

New Horizons Newsletter



Director

Pierre J. Samaan, Ph.D.

Telephone: 386-760-0445

Toll Free: 888-760-0445

www.newhorizonscounseling.com

ISSUE

APRIL 2013



"May the Lord show you His favor and give you peace."

(Nu. 6:26)

DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE; IS IT BIBLICAL?

Part 2 of 2

By Dr. Pierre J. Samaan

In Part 1 of this two part article on divorce and remarriage we looked at divorce statistics and one of the three most quoted Scriptures regarding this subject. The first is:

1. Adultery – Marital Unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 24:1; spoken by Jesus in Matthew 5:32; 9:9-11; 19 and Paul in 1 Corinthians 7)

E-mail us if you did not receive part 1 and would like a copy. The following is part 2 of 2:

2. Abandonment by the Unbelieving Spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12-15)

If a believing spouse abandons/leaves the believing spouse, they are still considered to be married, but living separately. Should one commit extramarital intercourse during the separation, it would be considered adultery (now being seen as spiritually unclean), freeing the non-offending believing spouse to divorce. Some have asked if a spouse's chronic misbehavior of abuse and/or neglect is considered to be rejection/abandonment and therefore, breaking the marital vows?

“¹⁰ But to the married people I give charge—not I but the Lord—that the wife is not to separate from her husband. ¹¹ But if she does [separate from and divorce him], let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband. And [I charge] the husband [also] that he should not put away or divorce his wife. ¹² To the rest I declare—I, not the Lord [for Jesus did not discuss this]—that if any brother has a wife who does not believe [in Christ] and she consents to live with him, he should not leave or divorce her. ¹³ And if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, she should not leave or divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is set apart (separated, withdrawn from heathen contamination, and affiliated with the Christian people) by union with his consecrated (set-apart) wife, and the unbelieving wife is set apart and

separated through union with her consecrated husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean (unblessed heathen, outside the Christian covenant), but as it is they are prepared for God [pure and clean]. ¹⁵ But if the unbelieving partner [actually] leaves, let him do so; in such [cases the remaining] brother or sister is not morally bound. But God has called us to peace.” (1 Corinthians 7:10-15 AMP)

Since we know that God cannot do anything that is contrary to His Word, how can He “divorce” Israel? In staying true to His Scriptures and the words of Jesus, God can only divorce Israel if He considers Israel an unfaithful and a corrupted spouse. In the “contract” between God and Israel, they would have been considered at one time, to be a believing spouse. For God to Biblically give a “writ of divorce,” the LORD would have to view Israel as having committed adultery.

3. Death of Spouse; The Widow (affirmed in 1 Corinthians 7:39 & 1 Timothy 5:11-15)

Remarriage for the widow or widower is permitted. “³⁹A wife is bound to her husband by law as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she will, only [provided that he too is] in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:39 AMP)

“¹¹⁻¹⁵ Don’t put young widows on this list. No sooner will they get on than they’ll want to get off, obsessed with wanting to get a husband rather than serving Christ in this way. By breaking their word, they’re liable to go from bad to worse, frittering away their days on empty talk, gossip, and trivialities. No, I’d rather the young widows go ahead and get married in the first place, have children, manage their homes, and not give critics any foothold for finding fault. Some of them have already left and gone after Satan.” (1 Timothy 5:11-15 MSG)

A widow's name was added to the “list” referred to in the above Scripture if she met the specific standards of 60 years of age or older and devoted herself to ministry.

When a woman's husband died leaving no adult male relatives, she was considered to be abandoned and helpless. If the deceased husband's brother lived, it was expected of him to marry his brother's widow (or another relative) if she were a good woman of prayer and helps to others. Her other three options were: (1) to return to her father's house (Genesis 38:11; Ruth 1:8); (2) marry again – especially if she were young, (1 Samuel 25:39-42; 2 Samuel 11:26f; Ruth 1:9, 13); (3) remain unmarried and serve God. If the widow had no male child, the female children were considered orphans.

A New Testament example of a widow who did not marry again was Anna the prophetess. She chose to not marry and serve God with her prophetic gifting.

³⁶ And there was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old, having lived with her husband seven years from her maidenhood, ³⁷ And as a widow even for eighty-four years. She did not go out from the temple enclosure, but was worshiping night and day with fasting and prayer. ³⁸ And she too came up at that same hour, and she returned thanks to God and talked of [Jesus] to all who were looking for the redemption (deliverance) of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38 AMP).

I am purposely emphasizing the widow because she is an emphasis of concern to God. God is her protector (Psalm 68:5; 146:9), maintains her boundaries (Proverb 15:25), sees to it that she receives justice (Deuteronomy 10:18), forbids exploiting the widow (Exodus 22:22), and taking her garment in pledge (Deuteronomy 24:17).¹ God help anyone who takes advantage of

¹Bromiley, G. General Editor, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; Fully Revised*, (1988), Pp 1060-1061, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI.

a widow! The caution is also meant for those who would take advantage of their widowed mothers.

Is The Body of Christ Conflicted Over Divorce & Remarriage?

Legalism is a term often used when addressing those who rigidly use the above Scriptures with unforgiveness regarding divorce and remarriage. If we are not careful to interpret Scriptures under the umbrella of God's grace and forgiveness of "all sins" through the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Savior Jesus Christ, we become the Pharisee and Sadducee of our day. There is not one of us who does not commit a sin of some sort through the day. Wrongdoers in the church will shine the light on others to avoid the light's illumination upon their own sins, whatever they may be (John 3:20).

Yes, sin is wrong! At the end of the day, we should repent when being made aware of those daily sins. That is why God requires a sacrifice that we can call upon during our pleadings with the LORD. Hate the sin, not the sinner, for each day you will be judged by your forgiveness or unforgiveness of others (Matthew 6:12-15; 26:28; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37). Harboring unforgiveness towards others is a demonstration of not having a heart of love, (Luke 7:47-48) God forgives you! (Luke 5:20; Acts 5:31; 10:42-43).

Forgiveness does not make it alright to continue to sin (continuing in multiple marriages or sexual unfaithfulness . . . etc.) once God has demonstrated your thoughts or behaviors to be defined as sin. Conviction leads to repentance, which is not only the recognition that you have sinned, but also the demonstration of change to put a stop to the wrong thinking and misbehavior (Matthew 3:8; 9:13; Acts 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9).

There are some of you who are dealing with addictive thoughts and behaviors that will take great effort, length of time, and help from others to curtail your sin (such as sex addiction, relationship addiction . . . etc.). Begin now to get the help and set reasonable goals for change.

The true sin of divorce is the breaking of the "holy" marital contract due to one or both marital partner's pride, selfishness, entitlement, loneliness, bitterness, lusts, stubbornness, jealousy . . . etc.

¹⁷⁻²⁵ "But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question?

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different." (Romans 7:17-25 MSG)

None of us are Good Enough

Are any of us any different than the Apostle Paul? We are all encumbered by sinful thoughts and misbehaviors. As the years of walking with Christ multiply, we will sin less because we are renewing our mind with Godly Truths that leads to an improved lifestyle. But, we will never be “good enough” without the shed blood of Jesus Christ. *He redeems us so God can accept us.*

My renewed lifestyle may not be as far along as yours. If you were to look at a typical church service, the crowd of participants is made of all ages, races, and lifestyles. Hopefully, the one thing they have in common is a belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The spectrum of Christian maturity will fall along a continuum from a baby to a mature believer whose life demonstrates much fruit.

Those church attenders will have something else in common, sin. As far as God is concerned, He no longer sees their sin because all sin has been washed away by the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ. Now, God sees Christ's righteousness in everyone who believes in the Gospel message.

¹³ *And yet no one has ever gone up to heaven, but there is One Who has come down from heaven—the Son of Man [Himself], Who is (dwells, has His home) in heaven.*

¹⁴ *And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert [on a pole], so must [so it is necessary that] the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross],*

¹⁵ *In order that everyone who believes in Him [who cleaves to Him, trusts Him, and relies on Him] may not perish, but have eternal life and [actually] live forever!*

¹⁶ *For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.*

¹⁷ *For God did not send the Son into the world in order to judge (to reject, to condemn, to pass sentence on) the world, but that the world might find salvation and be made safe and sound through Him.*

¹⁸ *He who believes in Him [who clings to, trusts in, relies on Him] is not judged [he who trusts in Him never comes up for judgment; for him there is no rejection, no condemnation—he incurs no damnation]; but he who does not believe (cleave to, rely on, trust in Him) is judged already [he has already been convicted and has already received his sentence] because he has not believed in and trusted in the name of the only begotten Son of God. [He is condemned for refusing to let his trust rest in Christ's name.]*

¹⁹ *The [basis of the] judgment (indictment, the test by which men are judged, the ground for the sentence) lies in this: the Light has come into the world, and people have loved the darkness rather than and more than the Light, for their works (deeds) were evil.*

²⁰ *For every wrongdoer hates (loathes, detests) the Light, and will not come out into the Light but shrinks from it, lest his works (his deeds, his activities, his conduct) be exposed and reprovved.*

²¹ *But he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light; so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are—wrought with God [divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him]. (John 3:13-21 AMP)*

Do you see Christ's righteousness dwell inside of you? Do you hold onto Christ's garment, trusting daily that doing what is right by Him will get you through your deepest of sins, even divorce or remarriage? None of us are condemned when we let our trust rest in the name of Jesus Christ. But, trust involves action. To change a negative cycle of events you must interpret your marital situation through the eyes of Christ. Forgive whenever possible and institute improvements to the marital relations. A loving heart will first look at itself to improve.

³ Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: “Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?”

⁴ “Haven’t you read the Scriptures?” Jesus replied. “They record that from the beginning ‘God made them male and female.’”⁵ 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.’”⁶ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”

⁷ “Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?” they asked.

⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended.”⁹ And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife **and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful.**”

¹⁰ Jesus’ disciples then said to him, “If this is the case, it is better not to marry!”

¹¹ “Not everyone can accept this statement,” Jesus said. “Only those whom God helps.”¹² Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.” (Matthew 19:3-12 NLT)(emphasis mine)

² Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: “Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?”

³ Jesus answered them with a question: “What did Moses say in the law about divorce?”

⁴ “Well, he permitted it,” they replied. “He said a man can give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away.”

⁵ But Jesus responded, “He wrote this commandment only as a concession to your hard hearts.

⁶ But ‘God made them male and female’ from the beginning of creation.”⁷ ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one,⁹ let no one split apart what God has joined together.”

¹⁰ Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again.”¹¹ He told them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her.”¹² And if a woman divorces her husband and marries someone else, she commits adultery.” (Mark 10:2-12 NLT)

¹³ And this you do with double guilt; you cover the altar of the Lord with tears [shed by your unoffending wives, divorced by you that you might take heathen wives], and with [your own] weeping and crying out because the Lord does not regard your offering any more or accept it with favor at your hand.

¹⁴ Yet you ask, Why does He reject it? Because the Lord was witness [to the covenant made at your marriage] between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously and to whom you were faithless. Yet she is your companion and the wife of your covenant [made by your marriage vows].

¹⁵ And did not God make [you and your wife] one [flesh]? Did not One make you and preserve your spirit alive? And why [did God make you two] one? Because He sought a godly offspring [from your union]. Therefore take heed to yourselves, and let no one deal treacherously and be faithless to the wife of his youth.

¹⁶ *“For I hate divorce!” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.” (Malachi 2:16 NLT)*

Escaping Responsibility

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew men often divorced to take on a new wife from the “heathen tribes.” Why were the Hebrew men attracted to those women? We can look at today’s examples of why most men and some women divorce and look for other mates. The disgruntled mate is most often looking for an escape from perceived “sufferings,” for which they have endured long enough.

Who do they escape to? It usually depends on what the unhappy mate considers themselves entitled to have and are not being freely given by their marital partner. The disgruntled husband will feel unloved, rejected, and disrespected. In my experience in Clinical Pastoral Counseling, *I see most men escaping to the lusts of the flesh, while many women escape for harmony, safety, and security.*

In Malachi and Jeremiah, God’s anger over divorce appears to settle on those Hebrew men who were not only disobedient of His instructions, but also to the unfair injury done to the offenseless wife. God states that they are guilty of injuring/offending the wife to tears and crying to God for unanswered prayers as though their problems were God’s fault.

¹³ *And this you do with double guilt; you cover the altar of the Lord with tears [shed by your unoffending wives, divorced by you that you might take heathen wives], and with [your own] weeping and crying out because the Lord does not regard your offering any more or accept it with favor at your hand. (Malachi 2:13-14 NLT).*

In this case, God viewed the offending partner as one who did not have legitimate reasons, but instead had been characterized as “treacherous.” In English, treacherous expresses betrayal, disloyal, false, fickle, inconstant, perfidious, recreant, traitorous, faithless, unfaithful, untrue.²

This same word, “treacherous,” is seen in Jeremiah where God describes why He divorced both Israel and later, Judah. *Judah followed Israel’s poor example.*

⁶ *During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, “Have you seen what fickle Israel has done? Like a wife who commits adultery, Israel has worshiped other gods on every hill and under every green tree.” ⁷ I thought, ‘After she has done all this, she will return to me.’ But she did not return, and her faithless sister Judah saw this. ⁸ She saw that I divorced faithless Israel because of her adultery. But that **treacherous** sister Judah had no fear, and now she, too, has left me and given herself to prostitution. ⁹ Israel treated it all so lightly—she thought nothing of committing adultery by worshiping idols made of wood and stone. So now the land has been polluted. ¹⁰ But despite all this, her faithless sister Judah has never sincerely returned to me. She has only pretended to be sorry. I, the LORD, have spoken!” (Jeremiah 3:6-10 NLT) (bold print mine)*

¹⁰ *“If a man who has married a slave wife takes another wife for himself, he must not neglect the rights of the first wife to food, clothing, and sexual intimacy. ¹¹ If he fails in any of these three obligations, she may leave as a free woman without making any payment.” (Exodus 21:10-11 NLT)*

²Retrieved 2/11/13, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/treacherous>

No Longer Bound to the Law

According to the words of Paul, we are no longer bound by the law. It is the Spirit of God who dwells in us that compels us to do what is right and holy. And, it is the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ to cover over those “infrequent” times that we fail to do right.

My heart is always heavy when experiencing the tears of a marital partner who has just been betrayed by their spouse. Both men and women have tears during this time. As in the death of a loved one, life will never be the same for the betrayed spouse. Christ's sacrificial love and compassion gives us an example of perfect love. Our sinful nature causes us to fall short of His example. Nevertheless, we must repetitively strive to perfection, both individually and relationally.

“¹ Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don't you know that the law applies only while a person is living? ² For example, 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. ³ 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.

⁴ So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God. (Romans 7:1-4 NLT)

*“⁷ In the same way you married men should live considerately with [your wives], with an intelligent recognition [of the marriage relation], honoring the woman as [physically] the weaker, but [realizing that you] are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and **cut off**. [Otherwise you cannot pray effectively.] (1 Peter 3:7 AMP) (bold print mine)*

“⁹The commandments, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet (have an evil desire), and any other commandment, are summed up in the single command, You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to one's neighbor [it never hurts anybody]. Therefore love meets all the requirements and is the fulfilling of the Law. (Romans 13:9-10 AMP)

Suggestions on Improving a Difficult Marriage³

- LET the husband or wife have some time and expense money for hobbies, continuing education classes, trips, or any relatively safe arena that allows for discovery of suppressed talents, skills, and enjoyments.
- BE careful to not allow the husband or wife to be cast in a role of mama or papa. Remind them on occasion that you are not their mama or papa and you don't want them to be your mama or papa.
- WHATEVER hobby or program your partner chooses for them self allow it to belong to them. Do NOT try to get too involved. Allow them the freedom away from you so they can become involved in their own activity. Ask enough questions to show interest, but do not become an inquisitor. It's OK to join in with them on occasion when they ask. Refrain from pressuring them to ask.

³Adapted from Sandford, John & Paula, *The Transformation of the Inner Man*, pp 346-7, Victory House, Inc., Tulsa, OK, 1982.

- LET your husband or wife find a part-time-job or some other activity that propels them outside the home. This gives them a sense of freedom in spreading their wings.
 - DATE! Allow the sensible teenager inside the both of you to take over and go on some fun dates together. Kick-up your heels and try different activities that are appropriate. Let your fun be spontaneous and uninhibited within both of your moral and Biblical boundaries. At least one date night a week is recommended. If your partner is willing, have a romantic weekend out of town each month without the children.
 - BE sensitive to your mate when he or she is being flippant, sarcastic, or too serious. This behavior usually means they are upset about something else. On occasion, it is alright to say, "It sounds like your upset. Would you like to talk about it?" Try to not criticize or condemn the other when you do not agree with their comments or actions. There will be time for adjustments later.
 - WHEN the other becomes critical, identify your reactions. Are you feeling intense negative emotions, such as anger, betrayal, misunderstanding, unwanted, etc. In prayer, ask God to show you the sources of these feelings. A professional Christian Counselor can help you with identifying past strongholds that need to be torn down.
 - TAKE on some of the chores the partner may be dropping. This is within reason, because it is still important for each of you to continue being responsible to current obligations.
 - REMEMBER that God is able to keep your partner until they find their individual identity.
 - INCREASE your prayer and worship time. "O LORD, I have come to you for protection; don't let me be put to shame. Rescue me, for you always do what is right." (Psalm 31:1 NLT)
-