding his family. If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. I assure you, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. But if the servant thinks, 'My master won't be back for a while,' and begins oppressing the other servants, partying, and getting drunk—well, the master will return unannounced and unexpected. He will tear the servant apart and banish him with the unfaithful.⁴⁷ The servant will be severely punished, for though he knew his duty, he refused to do it.

"But people who are not aware that they are doing wrong will be punished only lightly. Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given.

"I have come to bring fire to the earth, and I wish that my task were already completed! There is a terrible baptism ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished. Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I have come to bring strife and division! From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against—or the other way around. There will be a division between father and son, mother and daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law."

Holy Matrimony

Matthew 19:4-6 (NLT)

"Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'this explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together."

Consider also the ancient marriage charge warned before a marriage ceremony from the Star Book for Ministers:

"I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful Day of Judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's word doth allow are not joined together by God..."

Deliberate and Willfully Ignorant Sin

The Apostle John, known as the Apostle of God's Love, clarified the relationship between the Love of God, Salvation, and the moral Law of God as follows:

“And how can we be sure that we belong to Him? By obeying His commandments. If someone says, ‘I belong to God,’ but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and does not live in the truth. But those who say they live in God should live their lives as Christ did.” (1John 2: 3-6)

What this all means is that if we try to keep any law in order to be justified before God, it is not good enough. In order to be saved by keeping the law, we must then keep all the laws perfectly from the moment we were conceived until the moment we die. That is impossible! No one who ever lived would qualify except Jesus Christ. That is the point.

Salvation is only from the Grace of God through the atoning death of Jesus Christ our Lord. But as Jesus said, the moral law of God as expressed in the Scriptures is still in effect. It is the plumb line that applies to the behavior of His children, and God is serious about it.

Breaking these moral laws is as much a sin now as it was anytime since when they were written. The continued application of them is foundational to holy living in the New Testament, as attested by Jesus and His apostles. Willful and continued disobedience of God's moral law is sin and warned about most urgently.

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only the fearful expectation of judgment and raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

“How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that has sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace. For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.” (Hebrews 10: 26-31 NIV)

Restoration

All sin is eradicated and atoned for by the Blood of Jesus Christ by sincere, genuine confession and repentance. As the Church has sinned publicly then so must the confession be equally public. Confession means, in part, that the truth of God's instructions must be proclaimed as well as our own disobedience to them.

Repentance requires that we must turn away from sin and follow God's plan from that point on. This means that the Church must refuse to recognize and facilitate any further divorce and remarriage as reverse decisions taken in contravention to that disobedience.

God's Grace

“It is God who saved us and chose us to live a Holy Life. He did this not because we deserved it, but because that was His plan long before the world began – to show His love and kindness to us through Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:9 NLT)

Provision must be made to undertake the careful application of God's love and commands. Allowance must be made for an enormous number of differing circumstances without violating God's commands. It won't be easy, but we will have the blessings of God and the active assistance and leadership of the Holy Spirit. We do have an example in scripture to go by when

many in Israel violated God's commands and married outside of his will. In that case Ezra under the command of God required all those unions to be abandoned.

We are in the age of grace, and grace applies when it conforms to the will of God and His specific instructions as laid down in the Scriptures. Subjective evaluations of individual divorce and remarriage situations contrary to the Word of God are of course contrary to the will of God. As circular as this reasoning is, I feel it is the whole Counsel of God on the nature of marriage. The Church will have to fall on its face before our Holy God and seek supernatural wisdom as to how to unscramble the complete mess we have made in the lives of families.

God will forgive past sin upon contrite confession and true forsaking repentance and but will never tolerate continued disobedience. Our authority as the Church does not extend to permitting disobedience or granting indulgences for sin.

As Paul told Titus:

“For the Grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from Godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self – control, right conduct, and devotion to God....He gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing what is right. You must teach these things and encourage your people to do them, correcting them when necessary. You have the authority to do this, so don't let anyone ignore you or disregard what you say.” (Titus 2:11 – 15 NLT)

Our assemblies are filled with those who knowingly or unknowingly violated the direct command of God by divorcing and remarrying. There are many thoughtful Christians who have different views on just how the Church can be reformed and move forward with clarity and holiness. None are being listened to.

God is merciful and forgiving and only right and just in all He says and does. He corrects and disciplines those He loves and straightens their paths. Because He loves us He is correcting us. He is willing to forgive us and cleanse us and pour out His grace upon us. All we have to do is confess our sins, repent, and go and sin no more. We are not free to live in sin and disobedience but are given the grace freely to be conformed to the Image of His Son.

It is necessary therefore to warn all those who have remarried while a former spouse lives that they are in a continuing state of adultery according to the scriptures, and must repent of it by confessing that sin and vacating the relationship. It is impossible to affirm that it is a sin to remarry under those same conditions while maintaining it does not remain a sin after a ceremony is performed. A doctrine of grace that accommodates or justifies continuing in sin is not of God, but the doctrine of demons.

Watch, Look, Listen and Warn

Ezekiel 3:17-21 (NLT)

“Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for Israel. Whenever you receive a message from me, pass it on to the people immediately. If I warn the wicked, saying, ‘You are under the penalty of death,’ but you fail to deliver the warning, they will die in their sins. And I will hold you responsible, demanding your blood for theirs. If you warn them and they keep on sinning and refuse to repent, they will die in their sins. But you will have saved your life because you did what you were told to do. If good people turn bad and don't listen to my warning, they will die. If you did not warn them of the consequences, then they will die in their sins. Their previous good deeds won't help them, and I will hold you responsible, demanding your blood for theirs. But if you warn them and they repent, they will live, and you will have saved your own life, too.”

James 5, 19-20 (NLT)

"My dear brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back again, you can be sure that the one who brings that person back will save that sinner from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins."

Notes:

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