

**"You shall not commit adultery."
(Exodus 20:14, NIV)**

Part II

Biblical Teaching on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

Introduction

Marriage is a precious gift from God. Let us thank Him for it and let each married couple cherish one another and their children.

The divorce rate of the United States is about fifty percent. One wonders how many of the half who stay together really have a healthy marriage? How can couples have a happy, healthy marriage? The answer is found in the Lord's love gift to humanity: the Bible.

Living together, cohabiting or "shacking up" is fornication. It is sin. The couple should ask God for forgiveness, then get married or break up.

Marriage

MARRIAGE IS THE BASIC HUMAN SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

From marriage develops the basic social institution, the *Family*. The entire social order of the nation is strengthened if the family is strengthened or weakened if the family is weakened.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY ARE ORDAINED OF GOD.

They are not human in origin and human beings must not devalue or attempt to destroy them.

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

God made mankind as male and female. The appearance of homosexuality is a deviation, a devolution, a degeneracy of God's intention. Male and female are psychologically and physically compatible, complementary and cohesive. Apart, they are incomplete. Together, they make a whole human social unit.

GOD INTENDED THAT MARRIAGE BE A LIFELONG MONOGAMOUS UNION.

Moses and Jesus taught,

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave [stay joined in love and loyalty] unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Genesis 2:24, KJV

Some Pharisees came to him [Jesus] to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Matthew 19:3-6, NIV

In Matthew 19:5, Jesus quoted Moses teaching in Genesis 2:24. Jesus used a Greek word translated "cleave" in the King James Version and "united" in the New International Version. That word means literally "to be glued to, be closely bound to."

Polygamy did exist in the Old Testament. However, monogamy was taught as the ideal. (Psalm 128:3; Proverbs 5:18; 31:10-29; Ecclesiastes 9:9). Jesus also taught monogamy (Matthew 19:8-9).

MARRIAGE IS BASED ON A COVENANT.

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

Our Creator designed human beings to function in certain ways. He set the standards and we choose unnecessary suffering if we tamper with his design. It is not that God is vindictive. There are natural consequences that follow our choice. If we follow his design, we maximize our success and happiness. Those who think they know more than God about the way human beings are designed, and who attempt to socially engineer a new method, are in big trouble.

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT IS PRIMARILY WITH GOD.

God binds himself to us with a faithful, covenant keeping love. This love is represented by the Hebrew word *hesed*, which corresponds to the Greek New Testament word *agape*. He remains faithful to us even when we are unfaithful.

Solomon describes what an immoral woman does:

17 Who forsakes the husband and guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; 18 For her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the spirits [of the dead]. (Proverbs 2:17-18, The Amplified Bible).

Likewise, Malachi warns the husband to be faithful to God and his wife:

Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD

LORD

made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the LORD

LORD

God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD

LORD

Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

Malachi 2:13-16, NIV

MARRIAGE IS ALSO A SERIOUS COVENANT BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE.

It is very wise to pray for God's direction in this the second most important decision of a person's life. It is also wise to ask for counseling from your minister or someone qualified to do marriage counseling.

Divorce

GOD HATES DIVORCE.

Divorce is treachery and psychological violence against a spouse. Children of broken homes are deeply wounded. They may not develop properly and may become hardhearted.

Jesus stated with urgency and great emphasis the danger of divorce:

"So they [a married couple] are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Matthew 19:6, NIV

God intended that the home would be a little "heaven on earth." Paul writes,

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the LORD. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—30 for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:22-33, NIV

MOSES RESTRICTED DIVORCE.

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

Moses wrote,

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the L

ORD

your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4, NIV

The Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce:

Some Pharisees came to him [Jesus] to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one, Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." "Why

then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied,

"Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Matthew 19:3-9, NIV

Jesus plainly stated that the LORD through Moses only *permitted* hard-hearted people to divorce. (Under the Law, adultery was punishable by death, not divorce.) God through Moses did not *command*

divorce. The term "indecent" referred to some moral or sexual uncleanness other than adultery.

Moses made divorce difficult. If a man divorced his wife, and she remarried, he could not remarry her.

JESUS FORBADE DIVORCE.

Compare Matthew 19:3-9 above it to a similar passage in Mark:

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

Some Pharisees came and tested him [Jesus] by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" "What did Moses command you?" he replied. They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." "It

was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied

'But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Mark 10:2-12, NIV

Under the Mosaic Law, only the husband could divorce his wife. Matthew wrote to Jews and he gives a Jewish point of view. Since Mark wrote to Romans, he included the teaching that a woman who divorces her husband and remarries commits adultery.

PAUL FORBADE CHRISTIAN COUPLES TO DIVORCE.

To the married I give this command (not I, but the LORD): a wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11, NIV

Corinth was noted for its sexual immorality. This influence must have been felt in the church at Corinth. Christian couples were separating and God through Paul commanded them not to divorce and attempt reconciliation.

PAUL FORBADE CHRISTIANS TO DIVORCE ON THE BASIS OF UNBELIEVING SPOUSES.

To the rest I say this (I, not the LORD): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?
1 Corinthians 7:12-16, NIV

JESUS PERMITTED CHRISTIANS TO INITIATE A DIVORCE ON THE BASIS OF CONTINUED FORNICATION.

Jesus did not command Christians to divorce promiscuous partners, but he did allow it:

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."
Matthew 5:31-32, NIV

(See also Matthew 19:9 above.) In both Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, one Greek word, *porneia*, is translated "marital unfaithfulness."

Porneia is habitual sexual immorality of any kind, before or after marriage. It includes adultery.

With STD (sexually transmitted diseases) on the rampage, it is wise, if not necessary, to cease having sex with a promiscuous spouse. A woman is very likely to catch HIV from a bisexual male spouse. "Tough love" dictates that one require a spouse to cease all sexual immorality before sexual relations resume. Separation may be in order. Since HIV may take years to test positive, there should be a program of testing and waiting until the wayward partner is shown to be safe. The sad fact is that an infected spouse can transmit HIV within two months of being infected, before the HIV antibody is present in the blood! However, divorce should be a last resort.

Remarriage

UNDER BOTH THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS, PERSONS WERE PERMITTED TO REMARRY AFTER THE DEATH OF A SPOUSE.

Paul teaches,

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he live? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

Romans 7:1-3, NIV

Some extreme legalists believe that the Bible teaches that it is a sin to divorce and remarry, or to marry a divorced person. Further, they believe that the only way to rectify such a marriage is to divorce again, since they are "living in adultery." They teach that divorcees must remarry their original spouses or remain single. They teach that married people can never remarry until the death of the former spouse.

If a divorced person remarries and then finds Christ, he should ask God to forgive him and not leave the marriage. The second marriage is a contract with God and one another. It is also a legal contract.

Here is an example of contorted logic and evil thinking: a minister planned the murder of his wife so that he could remarry! He wrongly assumed that he could be forgiven by God, not be caught by law enforcement, and he would then have the woman whom he coveted. By breaking the tenth commandment (covetousness), he broke both the sixth commandment (murder) and the seventh commandment (adultery) in his heart.

PAUL ADDS A CONDITION OF REMARRIAGE FOR THE SURVIVING SPOUSE WHO IS A BELIEVER.

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the LORD. In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 7:39-40, NIV

When Paul wrote this passage, Christians were under persecution. Also, since these women were generally older, and had gone through the stress of caring for their first husbands, it would be wise not to remarry. The stress of caring for another sick husband and the added grief of losing another husband would be too much of a burden.

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

Please note that Paul also requires that Christians marry only Christians, initially and in any later marriage.

UNDER THE MOSAIC LAW, DIVORCED PERSONS WERE PERMITTED TO REMARRY.

This message is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 quoted above.

MALACHI SAYS THAT MARRIAGE TO AN UNBELIEVER IS FORBIDDEN.

Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the L

ORD

cut him off from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings offerings to the L

ORD

Almighty.

Malachi 2:11-12, NIV

Ezra gives the reason for not marrying an unbeliever:

After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness."

Ezra 9:1-2, NIV

The heathen people whom Israelites married were idolaters. They were violent people. Their religious practices included infant sacrifice and temple prostitution. STD was probably epidemic.

GOD DID NOT ALLOW PRIESTS TO MARRY DIVORCED PERSONS.

Moses taught,

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

"They [priests] must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God."

Leviticus 21:7, NIV

JESUS FORBADE THE REMARRIAGE OF DIVORCED PERSONS.

Jesus presents remarriage as an act of adultery. (See Mark 10:11-12, Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 above). Luke quotes Jesus,

"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

Luke 17:18, NIV

The basic intent of Jesus was to *prevent* divorce and the resultant suffering of children and parents.

JESUS PERMITTED DIVORCE FOR CONTINUED SEXUAL IMMORALITY.

However, he did not *command* divorce:

". . .whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication [habitual sexual immorality] _____ causeth her to commit adultery. . . ."

Matthew 5:32, KJV

"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness [habitual sexual immorality] _____, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Matthew 19:9, NIV

Note also that a sexually immoral woman had already committed adultery. Strongly implied is Jesus' permission to divorce her [or him] only in the case of habitual sexual immorality. Taking into account Jesus' other teachings, one should attempt to save the marriage through repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Jesus did not *command* remarriage. Jesus assumed that divorced people would remarry—that is the normal state of adult human beings. Strongly implied is Jesus' permission to remarry only in the case of habitual sexual immorality.

PAUL, UNDER THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, PERMITTED REMARRIAGE IF AN UNBELIEVING SPOUSE LEFT THE MARRIAGE.

But if the unbeliever leaves [the marriage], let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

1 Corinthians 7:15-16, NIV

Paul taught that a believing spouse should stay with an unbelieving spouse who is willing to stay married. Then, he taught that if an unbelieving spouse left, the believer was not bound to try to keep the marriage intact. However, Paul taught that if possible, the believer should attempt to keep the marriage going in order to attempt the salvation of the unbelieving spouse.

"Is not bound" is a strong expression meaning that the believer is free to let the unbelieving spouse initiate a divorce. Strongly implied is that the believing spouse is set free to remarry.

REMARRIAGE IS A NEW CONTRACT AND COVENANT.

It is a new covenant spiritually, and a new contract legally. Moses taught that the new covenant of remarriage should be kept, and that the divorced person could not break the new covenant and remarry the first spouse. (See Deuteronomy 24:1-4 above.)

Paul teaches that believing spouses should try separation first, instead of divorce. This leaves the door open for reconciliation. However, if they divorce, then the old marriage contract is broken.

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

Some see a parallel between stealing and the remarriage of divorcees. They see the remarriage as a continuing state of adultery. It can be forgiven, but the couple must divorce in order to repent of the sin of adultery. However, marriage involves a contract. Stealing must be repented of by stopping stealing. It is not like marriage—there is no contract involved.

If there are children involved in the second marriage, then a second divorce would really complicate matters. It would break up a home and cause the unnecessary suffering of parents and children.

In the Old Testament, God expected contracts to be kept even when they were entered into wrongly. When Joshua wrongly entered into a contract with the Gibeonites, God not only held Joshua to his promise to the Gibeonites, God performed the miracles of a hailstorm and a long day to help Joshua keep his word (Joshua 9-10). God through Isaiah warned King Ahaz against making a covenant with the Assyrians, but he entered a covenant with them anyway (Isaiah 7). Later, God warned King Hezekiah against breaking the covenant that Ahaz had made.

(Much of the previous material is based on the Bible study sponsored by the General Council of the Assemblies of God, entitled, "Divorce and Remarriage" (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1973.)

Conclusion

It is of utmost importance to keep this commandment. It is important for several reasons: (1) God commanded us not to commit adultery. (2) Adultery fractures the family, the basic unit of society. (3) Children are wounded. (4) Adultery can result in murder by an angry spouse. (5) If divorce results, spouses go through grief stages similar to death. (6) Adultery is a moral breakdown, which can lead to further internal moral disintegration of the guilty individual. (7) Adultery can result in STD. There is no such thing as "safe sex."

Positively, (8) Keeping this commandment helps in our relationship with our Creator. (9) Keeping this commandment strengthens the individuals who overcome the temptation, which, in turn, strengthens the marriage. (10) Keeping this commandment makes parents good role models for their children. (11) Keeping this commandment aids in providing a secure, disciplined, loving atmosphere that children need for good spiritual, moral, social, emotional, mental and physical development. (12) Keeping this commandment aids in the proper psycho-sexual identification and development of children. (13) Keeping this commandment brings the greatest amount of sexual fulfillment. Studies show that married people have the

The Seventh Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Monday, 18 January 2016 01:07

greatest amount of sexual fulfillment.

"The Seventh Commandment," from my ebook, *The Ten Commandments*. Download this book free at <http://www.BusterSoft.com/JRCM>

©John E. Russell 1993, 2016

In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things: Charity—Peter Meiderlin
1626.

You have permission to copy, email or print *unedited* Power Articles.