

# DOCTRINE OF MARRIAGE

- I. Introduction and preliminary considerations.
  - A. Marriage is viewed by adjusted believers as a sacred and holy union between a man and a woman; in fact, some unbelievers hold to this view as well.
  - B. However, others see marriage as a legal or governmentally sanctioned union that provides nothing more than legal recognition and property rights.
  - C. From a biblical perspective, marriage is categorized as Divine Institution #2, which was only preceded by the first Divine Institution of volition.
  - D. An institution is any association, custom, or relationship that is consciously approved by society, and organized and maintained through prescribed rules, laws, and/or agencies.
  - E. While this institution came from God directly, the human race has generally recognized the fact that it is an institution that should be honored and respected.
  - F. By divine design, the first two Divine Institutions normally and logically result in Divine Institution #3 (the family) and Divine Institution #4 (nations).
  - G. One should recognize that any attack (Satanic, human viewpoint, or otherwise) on Divine Institution #2 not only affects that institution, but has ramifications for the Divine Institutions that flow from it.
  - H. While the human race has observed and practiced a number of forms of marriage, the positive believer sees the institution as one that originated with God; therefore, it must be defined and understood in light of divine revelation.
  - I. God has provided marriage for two specific reasons; the first being the joy and fulfillment of men and women within the human race. Gen. 2:23,25
  - J. The second reason God established marriage was to provide a means by which the human race could procreate and continue to populate and subdue planet earth. Gen. 1:27-28
- II. Vocabulary.
  - A. Hebrew vocabulary.
    1. The word translated **marriage** is found 27 times in the 1995 New American Standard version.
    2. The Hebrew term אִשָּׁה (ishshah—woman, wife) is used with and without the definite article to refer to a wife. Gen. 2:24, 21:21, 24:3
    3. It is used some 53 times in the Old Testament with the inseparable preposition לְ (l) to refer to the institution of marriage.
    4. The most common Hebrew idiom used to express the concept of marriage in the Old Testament is **giving or taking someone for a wife**.
    5. The Hebrew verb בָּעַל (ba'al) means to possess, own, rule over, or marry, depending upon the context. Gen. 20:3; Deut. 22:22
    6. The cognate noun בַּעַל (ba'al) is defined as an owner, master, or husband.

B. Greek vocabulary.

1. γαμέω (gameo), verb, 28X, to take someone as a spouse, to get married, to be married.
2. γάμος (gamos), m.noun, 16X, the public ceremony associated with entry into a marriage relationship, a wedding, a wedding feast. It can also refer to the institution or state of being married. Heb. 13:4
3. γυνή (gune), f.noun, 215X, an adult female, a woman; a married woman, a wife; a newly married woman, a bride. Matt. 1:20,24; Rev. 19:7
4. ὑπανδρος (hupandros), adj. 1X, lit. under the authority of a man, subject to a man, legally married. Rom. 7:2
5. There is an idiom found in the Gospel of Luke for marriage, which is literally translated as **from her virginity**. Lk. 2:36

III. Definition of marriage.

A. Before defining marriage from a biblical perspective, one should recognize the various forms of marriage that have been practiced by the human race; some of which are still being practiced today.

1. Monogamy, which is derived from the Greek term for one marriage, is a union of one man and one woman; this is the most widely practiced form of marriage throughout history.
2. Polygamy, which is derived from the Greek term for many marriages, is a union that involves taking more than one spouse.
  - a. Polygyny refers to the union of one man and a number of women at the same time.
  - b. It may be as few as two women (bigamy), three women (trigamy), or hundreds of women. Gen. 4:19; IKings 11:3
  - c. Polyandry refers to the union of one woman and several men, which has been practiced due to a shortage of women and/or severe economic difficulty.
  - d. Another subset of polygamy is the Sororate Marriage, which involves marriage of one man to two or more sisters; while this normally occurs if the first wife is barren or dies, some have married two living sisters. Gen. 29:23,28
3. Levirate marriage is the union of a widow and a brother of her deceased husband; this was designed to ensure the security of the widow, keep the children within the same family, and maintain an heir to the inheritance of the deceased. Gen. 38:8-9; Deut. 25:5-6
4. Group marriage involves the union of several men and several women, who are all considered to be married to one another and who all share responsibility for any children arising from the marriage.
5. Common Law marriage has an ancient history, and involves a form of interpersonal status which is legally recognized in some jurisdictions as a marriage, even though no legally recognized marriage ceremony is performed or civil marriage contract has been obtained. It is not merely cohabitation, but both partners represent themselves publicly as being married.
6. Endogamous marriage is marriage within a specific group, most often among those of the same locality, religion, race, or social class. Modern examples of this are seen in the corporate and political elitists like the Fords/Firestones, Kerry/Heinz, and Kennedy/Shriver/Swarzenegger. Gen. 24:3-4, 28:1-2

- B. Marriage is a Divine Institution, which was established by God and should be defined by the terms that God has established. Gen. 1:26-27, 2:20-25
1. The only participants were a male and a female; any other gender arrangement is not only contrary to divine design, but abnormal (against nature), and anatomically impossible. Rom. 1:26-27
  2. In fact, any attempt to circumvent the male/female relationship and replace it with any type of homosexual relationship is abhorrent to God. Lev. 18:22
  3. Marriage was God's response to the problem of loneliness in the human race; therefore, God created a perfect counterpart to Adam as the solution. Gen. 2:18
  4. The divine intention for marriage involved a single couple, which indicates that God's intention is for marriage to be monogamous.
  5. Further revelation indicates that God's intention was for marriage to be permanent; divorce was never part of the divine purpose. Matt. 19:3-8
- C. However, apart from the biblical realities that govern it, marriage is also governed by the laws of the jurisdiction in which the two parties reside.<sup>1</sup>
1. Marriage is a legally sanctioned contract between a man and a woman; therefore, entering into a marriage contract changes the legal status of both parties, giving both the husband and wife new rights and obligations.
  2. All states limit people to one living husband or wife at a time and will not issue marriage licenses to anyone who has a living spouse. Once someone is married, the person must be legally released from his or her spouse by death, divorce, or annulment before he or she may legally remarry. Persons who enter into a second marriage without legally dissolving a first marriage may be charged with the felonious crime of bigamy.
  3. Marriages are generally prohibited between those judged to be mentally ill, or those lacking what is considered to be normal mental capacity.
  4. Consanguinity, or affinity between the parties within the same descending or ascending genetic line, however remote from each other, cannot lawfully marry; such marriages are deemed to be against nature.
  5. Therefore, every state proscribes marriage between relatives; each state forbids marriage to a child or grandchild, parent or grandparent, uncle or aunt, and niece or nephew, including illegitimate relatives and relatives of half blood, such as a half brother who has the same father but a different mother.
  6. Age is an additional requirement; although during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the legal age was as low as 12 years old for females, current statutes ordinarily provide that females may marry at age 16 and males at age 18.
  7. Once a license is legally obtained, most states require that the marriage commence with a wedding ceremony. The ceremony may either be civil or religious, because states may not require religious observances. In some states, nothing more is required than a declaration by each party in the presence of an authorized person and one additional witness that he or she takes the other in marriage.
  8. Legally, the idea that marriage is the union of one male and one female has been thought to be so basic that it is not ordinarily specifically expressed by statute.
- D. Therefore, in order to arrive at a sound working definition of marriage, one must take into consideration the divine design and the legal aspects that govern marriage as well.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/marriage>

- E. The true definition of marriage must then include the following legal facts and realities.
  1. Marriage is the permanent union between a man and a woman, who both lack any bars to marriage, are of sound mind, are of lawful age, and who have complied with all necessary legal and moral requirements.
  2. Marriage requires that both parties enter into the union willingly; both parties should recognize that they are committing to a lifetime of shared feelings and experiences, based on mutual love, trust, and support.
  3. A marriage is deemed to have commenced upon completion of a valid marriage ceremony.
  4. At that time, certain legal and moral obligations are put in place, which include the following;<sup>2</sup>
    - a. It vests in the husband all the personal property of the wife; it also vests in the husband right to manage the real estate of the wife, and enjoy the profits arising from it during their joint lives.
    - b. It vests in the wife after the husband's death, an estate comprised of the husband's lands, and a right to a certain part of his personal estate, when he dies.
    - c. It creates the civil affinity which each contracts towards the relations of the other.
    - d. It gives the husband marital authority over the person of his wife.
    - e. The wife acquires the name of her husband, as they are considered as but one, of which he is the head. In general, the wife follows the condition of her husband.
    - f. The wife, on her marriage, loses her domicile and gains that of her husband.

#### IV. Origin of marriage.

- A. The marriage relationship was established by God in the Garden of Eden in order to provide the perfect solution for the problem of loneliness. Gen. 2:18,20
- B. The formation of the woman from the rib of the man is designed to demonstrate the organic union between the husband and the wife; this is commonly known as the principle of **one flesh**. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5
- C. In that regard, the woman and the man are designed to complement each other perfectly in every way—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sexually.
- D. God's purpose and design in marriage is seen in the following:
  1. Adequate physical and intellectual capacity. Gen. 1:28, 2:19-20
  2. Adequate spiritual and emotional capacity. Gen. 1:27
  3. Woman as the ideal companion and assistant. Gen. 2:18, 1:27
  4. Both share complete sexual and reproductive capacity. Gen. 4:1
  5. Both shared the capacity to enjoy the relationship. Gen. 2:24-25
- E. The perfect nature of the original marriage is seen in the statement of original bliss that the husband and wife shared. Gen. 2:25
- F. The divine intention was that marriage be monogamous and permanent; Jesus makes it quite clear that divorce was never part of God's original plan. Matt. 19:6,8

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lectlaw.com/def2/m087.htm>

- V. Restrictions and prerequisites for normal marriage.
  - A. Gender.
    - 1. Divine revelation indicates that marriage (and even sexual activity) must be practiced only between people of the opposite sex. Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Rom. 1:23-24; ICor. 6:9
    - 2. Most normal, governmental laws flow from biblical principles, which are recognized as being good, moral, and righteous.
    - 3. Any attempt to circumvent the divinely ordained gender requirements are not only opposed by God, but by nature and very often by the laws of man.
  - B. Legal age/maturity.
    - 1. All people need to possess a certain amount of physical and emotional maturity before they consider entering into a marriage.
    - 2. This is reflected in the laws, which all provide a minimum age at which a person may enter into a marriage.
      - a. Most states require a minimum age of 18 years (some raise this to 21) before one is legally able to marry.
      - b. In cases where people attempt to marry prior to that age, parental consent must be obtained by the prospective bride and groom.
      - c. In certain cases that do not meet the legal age requirement, legal sanction must be obtained from a judge before the marriage can be preformed.
    - 3. Beyond the necessary mental and emotional maturity, each male should possess a certain measure of fiscal stability before he would attempt to become responsible for another person.
  - C. Mental status.
    - 1. In normal situations, mental competency is a legal requirement for both parties that desire to enter into the state of matrimony.
    - 2. This includes normal mental competency, but is also broadened to include competency at the time of marriage.
      - a. If a person was insane when he/she got married, the marriage is not considered valid.
      - b. If a person was incapacitated (drunk, under the influence of drugs, etc.) when he/she participated in the marriage ceremony, the marriage may not be valid.
  - D. Volitional freedom.
    - 1. While the issue of willingness is often not the case for a young couple, most states provide that mutual consent must be present in order to engage in marriage.
    - 2. These laws prohibit couples from being married when one or both of the participants are under duress, which may include physical or emotional pressure, or both.
    - 3. Some people fall prey to forced marriage through deception, abduction, coercion, fear, and certain inducements; this is also known as a shotgun wedding/marriage.
  - E. As a prerequisite for a successful marriage, the positive believer must strive to avoid human viewpoint and cosmic pursuits in regard to marriage.
    - 1. One should avoid pursuing a potential mate in ways that are incompatible with sound doctrine.
    - 2. This means that one should not violate the doctrine of separation in order to pursue a relationship with someone outside of Bible class. ICor. 6:14-16
      - a. Positive believers are not biblically permitted to marry unbelievers. ICor. 7:39, 9:5
      - b. Likewise, it is unwise to pursue a relationship with a negative believer, which essentially amounts to a violation of the doctrine of separation.

- c. This would preclude “missionary dating”.
- 3. From the standpoint of sound doctrine, certain environments and practices are truly not conducive for finding a positive mate.
  - a. Local bars, gentlemen’s clubs, and dance halls.
  - b. Dating clubs, chat rooms, and computer dating services.
  - c. Fundamentalist singles ministries.
  - d. Civic organizations, health clubs, and networking environments.
  - e. Astrology, alcohol, drugs, and magic.
- 4. Many people simply look for the wrong things when considering a potential marriage partner.
  - 1. Women may be prone to search for a husband based on his intelligence, looks, chosen profession, financial, or social status.
  - 2. Men are prone to focus on the overt package and not give the issue of inner character the serious consideration that it demands. IPet. 3:3-4
  - 3. All positive believers should put doctrinal considerations first; this means that you seek someone that is positive, in Bible class, demonstrates consistency in intake and application of doctrine, and has demonstrated integrity.
- F. One of the most important prerequisites for the positive believer is the virtue of patience. Heb. 6:15
  - 1. Patience comes as a result of applying doctrine to your situation, which should manifest itself in a relaxed mental attitude about your status and your future.
  - 2. Patience recognizes that it is necessary for God to bring a man and woman together; operation energy of the flesh may result in some serious, long-term difficulties. Gen. 2:22
  - 3. Patience also recognizes that it is not God’s will for all people to marry. Matt. 19:12
  - 4. While one is waiting, he/she should recognize that the single lifestyle has some spiritual benefits that should be exploited. ICor. 7:32-34a

VI. The authority structure within marriage.

- A. The authority of the husband over the wife in the marriage relationship is part of the Royal Chain of Command, which elevates this relationship beyond the realm of the secular. ICor. 11:3
  - 1. The authority of the man over the woman was established at creation by virtue of the order of creation. ITim. 2:13
  - 2. That authority structure, which existed before the fall, is reiterated and reinforced by God after the fall. Gen. 3:16
  - 3. Within the marriage relationship, the authority of the husband over the wife is likened to the authority of Christ over the Church. Eph. 5:23
- B. The husband is the ranking authority in marriage, but he must first establish his authority in a new environment in which he is the head of his own house.
  - 1. While there may be other biblical reasons for the child to leave home (the ministry would certainly qualify, as would forced military service—Acts 16:3), the primary biblical reason for leaving the authority of the parents is to establish a new family unit. Gen. 2:24 cf. Lk. 15:11ff
  - 2. The positive believer should consider the doctrinal opinion of his/her authorities; he/she should recognize that the authorities in the life (pastor-teacher, father and mother) are there for a purpose and should not generally be disregarded.

3. Before, or at the time of the marriage, the man is responsible to leave the authority of the parents and establish his authority over his wife in a separate residence.
  - a. As long as any child (no matter the age) lives with the parents, he/she remains under the authority of the parents.
  - b. Therefore, it is impossible to establish the new husband's authority while he resides within the house of another male authority.
  - c. He is also to make certain that the wife leaves her family (physically, mentally, and emotionally), and make it clear to both sets of parents that meddling will not be tolerated.
4. As with any authority, the purpose of the authority is the protection and well-being of those under authority. IICor. 10:8
  - a. The husband is to use his authority to encourage his wife to maximum spiritual growth and production.
  - b. When the husband is confronted with disobedience, he is free to use severity; however, this must be exercised cautiously, and within the parameters of the weaker vessel principle. IPet. 3:7
5. The badge of the husband's authority is his shorter hair. ICor. 11:7-9
- C. The responsibility of the wife within the authority structure of the marriage is to freely submit herself to the leadership of her husband.
  1. The response of the woman to the leadership of her husband is likened to the response of the Church to the leadership of Christ. Eph. 5:24
  2. This means that she is to willingly orient to her position as a helper, and not attempt to usurp the authority of her husband, either covertly or overtly.
  3. In fact, usurping authority and acting independently of the husband is what led to the fall of the human race. Gen. 3:6
  4. The wife is responsible to obey her husband in the Lord, even if he proves to be unreasonable at times. IPet. 3:1
  5. In this case, it does not matter if the husband is an unbeliever, or a negative believer that is hostile to doctrine; the wife is to demonstrate her respectful behavior, which has the potential of having a beneficial effect on the negative spouse.
  6. The badge of the woman's submission is her longer hair. ICor. 11:10,15
  7. The only reason that the wife may legitimately disobey her husband is if he abuses his authority in certain areas.
    - a. The husband is not free to use his authority to command his wife to sin.
    - b. The husband does not have the authority to interfere with his wife's spiritual growth and generally should not meddle with her application of doctrine. IIPet. 3:18
    - c. The wife does not have to submit to an authority if that authority willingly and knowingly endangers her life. *You can't grow spiritually if you are dead!*

## VII. Responsibilities within the marriage relationship.

- A. First, it should be understood that the Bible does not require any believer to get married; it just requires certain things of that believer if he/she chooses to do so. Matt. 19:10-11
- B. If any believer does not want to place himself under these regulations he/she is perfectly free to avoid marriage.
- C. However, the responsibilities of marriage are incumbent upon anyone who has or will enter into a marriage relationship.

- D. In a sense, once you enter into marriage you forfeit a certain amount of freedom in determining what you will or will not do; the terms are not optional, but are clearly defined and outlined in the Scriptures.
- E. Therefore, while normal, establishment unbelievers can and have lived by certain principles throughout history, we will look to the Bible to define what the role of each partner is in the marriage relationship.
- F. The responsibilities of the husband.
1. Because of the nature of authority and responsibility, the husband is the final authority in the home and has the responsibility for how the household functions.
  2. Although the husband possesses the authority and responsibility, the wise husband will learn to understand his wife and delegate appropriately. Prov. 31:11
  3. Further, he should learn that he will not have all the answers for every situation in life; his wife is provided by God as a help, support, and encouragement for him. Gen. 2:18
  4. The Bible makes it quite clear that the man is responsible to work and provide for himself and his household as the breadwinner. Gen. 3:19
    - a. In that regard, the husband is to be the primary provider; he is generally not to rely on his wife for financial support since this obviously interferes with her primary directive to pursue the wife/homemaker niche. Tit. 2:4-5
    - b. While this does not preclude the wife from working outside the home (to the extent that it is necessary), many marriages have fallen prey to materialism--the inordinate pursuit of money and the details of life. ITim. 6:9-10
    - c. Further, the man is expected to fulfill his responsibilities as a leader; this means that he should not attempt to pressure his wife to take the financial responsibilities that are incumbent on him.
  5. However, his responsibility to provide physically for his wife does not absolve him of the responsibility to provide the other aspects of marriage that a wife requires.
    - a. He is not to use his authority to act as a dictator or tyrant; while God delegates His authority to all other authorities, He does not advocate abuse of those under authority. Matt. 20:25-27; IPet. 5:3
    - b. While physical provision is important, the husband is also to strive to understand and meet the other spiritual, mental, and emotional needs of his **weaker vessel**. IPet. 3:7
      - 1.) While the verbs in this passage are participles, they have the force of imperatives and should be understood as such.
      - 2.) The two primary directives are **live together and grant her honor**.
      - 3.) The first deals with the manner in which a husband cohabits with his wife, which is designed to be **according to knowledge**.
        - a.) That phrase essentially means that he is to live with her in a fashion that reflects the truth of God's revealed will. cf. Rom. 10:2
        - b.) In that regard, a husband should understand who his wife is, seek to meet her needs, accept her as she is, demonstrate strength, wisdom, and compassion in his leadership, and be faithful to her all his life. Eph. 5:25
        - c.) The motive Peter provides for such activity is the recognition that the feminine nature of the wife was not created to be as strong and capable as the masculine nature of her husband.

- 4.) The second command focuses on the principle of **granting her honor**, which begins in the mental attitude, but is to be demonstrated overtly.
  - a.) The Greek term τιμή (time-honor) first relates to the amount at which something is valued; then, it comes to mean a manifestation of that valuation by an overt display of esteem or honor.
  - b.) The term is also used to denote that honor may sometimes have a physical component to it; the husband would then be responsible to share the appropriate financial blessing with his wife.
  - c.) His motive for this exhortation is found in the fact that his weaker vessel is a **fellow heir of the grace of life**; this means that his wife is equal with him in terms of spiritual privilege and eternal importance.
- 5.) Peter provides some additional incentive for husbands, as he informs them that there are spiritual repercussions for failure to function properly within this Divine Institution.
6. In general, the husband is responsible to **love his wife**, which is defined as placing her best interests above those of himself; such love is characterized by the principle of self-sacrifice. Eph. 5:25; ICor. 13:4-7
  - a.) A husband is then to put aside his own likes, desires, opinions, preferences, and welfare in order to please his wife and meet her needs.
  - b.) Paul references the original concept of **one flesh** as a reason for husbands to provide what their wives need. Eph. 5:28
    - 1.) The first obvious factor is that all people tend to take care of the body, providing everything the physical body needs. Eph. 5:29a
    - 2.) Paul cites two specific areas of responsibility for the husband, which are seen in the Greek terms ἐκτρέφω (ektrepho—nourish), and θάλπω (thalpo—cherish).
    - 3.) The first is used of raising children, which involves the physical provision of food, clothing, education, and discipline that are necessary for one to grow to a mature adult. Eph.6:4
    - 4.) The second term literally means to warm with body heat, and is used of a hen warming her eggs and chicks; it means that the husband is to provide the kind of environment that is warm, nurturing, and secure.
7. The husband is responsible for the sexual fulfillment of his wife. ICor. 7:3
8. As the authority and leader, the husband should set the tone within the household regarding the importance of doctrine and the application of the same.
- G. The responsibilities of the wife.
  1. The wife should make it her priority to orient to the godliness code for married women, which means that she strives to occupy the wife/homemaker niche, rather than pursuing a career outside the home. ITim. 5:14; Tit. 2:3-5
    - a. This does not mean that a wife cannot work a job in order to help provide in the event of a regular financial shortfall within the home. Prov. 31:10ff
    - b. In fact, working a job under those circumstances would be an application of Bible doctrine, as she aids her husband.
    - c. However, be advised that when a woman works outside the home, her loyalties may become divided, she may come under various unsavory influences, and her primary responsibilities may suffer.

2. Since her primary niche is to be in the home, she is responsible to use her time wisely; she should not waste her days with laziness, nor should she become overly involved in the lives of others. ITim. 5:13
3. The wife should seek to avoid the Eve Complex; she should not seek to usurp authority, but should strive to maintain submission (both mentally and overtly) to her own husband. ITim. 2:14
4. In that regard, she only has to submit to her own husband; wives are not responsible to submit to other males outside the normal chain of command. Eph. 5:22
5. All women are to take the appropriate time to properly adorn themselves according to the Royal Imperative to do so. ITim. 2:9; IPet. 3:3
  - a. However, the wife should not fall into the pursuit of overt fashions that do not comply with the details of the godliness code for women.
  - b. She is to avoid pursuing the latest cosmic fashion trends, but dress in a manner that is compatible with her age and station in life.
  - c. She is to get and maintain a hair style that is simple; she should not resort to elaborate extremes.
  - d. She is to avoid the pursuit of an extensive and expensive collection of jewelry, which merely embellishes the overt, but does nothing for the soul.
  - e. She is generally to avoid extreme forms of external adornment and concentrate on her opportunities for Divine good production, which is the inner beauty that God seeks. ITim. 2:10; IPet. 3:3-4
6. She is responsible to learn doctrine with true humility; if she lacks understanding in a particular area, she is first to consult her own husband. ICor. 14:34-35; ITim. 2:11
7. Older wives have a responsibility to the younger women in the local church to set an example in Divine good production and teach the younger women the standards that are required of a good wife. Tit. 2:3-5
8. As with the husband, the wife has a responsibility to pursue the sexual needs of her husband. ICor. 7:3
9. Both husbands and wives ought to be aware that significant failure in the sexual realm is simply providing an opportunity for Satan to tempt one party or the other with immorality. ICor. 7:5

#### VIII. Separation and divorce.

- A. First and foremost, every believer ought to understand that God views marriage as a fundamental union that is designed to be permanent in nature. Matt. 19:5,6,8
- B. God's viewpoint of divorce is that it is tantamount to **treachery/betrayal**; for this reason the Bible says, **For I hate divorce, says the Lord.** Mal.2:14-16
- C. One reason for this strong language is found in the fact that when a marriage occurs, both parties exchange wedding vows by swearing an oath before God and the assembled witnesses to be faithful to each other forever. Deut. 23:21; Eccles. 5:4-5
- D. Adultery is the only biblically legitimate reason for divorce; even in that extreme case, divorce is not commanded. Matt. 19:9
- E. Divorce is clearly part of God's permissive will, which made provision for the inherent problems that may arise between two sin natures. Deut. 24:1; Matt. 19:7-8

- F. Definition of the terms surrounding marriage, and the potential events that may occur within a marriage, which include the marriage itself, adultery, separation, divorce, and remarriage.
1. Marriage is defined as the union that is entered into between one man and one woman for the purpose of founding and maintaining a separate family; a marriage has spiritual, moral, legal, and social ramifications. Gen. 2:24
  2. Adultery is the act of voluntary sexual intercourse by any person who is legally married with someone other than his or her spouse; a secondary form of adultery occurs when one engages in sex with anyone who has been divorced. Matt. 5:27,32
  3. Separation is the cessation of cohabitation by a legally married couple without a permanent and legal divorce. It should be recognized that all states do not recognize legal separation, and there is some question as to whether or not the Bible does.
  4. Remarriage is simply the action of entering into another marriage, having been previously legally married and legally divorced; otherwise, one who remarries illegally is known as a bigamist.
- G. Old Testament teaching regarding divorce and remarriage. Deut. 24:1-4
1. This passage does not commend, command, or condone divorce, it merely deals with divorce as a reality that must be acknowledged, addressed, and regulated by the Law.
  2. The key element in our passage is that the husband found some indecency in his wife; the Hebrew term עֲרֻוָּה (‘erwah—indecent, pertaining to the genitals) deals with some gross sexual impropriety, such as overt sensuality, acting in a sexually suggestive way, or even exhibitionism. Lev. 18:6ff
  3. It does not refer to adultery, since that crime was punishable by the death penalty. Lev. 20:10
  4. If the husband could not get beyond the moral flaw, and he was unwilling to forgive, forget, and move on, he could secure a written, legal document that legally dissolved the marriage.
    - a. One reason for making this a more complicated legal matter, which of necessity requires more time to execute, was to preclude hasty, impulsive, or ill-advised divorces.
    - b. The second reason for the legal writ, which was recognized by the legal courts in Israel, was to provide both parties with protection against being accused of adultery if either became involved with another person.
  5. Once the woman had received the writ of divorce, left the former husband’s house, and remarried, the first marriage is legally terminated.
  6. The woman was permitted to leave and enter into a second marriage without any social or legal repercussions.
  7. Verse 3 indicates that a similar scenario could occur once again, or that the second husband could simply die; this would free the woman to legally marry for a third time. Jn. 4:18
  8. However, verse 4 indicates that once the first divorce is final, the woman is forever declared to be unclean with respect to the first husband; they are never free to reconcile and remarry.
- H. Jesus Christ’s first teaching on divorce. Matt. 5:31-32
1. Jesus was fully aware of the Old Testament provision that granted divorces under the permissive will of God upon certain conditions.
  2. Jesus clarifies the exact meaning of the Old Testament passage by setting forth the sole condition when one has grounds for a legitimate divorce.

3. The Greek term πορνεία (porneia—immorality) refers to various kinds of unsanctioned and unlawful sexual intercourse.
  4. While it encompasses various forms of immorality, in this context it indicates adultery, which is the only bona fide basis for a biblical divorce.
  5. He further goes on to assert that anyone that marries a divorced woman is caused to commit adultery. (Present passive indicative of μοιχάω {moichao})
  6. Since adultery must occur before a divorce is viewed as being biblically legitimate, a divorce granted for any reason other than adultery may very well result in adultery anyway, which effectively provides grounds for divorce.
  7. Although anyone who gets a divorce and remarries under any other circumstances commits adultery, those marriages arising from non-biblical divorces must be regarded as legal and legitimate marriages, even though an act of adultery was committed initially.
- I. Jesus' second teaching on divorce. Matt. 19:3-12
1. The background for this incident is that the Pharisees are seeking to put Jesus on the spot, since they are aware that his public teaching did not agree with the popular viewpoint of that time. Matt. 19:3
  2. They hoped to discredit him before the masses since they were from the School of Hillel, which held to a very liberal interpretation of Deut. 24:1ff.; in fact, Hillel allowed divorce for very trivial offenses, such as burning a meal.
  3. Christ's response to the question emphasizes the permanence of the marriage union, which was instituted by God and governed by the principle of becoming **one flesh**. Matt. 19:4-6
  4. The Pharisees' response indicates confusion between the permissive and directive will of God, which Jesus immediately points out was a concession and not the divine design. Matt. 19:7-8
  5. Therefore when a married person divorces for a non-biblical reason and remarries, the initial sexual act constitutes adultery for the man and his new wife. Matt. 19:9 cf. Matt. 5:32
  6. If either spouse commits adultery (perhaps divorcing the original spouse and remarrying), the innocent party is free to remarry without any sin or stigma.
  7. The disciples respond to Jesus' teaching with some incredulity, which prompts them to make an unbiblical assertion; their suggestion conflicts with the divine intention found in Genesis 2:18. Matt. 19:10
  8. However, Jesus quickly counters with the doctrinal truth that celibacy is the exception and not the norm for the human race. Matt. 19:11-12
- J. Paul's teaching on divorce is commonly referred to as the Pauline privilege. ICor. 7:10-16
1. This passage is the most extensive in the New Testament regarding the issue of marriage, divorce, and potential remarriage.
  2. Paul makes it clear that these instructions are not optional; they are commanded by Jesus Christ and reiterated by Paul. ICor. 7:10
  3. While some have viewed this section as a teaching that amplifies and expands on what Jesus Christ taught, there are no new principles introduced regarding marriage and divorce.
  4. There are two potential occurrences in view, both of which focus on the designed permanency of marriage and the secondary subject of harmony within the household.

5. The first scenario deals with a marriage between two believers, both of which are commanded not to divorce their spouse. ICor. 7:10-11
  - a. The first command is addressed to the wife, which some have interpreted as dealing with the subject of legal separation and not divorce.
  - b. However, the subject of separation is not in view; the Greek verb χωρίζω (chorizo) means to divide or separate something/someone from something/someone else by the use of space.
  - c. When one examines this term, which is the same term Jesus used in His teachings on divorce, it becomes clear that permanent separation (divorce) is in view. Matt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9
  - d. Further, immediate context demands that a divorce has taken place since Paul commands the believing woman to remain unmarried by using the present imperative of μένω (meno—abide, remain, stay). ICor. 7:11
  - e. The same command is issued to the husband, using different terminology; however, both terms in this context indicate that divorce is the subject at hand.
  - f. The Greek verb used with respect to the husband is ἀφίημι (aphiemi), which means to dismiss someone from one's presence, to send someone away.
  - g. In this context, it is clear that the sending away is the legal and permanent release from the marriage bonds.
  - h. Conclusion: if two believers marry, God expects them to remain married for life; however, should they divorce, remarriage is not part of God's directive will. Their only biblical options are to reconcile or remain single.
6. The second scenario involves a believer (either male or female) finding themselves in a marriage to an unbeliever. ICor. 7:12-15
  - a. While Paul does not emphasize the Royal Chain of Command in these verses, it is clear that the apostolic injunction about the marriage relationship is to be obeyed. ICor. 7:12
  - b. While some have speculated that Paul was addressing the subject of believers marrying unbelievers, such is not the case since Paul had already made his position clear on that subject. ICor. 7:40; IICor. 6:14ff
  - c. What he is addressing are homes in which one spouse had become a believer and the other spouse remained an unbeliever.
  - d. While the initial problem may not have been acute or widespread, as time went on, the problem likely continued to become more prevalent and intensified within all churches.
  - e. Paul states decisively that if a believer is married to an unbeliever, and the unbeliever is content to keep living with the believer, then the believer is not free before the Lord to instigate a divorce (apart from adultery, of course).
  - f. Paul is aware that in some cases the unbeliever will not be content to maintain the relationship and will move to divorce the believer. ICor. 7:15
  - g. In that case, the believer is not to seek to maintain the relationship at all costs; he/she is not to resist the unbelieving spouse if the unbeliever seeks a divorce.
  - h. At this point, interpreters are quite divided over exactly what the Pauline privilege is; some state the believer is free before the Lord to remarry, while others state that the injunction respecting adultery must still be honored.

- i. The first view is that the believer is **not bound in regard to marriage**; that is to say that the believer that has been abandoned by an unbeliever is free to remain single or to remarry.
  - 1.) However, this is in conflict with what Christ taught about marriage, and there is no other scripture that supports this interpretation.
  - 2.) The argument for this view is the conceptual parallel with what follows in this chapter, where a wife is said to be **bound** (a different word in Greek, but the same concept) as long as her husband is alive.
  - 3.) However, if the husband dies, she is **free to marry as she wishes, only in the Lord**.
  - 4.) Therefore, if the parallel holds, the use of **not bound** in verse 15 is also interpreted to mean **free to marry another**.
- j. The second, and far more likely interpretation, is that the believer is **not bound to continue the marriage**.
  - 1.) In that case, the teaching is that the believer is not so woodenly tied to the instruction about not divorcing, that he/she refuses to face reality when the unbelieving spouse is unwilling to continue the relationship.
  - 2.) In this view, divorce is allowable under these circumstances; however, the believer is not free to remarry since adultery was not the issue.
  - 3.) This would mean that the previous teaching to other believers still applies to the believer that has been abandoned by an unbeliever.
  - 4.) The believer has the option to remain unmarried or be reconciled, if the unbelieving spouse should have a change of heart.
  - 5.) Obviously, if the unbelieving spouse were to commit adultery or to remarry, the believer would be free before the Lord to pursue a second marriage.
- k. Paul's statement that **God has called us to peace**, is designed to make it plain that when a negative unbeliever so resents living with a believer and leaves, that very action demonstrates that peace in the home is not possible. ICor. 7:15
  - 1. Therefore, the believer is not enslaved to a marriage that has no chance of success; he/she is free to move on with life, and not under bondage to pursue reconciliation.
- K. Given these realities, there are two, and only two, conditions under which one may divorce or remarry without violation of God's directive will.
  - 1. The physical death of one's spouse frees one legally and morally from the marriage vows. Rom.7:2-3; ICor. 7:39
  - 2. When one becomes the innocent party of an adulterous spouse, he/she is free to remarry another believer without spiritual, moral, or legal repercussions. Mat.19:9

## IX. Conclusions.

- A. God has provided marriage for two specific reasons; the first being the joy and fulfillment of men and women within the human race, and the second as the means by which the human race could procreate and populate the planet.
- B. However, the subsequent fall of mankind and the introduction of the genetic sin nature have brought many complications and problems that were not part of the original design of marriage.

- C. This doctrine is designed to instruct those that may be seeking marriage about the biblical way to approach a potential marriage, as well as instructing those already married as to their rights, privileges, and obligations.
- D. While Jesus and Paul both advocated a single lifestyle for some, it should be remembered that celibacy is the exception and not the general rule.
- E. Since divorce is so prevalent in our society, one should be well-versed on the principles contained herein, and diligently seek to apply them in order to avoid potential catastrophe.
- F. Because marriage becomes such an integral part of the believer's life, mistakes in this area may have significant, and long-term consequences.
- G. This does not mean that any believer that has failed within this institution does not have the grace of God to comfort, strengthen, and encourage them in the future.
- H. Because sexual immorality is so dangerous and can have a devastating effect on any marriage, believers are exhorted to maintain sexual purity within the boundaries of marriage. IThess. 4:3-8
  - 1. This is clearly revealed as the will of God. IThess. 4:3
  - 2. It is incumbent upon the husband and wife equally. IThess. 4:4 **each one**
  - 3. One motivating factor within the local church ought to be the knowledge that believers are our brothers and sisters in Christ. IThess. 4:6
  - 4. Another factor ought to be the fear of the Lord, Who is **the avenger in all these things.** IThess. 4:6
- I. Adultery and divorce, like any other violations of God's word, were addressed on the cross and fall under the efficacy of rebound. IJn. 1:9
- J. All marital problems (up to and including adultery) should be addressed with a view to reconciliation; divorce should always be the last resort for any couple.
- K. However, any subsequent, biblical, legal remarriage following divorce is permitted by God and is to be considered valid among believers.
- L. If a divorce does occur within the local church, believers need to exercise caution, seek to avoid meddling, and attempt to remain neutral as much as possible.
  - 1. First, there are always two sides to every story; the problem is that if you get involved, you may only likely get only one of those sides.
  - 2. Rather, consider the doctrine and seek to determine any necessary applications toward one or both of the parties.
  - 3. Always remember that situations such as this can be very divisive in the local church. Heb.12:15

*And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh '? 'Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."*

Matt. 19:4-6