

18 and also betrothal unfaithfulness, which is listed in Deuteronomy 22 and illustrated in Matthew 1:19" (Bill Gothard). If the exception clause had reference to marital unfaithfulness, Jesus would have used the Greek word "moichos" which means adultery. But Jesus used the general word for sexual uncleanness -- "porneia."

Conclusion: No sin is beyond the forgiveness of God! The church of Jesus Christ must sympathetically minister to those whose lives have been ravaged by divorce. God is in the rebuilding business. He can "... restore the years that the locusts have eaten..." (Joel 2:25). But at the same time God's truth must be maintained and proclaimed.

GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION - The question of being right with God is not "Am I living a good enough life?" Nor is it the statement "I'm doing the best I can." Salvation is not gained by what WE do for God, rather it is a free gift based on the FINISHED WORK of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8,9)! Religion is MAN'S effort to please God. Becoming a Christian is believing that GOD has already done all that needs to be done for me to be saved. Many religious people on judgment day will discover to their utter despair that "religion" will not allow them into the presence of God in heaven (Matt. 7:21-23). The vital question is "Are your sins forgiven?" All men are sinners by NATURE and by action (Rom. 3:23 5:12; Eph. 2:1-3). We don't become sinners when we sin; we sin because we ARE sinners. Our very NATURE towards God is corrupt (Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:10-13). Because we are sinners, we experience death (Rom. 6:23). Death is not only physical (separation of the soul from the body), but also spiritual (separation of the soul eternally from God) (2Cor. 5; Gen. 3). Man's only hope of being reconciled to God is through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (2Cor. 5:17-19). Through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection He paid the penalty for man's sin and made it possible for believers to be freed from the bondage and condemnation of sin (1Cor. 15:1-7; 1Pet. 2:24). Forgiveness is possible through His shed blood (I Peter 1:18,19) by TOTALLY trusting Jesus as your ONLY hope of being made right with God; you can be saved from the condemnation you justly deserved (Jn. 1:12; 3:16; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE



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Biblical Teaching about Marriage: Gods norm for marriage is one man for one woman for a lifetime! When God made Eve for Adam, he made not "helpers," but a "helper" (Genesis 2:18). God told Adam to cleave to his wife (singular) (Genesis 2:24). Notice also that a man leaves his "father and mother" to be married not his "first wife." This monogamous relationship is to be heterosexual not homosexual. God forbids sodomy in any form (Genesis 13:13; 18; 19, Lev. 20:13, Rom. 1:26ff, 1Cor. 6:9-11). Marriage is an indissoluble bond between a man and a woman until death (Rom. 7:1-5). The marriage vows state: "till death do we part." Vows are sacred, and God warns that those who violate their vows will suffer major consequences (Ecclesiastes 5:1-5)! Those who divorce and remarry will suffer "a wound and dishonor" and their "reproach shall not be wiped away" (Prov. 6:33). Marriage is a covenant not a contract (Malachi 2:14). A contract may be broken by mutual consent, but a covenant is permanently binding. God's covenant of salvation with Christians includes the promise "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5, Matt. 28:20). When there is lifetime commitment to marriage, then there is the foundation for any problem to be resolved. Genuine love "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1Cor. 13:7).

Old Testament Teaching: Malachi 2:14-16 pointedly states that God hates divorce -- "putting away." In Deuteronomy 24 reveals that if the wife is divorced by her first husband and she consequently is remarried to a second husband who also divorces her, she may not return and remarry the first husband. The reason given is because she was "defiled" by the second marriage. Even though a quote "legal marriage" took place in the eyes of human government, in the sight of God this was a defiling relationship. What man approves of, and what God approves of, are often two different things (Luke 16:15). When separation occurs between husband and wife, reconciliation is always to be the goal of those involved. Even in the case of an adulterous relationship, healing and restoration is still God's will to be sought (Hosea 1, 2).

New Testament Teaching: Jesus clearly affirms the permanence of marriage: "what therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). If a man divorces his wife and she remarries, Jesus declares she is living in adultery. The person who marries her who has been divorced is also involved in an adulterous relationship (Mark 10:1,2). "Whosoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits

adultery; and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband, commits adultery" (Luke 16:18). Paul reinforces the same teaching: "... let not the wife depart from her husband," and "... let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Cor. 7:10, 11). If a person is separated or divorced from their spouse, they are to "remain unmarried" or "be reconciled" (7: 11). Only one event breaks the marriage bond -- death (Rom. 7:1-3). A Christian is not to marry a non-Christian (2Cor. 6:14). But, if this marriage has taken place, there is to be no separation or divorce (1Cor. 7:12-14).

General Biblical Principles: Those who seek to justify divorce on biblical grounds sometimes conveniently ignore Deuteronomy 22:28,29. This passage reinforces God's standard of no divorce, particularly in the case of premarital sexual relationships. Christians who engage in divorce proceedings, violate God's restriction that Christians are not to take other Christians to court before the unsaved world, to settle their differences (1Cor. 6:1-8). Christians who boast of how well things have gone for them since they divorced and remarried are encouraging others to choose the same solution (Romans 14). Those who suffer most in a divorce are the children. Jesus gave a severe warning to all those who "offend one of these little ones" (Matt. 18:1-6). The standard for leaders in the church for others to follow is that they be the "husband of one wife" (1Tim. 3: 2). God has instructed the church to take care of those widows who have been "the wife of one man" (1Tim. 5:9). A lot of people react to the teaching that a divorced spouse must live the rest of his or her life single or be reconciled to their partner. Singleness is not a curse or a heavy weight to bear! Paul teaches that those who are single actually have the advantage over those who are married. "... He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord. How he may please the Lord; but he that is married cares for the things of the world, how he may please his wife" (1Cor. 7:32, 33).

Exception Clause: "When the Pharisees tried to get Jesus to side with one of the rabbinical schools of thought on divorce, Jesus rejected both schools (Matt. 19:3-10). Jesus went back to Genesis and reemphasized God's original creation order, in which there was no divorce. Then, when the Pharisees persisted in justifying their practice of divorce on the basis of Moses Law, Jesus restated his rejection of divorce for any cause. To be comprehensive, however, we would have had to "except" the illegal marriages of incest and sodomy which are forbidden in Leviticus