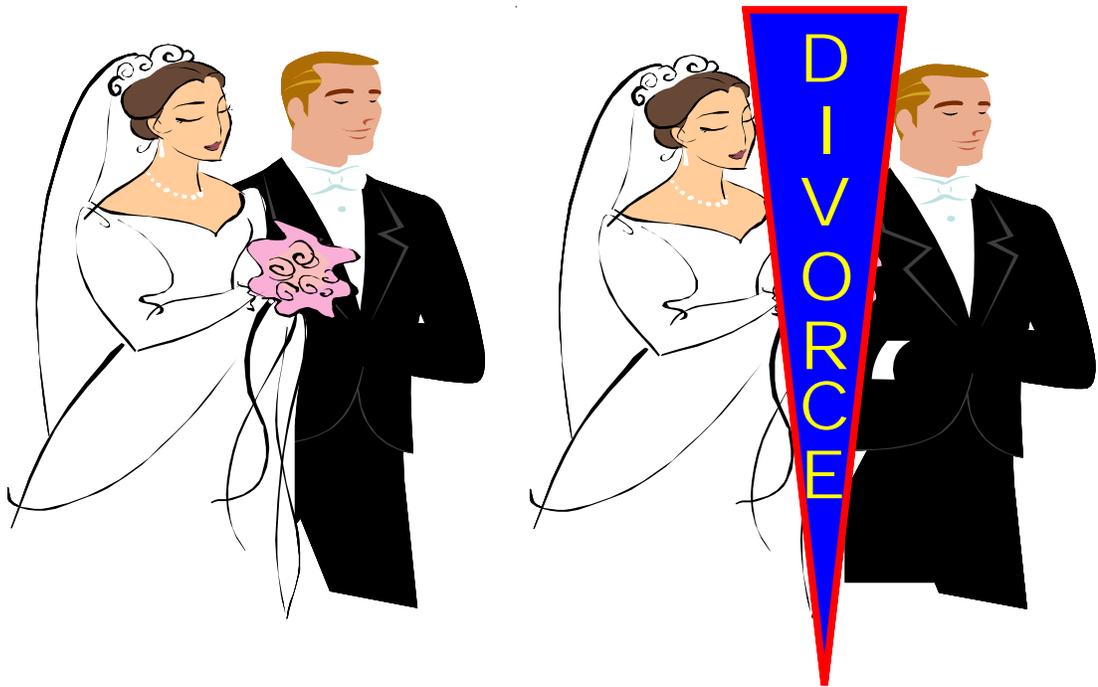


Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage



**Biblical Examinations
Of An Emotional &
Controversial Subject**

Prepared By Jeff Smith

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage



Table Of Contents

<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
1	General Introduction	1
2	Marriage	4
3	Divorce	10
4	Remarriage	19

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Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage: An Emotional & Controversial Topic

Lesson 1 – General Introduction

Overview

Although the kingdom of Jesus Christ is indeed a spiritual one (**Jn. 18:36; Rom. 14:17**), it does exist in a physical realm (**Jn. 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:10**). The citizens of this kingdom constantly interact with and are confronted by citizens of Satan's kingdom (**1 Jn. 5:19**). Even though Christians find themselves in situations similar to unbelievers because we live with them in the world, saints must operate at higher principles than do their unbelieving counterparts (**Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:1-2**).

Marriage is one of these "situations." Often, it is heard in discussions re: marriage, "A marriage according to God...a marriage according to man." This is not Biblical. We cannot find one verse in the Scripture where the Lord or one of His apostles ever spoke with this terminology. Even if the marriage and/or divorce doesn't meet with Divine approval, it is still just that...a marriage and/or a divorce.

The difference lies in what attitudes or level of respect two people bring to this relationship. At one time, almost everyone was willing to admit what the Scripture boldly proclaims: "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God shall judge*" (**Heb. 13:4**). Nowadays, the institution of marriage has lost the respect it once enjoyed. The world lampoons the notion of remaining a virgin until marriage or being faithful to your spouse until death. Newspapers are now filled with "advice columnists" who advocate divorce for any reason whatsoever when married partners encounter problems. The foundations of the family have been crumbling for decades. Let's not candy coat it... the scourge of unfaithfulness and divorce has been at epidemic proportions for years. What once was viewed as the "exception to the norm" has now become the norm. If anyone disagrees, consider the following brief synopsis from Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 classic *The Scarlet Letter*.

Set in Puritan New England (Boston), the story centers on Hester Prynne. She commits adultery and eventually gives birth to the resulting child. When her sin becomes known, her punishment is mainly two-fold. She is forced to stand on the scaffold in the town square for 3 hours to endure public ridicule and humiliation. She must also wear at all times a "scarlet letter A" sewn onto her garments to denote her shame and sin.

Public outcry on this level against adulterous behavior has long since evaporated. This sin (*along with most other sins*) has lost its sense of shame (**cp. Ezra 9:6; Jer. 6:15; 8:12; 1 Tim. 2:9**).

It seems like everyone (including politicians stumping for votes) are willing to admit the family is the basic unit...the "bedrock of our society." The problem is that few are willing to agree on and admit the following:

- The family's Divine origin
- The Biblical definition of the family...one man & one woman
[a reference to the current movement re: "homosexual marriages"]
- The determination to regulate their marriage to Biblical teaching

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 1

The marriage, divorce, and remarriage situation affects everyone. Ask a teacher...how many children in the classroom have the same last name as both parents? How many even have 2 parents? Which one is in the majority...biological or step-families? Step-parents are now all too common as a result of divorces and remarriages. No-fault divorces have simplified the legal process in most of our states, making divorces far too easy to obtain. However, the courts now hesitate to even list adultery as the cause for divorce.

When a marriage is not governed by what the Bible teaches, one can be sure troubling times and monumental challenges will face that family. The man & woman who at one time openly pledged their undying love and fidelity to each other eventually begin to act in ways that are directly opposite to what they vowed before God and man. If the relationship sours enough that one of them ventures off into the bed of adultery, the heart of the faithful spouse left behind is virtually and literally ripped out and trampled in ways that may be unrecoverable. If any children are born to that union, many times they suffer tremendously as "innocent victims." This is especially evident if the divorce turns nasty, and they become nothing more than "human pawns" in the ensuing custody battles. When the dust settles they, too, are losers. They are now bereft of the full-time joint presence of a father and mother in their lives.

Local churches are also drawn into this mess. Problems are often encountered when attempts are made to conduct home Bible studies. It sometimes becomes apparent there could be an unscriptural marriage that will eventually have to be addressed if the prospects continue to show interest in the gospel. Within congregations there are occurrences of divorce and remarriage, some scriptural and some unscriptural. Over the years good brethren have disagreed over various aspects of this subject:

- Who may marry and what constitutes a marriage?
- What exactly is a divorce and when does it occur?

Men of considerable influence and great ability in the Lord's kingdom have not always agreed on this subject. This is evident when listening to their preaching or reading from their articles. We sure are not surprised any more to know that people in a questionable marriage can usually find a preacher who will tell them what they want to hear (**cp. 2 Tim. 4:3-4**).

Brethren (elderships in particular) are many times forced to deal with seemingly unending situations that has them longing for Solomon's wisdom as they try their best to apply Biblical principles to unravel such tangled webs. Decisions people make regarding their marriages often brings about adultery (**Mt. 19:9**), and adultery is serious (**1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21**). The church's concern becomes one of fellowship and trying to be on the side of truth (**Eph. 5:11**) while maintaining the church's purity (**1 Cor. 5:6-7**).

This subject is extremely sensitive because we are dealing with life's *most* intimate relationship. It involves tender emotions and always affects more than one person. It is all too easy to be guided solely by sentiment and allow empathy to overshadow truth. Therefore, it is urgent that as disciples of the Lord Jesus, we know exactly what He has taught regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Our goal will be a 3-fold approach. If we stay committed to this goal and confine ourselves to what the Bible teaches, we will have a profitable study together.

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 1

1) Marriage → Love Designed By God

The best, and obvious, place to start. More time needs to be spent on how to have a good marriage than on trying to figure out all the aspects of divorce & remarriage. We'll discuss who may actually marry as well as the principles the Bible sets forth that govern the contributions of both the husband and the wife.

2) Divorce → A Testament To Failure

Whenever a divorce occurs, someone has failed. It can be only 1 person or there could be (and often is) enough guilt to go around for both parties involved. Even though the Bible clearly presents God's feelings about divorce (**Mal. 2:16**), we also need to know what Jesus taught about putting a spouse away. Divorce is a Divinely allowed exception to the Biblical law of marriage.

3) Remarriage → An Option For Some...Not All

Remarriage is an available option, but not for everyone. Reviewing what Jesus taught tells us the seriousness of making sure that option is available to us. Even if we have the right to remarry, we must also understand the restrictions the Lord has placed on remarriage.

When engaging in a study like marriage, divorce, and remarriage (M/D/R), it is necessary when reviewing what the Bible does say to also consider the doctrines of men that have been invented for one reason or another. So many different doctrines exist that have done nothing to help people striving to know truth on this important topic. All these notions have done is confuse and lead people astray, and "...invalidate the word of God" (**Mt. 15:6**). Among the more prevalent ones are:

- Alien sinners not being accountable to the gospel's teaching on M/D/R
[some refer to this as the "Homer Hailey" doctrine]
- One spouse unscripturally divorcing the other spouse and then either committing fornication or remarrying, only then to be subsequently put away by the previously divorced spouse
[some refer to this as the "Mental Divorce" doctrine]
- Believers being able to remarry after an unbelieving spouse departs unscripturally
[some refer to this as the "Pauline exception" for divorce]

It is imperative that when considering these and other similar doctrines that we do not just consider the doctrine itself. We must also be aware of the inevitable and logical conclusions those doctrines lead to. That is why error is so deadly...an erroneous position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage **never** leads one closer to God. It only leads to the bed of adultery. As we have already noted, impenitent adulterers will have no place in the kingdom of God.

We will not only limit our study to the New Testament. The Old Testament has several passages that reveal principles still relevant to the marriage, divorce, and remarriage issue today. Understanding those texts from the 1st covenant is vital to properly know what is taught in the 2nd covenant.

We pray for wisdom and patience to practice what we learn in these coming studies. "O Lord, increase our faith" was the desire of Jesus' disciples (**Lk. 17:5**). May that be our desire as well.

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 2

MARRIAGE – Love & Companionship Designed By God

Introduction

Place yourself in the following scenario and think about how you would be personally affected:

You are all alone. You have no one to talk to, no one with whom to celebrate your successes or help support you in your defeats. No one is around who has similar thoughts, feelings, dreams, or aspirations. You are completely lonely, and this emptiness surrounds you...you cannot escape it no matter where you go or what you do.

How do you think you would survive in such a situation? Some might think they could survive, even rather well. To those who might have that opinion, we offer 2 well-known sayings –

- ♦ ***“No man is an island.”***
- ♦ ***“Denial is more than a river in Egypt.”***

The above scenario was not made up nor dramatized for emphasis. It really occurred. A long time ago it happened to a man named Adam, God’s first human creation. When quizzed about divorce, Jesus reminded His hearers about what happened “...from the beginning” (Mt. 19:8). That is the proper starting place to understand marriage. It is also where we will begin.

God’s 3 “Divine Institutions”

- 1) Name the 3 “institutions” brought into existence by God in order of their creation.

_____ (Gen. 2; Mt. 19:4, 6)

_____ (Gen. 14; Rom. 13:1-2)

_____ (Acts 2; Mt. 16:18)

- 2) ***Thought question:*** how does the first one created help the remaining two function?

Man’s Early Problems & God’s Solution

Quite often, when reading the creation account in Gen. 2, we start at v. 18 and then “jump ahead” to vv. 21-25 to study about family and the home. If this is our approach, we will miss an important point... a fact that emphasizes the significance of marriage and how it truly solves man’s problems of loneliness & companionship.

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 2

- 3) What thoughts of God are recorded in v. 18? Define “meet” or “suitable.”

- 4) What did God allow man to “experience” in vv. 19-20? Where would the answer to Adam’s problem of loneliness *not* be found? How might this help “modern man” be more appreciative of being married to a woman? (cp. Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:7)

- 5) **Thought question:** do you see any significance to God putting Adam to sleep before He began to bring about the solution to Adam’s problem? (v. 21)

- 6) What were Adam’s thoughts about God’s “solution?” (v. 23)

- 7) What must be done for this “relationship” to be successful? (v. 24a) Define “leave” & “cleave.” Where else in the Scripture is this passage either used or cited?

- 8) What else results when a man marries a woman? (v. 24b) Comment on what you think “one flesh” means and what is involved?

- 9) Besides indicating their innocence before they committed sin (Gen. 3), what else might v. 25 suggest about the relationship between a man and his wife? (cp. 1 Cor. 7:2b-4)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 2

- 10) Would you agree **Gen. 2** “defines” marriage or family? Do you also agree that Jesus’ comments at **Mt. 19:4-5** further clarify this “definition?” If so, why would this be important, given certain “political movements” in our culture? What other passage(s) would you use to help defend the Biblical definition of marriage or family? Use either O.T. or N.T. passages.
- 11) How serious does God view marriage? (**Mal. 2:14**) What is His intention regarding the union a man forms with a woman? (**Mt. 19:6b, 8b**)

Preparing For Marriage

A relationship this serious must not be entered into without preparation. Sadly, we require more training for one trying to obtain a plumber’s license than we do for a couple desiring a marriage license (*no disrespect intended against plumbers!*).

Proper preparation on the part of both parents and young people is certainly in order for future marriages to be successful and for those unions to gain God’s approval.

- 12) What is recorded in **Gen. 24:1-4, 61-67**? What kind of marriage was this? What do you think would have been some of Abraham’s concerns?
- 13) Even though today’s parents cannot choose their child’s marriage partner, is there anything in the above passage to learn or apply on a spiritual level? As you answer, think about **1 Cor. 7:12-13** and **1 Pet. 3:1-2, 5**, as well as **Mt. 19:6a** (cp. **Jn. 10:30; 17:21**).
- 14) On a physical level, what else should parents be extremely diligent in? (**Song of Sol. 8:8-9**)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 2

Courtship or dating is also important. Eventually, boys are no longer “gross” and girls are no longer “icky.” Hormones finally “kick in” and members of the opposite sex become attractive. Dating and all its attendant activities present the final challenge to a mother and father before their son or daughter leaves home.

- 15) Up until a young person begins dating, what is the only kind of love they've really known?
- 16) What is the real purpose for dating or courtship? How has our society “cheapened” or diminished this necessary activity?
- 17) We believe the theme to the **Song of Solomon** is stated three times: **2:7**; **3:5**; and **8:4**. What do you think the phrase “...do not arouse or awaken love until it pleases” means?

Purpose For Marriage

Life's most important physical relationship has a stated purpose from the One who originated it. In His word, God reveals principled reasons why He desires man to be married.

- 18) In the blanks provided below, list the 3 Scriptural reasons for the purpose of marriage.

Gen. 1:28 _____

Gen. 2:18 _____

1 Cor. 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4 _____

Regulating Marriage

The same word that reveals the institution of marriage also reveals how married partners ought to behave towards each other. In any relationship, promises are made and all parties involved expect those promises to be kept. The marriage relationship is built upon promises made to both man and God. Marital conduct is like any other human behavior...it is subject to the judgment of Christ (**2 Cor. 5:10**). For most of the following questions, the focus will be on **Ephesians 5**.

- 19) In **Eph. 5**, what is Paul's real subject matter? (v. 32) What is the illustration? (vv. 22-33)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 2

- 20) In **Eph. 5:25a**, husbands are to “love” their wives. The Greek word is **agape** → the sacrificial love shown for the betterment or interests of others (**cp. Jn 3:16; Rom. 5:8**)
- In **Titus 2:4**, women are to “love” their husbands. The Greek word is **phileo** → the more emotional display or tender affection (**cp. Mt. 10:37; Jn. 11:36**)
- Do you see any significance in the different emphasis on “love” given for each marriage partner?
- 21) Who is the husband's example? (**v. 25**) How does a husband show love for his wife? (**v. 25b**) What will this “love” prevent him from doing? (**Col. 3:19**)
- 22) How did Jesus obtain the blessing of a “sanctified & cleansed, glorified, spotless, and wrinkle-free” bride? (**vv. 26-27**) What is the lesson for husbands? (**vv. 28-30**) To what O.T. passage does Paul refer to conclude his point? (**v. 31**)
- 23) What else are husbands required to do? (**1 Pet. 3:7**) To be successful in doing this, how must he view his wife? Are there any consequences for his failure to do so?
- 24) **Thought question:** do you find it interesting wives are not taught to “*understand their husbands?*” Does this suggest anything about wives and how they can use their strengths in contributing to the marital relationship?
- 25) What are wives taught to do? (**v. 22; cp. Col. 3:18**) For what reason? (**vv. 23-24**) Who is the wife's example? (**v. 24**)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 2

- 26) Some believe, based upon **Gen. 3:16**, women are to be submissive because of the first sin. Do you agree? Before answering, consider **1 Tim. 2:12-15** and **1 Cor. 11:3, 8-10**.
- 27) To summarize both the husband's & the wife's love, how might **1 Cor. 13:1-8a** offer help?
- 28) Outside of the Scripture, what "civil regulations" are imposed upon a man and a woman before they can be a husband and wife? What passage(s) do you think are relevant to this discussion? *[This will become important later in our discussions on divorce and remarriage.]*

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

DIVORCE – A Testament To Someone's Failure

Introduction

For various reasons, man has consistently done something...even not long after his creation. He has routinely "set aside the commands of God for the sake of his own traditions" (cp. Mt. 15:6). Despite knowing and understanding God's clear instructions on a matter, man has his own ideas about how those things ought to be. Eventually, he relegates God's wisdom to "second class status" behind his own, and he does what he wants to do regardless of what his Maker has decreed (cp. Rom. 10:3; 1 Cor. 2:12-14).

Marriage is not immune from this mindset. We have already established why God instituted this most important of domestic relationships and how marital partners are to conduct themselves. Yet, man demonstrates his unwillingness at times to be content with what God has ordained about marriage. Either the husband or the wife, or even both, begin to display conduct that is detrimental to their relationship and to the happiness God wants for them. "One thing leads to another" and divorce ends their happiness.

Divorce is indeed a testament to failure. Even if divorce is sought and obtained for the reason the Lord sanctions, *somebody still failed*. It is as glaring as if we put up a statue in the middle of the town square to commemorate all the downfalls of the town's worst failure. Later generations could still pass by, mocking and ridiculing "*The Great Underachiever*" (cp. Lk. 14:28-29). Divorce leaves behind such a "permanent" reminder.

For as much happiness as marriage is to bring to a couple, divorce brings even a greater amount of heartache.

Divorce Under The Old Testament

Deut. 24:1-4

Even before the children of Israel entered their promised home, it is apparent they were already divorcing contrary to God's original marriage law, as indicated by this passage. It is also important to understand because it plays a major part in Jesus' later discussions with the Jews, as revealed in Mt. 19 and Mk. 10.

This provision in the Law was attempting to regulate sinful behavior already present...it was not giving license to future divorce for any cause at all. Just because God anticipates undesirable situations and tries to regulate them through His word does not mean He approves of the sinful behavior (cp. 1 Jn. 2:1-2).

- 1) Be able to identify the "conditional" (*the "if" part of the proposition*) as well as the "conclusion" (*the "then" part of the proposition*) sections of this passage. [*This is important.*]

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

- 2) What did this passage expressly forbid? (v. 4) What was *not* expressly forbidden? (v. 2)

- 3) What was it that defiled the woman? How do we know it wasn't her 2nd divorce? (v. 3)

- 4) What do you think is meant in v. 1 by the phrase "some indecency?" [NASV] As a comparison, consider Deut. 23:14. Are we able to say with any certainty what this "indecency" was? (cp. Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:13-27)

- 5) **Thought question:** why did God put this provision in the Law? In your answer, consider Mt. 19:7-8 and Mk. 10:3-5.

- 6) Obviously, from Jesus' own words in Mt. 19 & Mk. 10, how does this passage relate to marriage as found in Gen. 2?

Ezra 9-10

Ezra led the 2nd return back from Babylonian captivity around 458 B.C. Coming back some 80 years after Zerubbabel led the initial return to rebuild the temple, Ezra's task was to "rebuild the spiritual infrastructure." Ezra "set his heart" to know, practice, and then teach the Law to the "ignorant" Jewish exiles (7:8-10, 25).

As evidenced by these 2 chapters, "old sins" came back and Ezra was forced to deal with them.

- 7) What had the exiles failed to do? (9:1-2a) Who had been foremost in this sin? (9:2b) Where was this originally addressed in the Law? [Notice Ezra's prayer of confession – 9:6-15]

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

- 8) For reconciliation with God to occur, what had to happen? (10:1-4) How did they determine to work this out? (10:9-14, 16-17) Was there any opposition to this? (10:15)
- 9) **Thought question:** how hard do you think this was going to be? (10:44) What could have been emotionally argued, and would it have been a valid argument to make? Do you see any relation at all in situations like this to the demands of repentance? *[Important for later discussions]*
- 10) Why is this passage an appropriate one to consider when faced with modern-day unlawful marriages? What does it teach about priorities in life and our relationship with God? (cp. Mt. 19:12)

Mal. 2:10-16

Malachi prophesied around 440 to 430 B.C. He is the final O.T. prophetic spokesman, and his prophecy correlates with Nehemiah's book about the 3rd return from Babylonian captivity [445 B.C.]. Once again, the exiles showed themselves eager to return to prior sins. It had only been 13 years since Ezra dealt with a problem when it resurfaced and forced Malachi to address it again.

- 11) What was the problem as recorded in this passage? (v. 10) How had they accomplished this? (v. 11) What was the judgment pronounced upon the guilty? (v. 12)
- 12) What else had their actions done? (v. 13a) Whose tears do you think are mentioned? Did this have any affect on the worship of the exiles? (v. 13b)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

- 13) Would you agree these Jewish exiles were in denial? (v. 14a) How does the prophet address this "denial?" (v. 14b) Principle → what does this verse set forth for all marriages for all time?
- 14) Mal. 2:15a is a challenging verse because of the various translations. What do you think is its interpretation? Mal. 2:15b is somewhat "easier"...what do you think is being discussed?
- 15) What feelings of God are mentioned in v. 16? What bearing should this have had on the problem faced by Malachi (*and Ezra*)? Does it have any impact on modern-day marriages?

Divorce In The New Testament

Mt. 5:31-32

In this section of Jesus' *Sermon On The Mount* (5:21-48), the Lord is not correcting Moses, as many believe when they read all the "You have heard it said...but I say unto you..." statements. Jesus is instead correcting skewed Jewish interpretations of the Law. He had just previously defended the importance of the Law (5:17-19). The problem was "shallow righteousness" as taught and practiced by the Jews...namely, the Pharisees (5:20).

- 16) To what passage does Jesus refer in v. 31? To this Jewish thinking that Jesus addressed, divorce appeared to be "okay" (*allowed*) as long as what happened? (v. 31)
- 17) How does Jesus emphasize God's original marriage law? (v. 32a) Would you agree that Jesus actually states here what Deut. 24 only implied?

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

- 18) When Jesus says an unlawful divorce “makes her commit adultery,” what is assumed to occur or happen? What does this teach or remind us about “stumbling blocks?”
- 19) **Thought question:** why wouldn't a lawful divorce “make her commit adultery?”
- 20) Who else is addressed in v. 32b? What are we to conclude about put away people and remarriage?

Mt. 19:3-9 / Mk. 10:2-12

There may not be any more familiar N.T. texts dealing with M/D/R than these two passages. The Lord's teaching recorded here arose out of yet another attempt by the Pharisees to discredit Him and try to set Him at odds with Moses. This one came while He was in Perea (Mt. 19:1), not long before His final entry into Jerusalem to suffer at the hands of these very opponents (Mt. 22).

- 21) What was the real reason for the Pharisees questioning Jesus? (Mt. 19:3; Mk. 10:2) How does the Pharisees' question differ between the 2 inspired gospel writers? What was their basic question?
- 22) How does Jesus initially respond and what passages does He cite? (Mt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:5-9) What is His conclusion? (Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:8-9) **Principle** → why is “at the beginning” so important? (Mt. 19:4, 8; Mk. 10:6)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

- 23) According to Matthew's account, what "follow-up question" did the Pharisees pose? (Mt. 19:7)
What "correction" does Jesus make re: their question? (Mt. 19:8) Why does "hardness" always present a problem with some who try to follow God's will? (cp. Heb. 3:12-15)
- 24) What is the "rule" re: divorce as stated by Jesus? (Mt. 19:9; Mk. 10:11-12) Has this always been the rule? How does Matthew's account differ from Mark's record on this point?
- 25) Though not explicitly stated, what is the implication re: one who puts away a spouse who has been unfaithful? (Mt. 19:9)

Lk. 16:18

- 26) Who is addressed in the first part of this verse? How does this harmonize with Mark's record?
- 27) Who is addressed in the second part of this verse? What is taught about a "put away" person?

Mk. 10:29-30 / Lk. 18:29-30

These passages are important to include and consider because some brethren currently use them to teach another allowable cause for divorce...a divorce "for the sake of the kingdom of God."

- 28) What is the context? (Mk. 10:17-27; Lk. 18:18-27)
- 29) Can these verses be properly used when discussing M/D/R? If so, what *kind* of wife would have to be left "for the gospel's sake?"

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

Rom. 7:1-4

In this section of Paul's epistle to the Roman Christians, the apostle is trying to cement the idea that Jewish disciples were free to be "married to Christ" because their first husband (*i.e. the Law*) had died. To illustrate, he uses the imagery of physical marriage. In this way, this passage is much like the great marriage text of **Eph. 5:22-33**.

- 30) How long does law have jurisdiction over a person? (v. 1) How does this apply to the marriage relationship? (v. 2) What "law" is under discussion in v. 2? **Thought question:** how does the truth stated in **Mt. 22:23-30** reinforce what is taught here?

- 31) What two scenarios are presented in v. 3? What is the one thing that makes the difference?

- 32) **Principle** → based upon v. 3, what real possibility can be found in a marriage?
[Important to recognize & understand when considering prevalent false doctrines on M/D/R]

- 33) Though not stated, what **kind** of divorce is under consideration in v. 3? Be able to relate it back to what Jesus said in **Mt. 19**.

- 34) As a way to illustrate the teaching in **Rom. 7:1-4**, consider **Mk. 6:14-29**.
 - a) What did Herod think of Jesus? (vv. 14-16)

 - b) What had happened to John? (vv. 17-18)

 - c) On what "law" did John base his teaching?

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

- d) How could Herodias be “Philip’s wife” and be married to Herod at the same time?

- e) How do vv. 19-29 remind us of the high cost of preaching the truth?

1 Cor. 7:10-11

This section of Paul’s epistle to the Corinthian Christians began his answers to questions the brethren had previously submitted to him (7:1). When considering the overall teaching of this chapter, it is good to remember its thematic verse...v. 26. There was some type of “distress” that troubled them. The overall truths Paul teaches are the same whether a distress is present or not. However, some of his statements are to be viewed in light of this “distress.”

- 35) Who does Paul address? (v. 10a) How does he emphasize what he is about to say? (cp. 4:17; 7:17; 14:37)

- 36) What are his instructions? (vv. 10b-11) *Note:* many translations have most of v. 11 in parentheses to indicate this is not the main thought. If we view this section as some sort of “exception,” what is the rule as taught by Paul if we read vv. 10-11 without this “parenthetical” section? How does it harmonize with what Jesus taught in Mt. 19? Do you see the structure of 1 Cor. 7:10-11 as similar to 1 Jn. 2:1-2 in any way?

- 37) Paul begins v. 12 by stating, “*But to the rest...*” and addresses believers who are married to unbelievers. Given this, is there any way to determine who he addresses in vv. 10-11?

- 38) What do you think “depart” or “leave” means in v. 10? (cp. Mt. 19:6)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 3

- 39) Are we able to determine what *kind* of divorce is under consideration in these verses?
- 40) This passage directly contradicts the "Mental Divorce" doctrine. When an unscriptural divorce has taken place, what adjective does Paul use to describe the spouse who put away a mate? (v. 11a)
- 41) "Mental Divorce" advocates teach when one has been put away unscripturally, he/she can later "mentally" put away the previous spouse after fornication or a remarriage has occurred. What this really boils down to is "waiting them out" until they commit either fornication or adultery. How does Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 7:10-11 refute this?
- 42) Some teach these verses give an individual 2 equal options, especially if one believes it is acceptable to divorce as long as you do not remarry. Do you think this passage supports such a view? If not, how do we explain Paul's words, "...let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband?"

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 4

REMARRIAGE – An Option For Some...Not All

Introduction

So far, we have studied the following –

- ◆ **Marriage**

We discussed God's original plan "from the beginning." We emphasized its importance and how God instituted marriage as a solution for man's lack of companionship and his problem of loneliness. We also stressed how seriously God views marriage. When God said, "*It is not good for man to be alone*" (**Gen. 2:18**), we understood that to mean God expects those who marry to share His view on the permanence of entering into the marital covenant and becoming "one flesh."

- ◆ **Divorce**

We presented divorce as a failure. It testifies to the heart-breaking dissolution of earthly life's most intimate relationship. God, being "Witness" to the marital covenant, hates divorce (**Mal. 2:14, 16**). Man is **not** authorized to put asunder what God joins (**Mt. 19:6**). Just like it is with any command of God, man continues to show an inclination to go against clear Biblical instructions re: divorcing a spouse. We were also reminded of situations that result re: all parties involved when one spouse puts away his/her mate.

Our discussion will not be complete without a review of the topic of **Remarriage**.

God's original plan for marriage did not contemplate nor even encourage divorce (**Gen. 2:18-25**). Yet, the Bible does provide instruction on potential remarriages when one spouse does put away his/her mate. And while the Scripture does grant remarriage privileges, it is **not** available to all whose first marriage fails. The Lord grants the right of remarriage to only **two** categories of people...those whose first mates have died, and those who have divorced a spouse because of their marital unfaithfulness.

Remarriages do not enjoy the "innocence" of original marriages. We do not mean by this that all remarriages are inherently bad and do not enjoy Divine approval. Obviously, those who marry for the first time do not have concerns about previous marital relationships as do people who subsequently marry. There are no worries about "*Do I really have the right to marry this person?*" Previous marriages and how they ended must be considered **before** one marries someone else who has been married before...even if the one previously married put away his/her original spouse for fornication.

As we observed in our *Lesson 3*, the safe assumption is that divorced people will likely remarry in most situations. Even Jesus based some of His teaching on this probability (**Mt. 5:32**). When reading what the Lord taught about remarriage, the over-riding concern for those who remarry is that their second, third, etc. marriage not lead them to the bed of adultery. This sin is "automatic" in subsequent remarriage(s) when the first marriage is not dissolved for the cause of fornication.

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 4

The Gospel Accounts

- 1) What does Jesus say about the remarriage of a previously put-away person? (Mt. 5:32b; 19:9b; Lk. 16:18b)

- 2) What does Jesus say about one who divorces a spouse for reasons other than fornication and then remarries? (Mt. 19:9a; Mk. 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18a)

- 3) If one has forfeited the right to remarry, what did Jesus teach about the serious consequences of living a celibate life? (Mt. 19:10-12)

1 Cor. 7:12-16

There are some who believe and teach this passage grants another acceptable cause for divorce and remarriage [they refer to this as the “Pauline exception” to Jesus’ earlier teaching on divorce].

- 4) What do you think Paul means when he says, “...I say, not the Lord...” (v. 12) In your answer, please consider the following passages: Jn. 16:12-13; 1 Cor. 7:25, 28, 40; 14:37

- 5) Based on the phrase “But to the rest...,” who do you see as the marriage partners under consideration in vv. 12-13? [Note: refer back to question 37 on page 17]

- 6) What is the basic point Paul is making? (vv. 12b, 13b) What “benefits” might result? (vv. 14, 16)

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 4

- 7) What does “departs” [NKJV] or “leaves” [NASV] mean in v. 15a? **Thought question:** what do you think might have been motivating the unbelieving spouse to “depart” or “leave?” (cp. v. 26)

- 8) What does Paul teach if such a “departure” occurs? (v. 15b)

- 9) Define “bondage” in v. 15b? [*This is where the debate over this passage hinges.*]

- 10) Do you think this is referring to the “marriage bond” (cp. Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:27, 39) or to some other aspect of the relationship?

- 11) Notice the contrast between vv. 12-13 and v. 15. What do you see as the main difference between the 2 situations addressed?

- 12) In this passage, what does Paul teach about the remarriage of a believing spouse whose unbelieving mate has departed?

Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

Lesson 4

1 Cor. 7:39

- 13) Explain what you think Paul means by the statement re: the remarriage of the widow, "...*only in the Lord.*" Be able to support your answer with appropriate supporting passages.