

Questions About Marriage

More and more the disdain for marriage is being felt as society holds little or no regard for this divinely ordained institution. Its beautiful beginnings started in the mind of God and unfolded in the Garden of Eden close to 6,000 years ago.

Although today something may be called “*marriage*” does not prove that it is what God had in His eternal mind. Herod was considered “*legally*” married to Herodias, yet John the Baptist correctly pointed out that it was **NOT** a God approved marriage because Herodias was another man’s wife (Matthew 14:3-4). Even Solomon sinned against God when he married **MANY** wives, despite the fact they may have been legal (1 Kings 11:1-3; Nehemiah 13:26). Today our society recognizes various unions as “*marriage*” even though God does not. Most States have what they call “*Common Law*” marriages, where a man and woman who have shackled-up for a certain period of time are automatically considered to be married. Then there are States who are “*legally*” marrying individuals of the same sex and then labeling their State sanctioned contract as a “*marriage!*” What about States that allow divorce for any reason whatsoever? Thus giving both parties the opportunity to divorce and remarry as many times as they wish. The point being that not one of these “*marriages*” is acceptable in the eyes of God, no matter how “*legal*” they may be!

So what is marriage? It is a divinely ordained institution between one man and one woman for the purpose of: (1) Preventing fornication, (2) Multiplying the species, (3) Providing companionship, (4) Helping humanity understand relationships and to help mold individuals for a better society. Divinely acceptable marriage is a permanent, monogamous, heterosexual relationship that requires three to make it work --God, husband and wife.

There are only three classes of people that God authorizes to marry or remarry. (a) A man and woman who have never been married before, (b) A man or woman whose spouse of the opposite sex has died (Romans 7:1-4; 1 Corinthians 7:39), (c) A

man or woman whose spouse of the opposite sex was unfaithful because of fornication (Matthew 19:9).

The Excellence of Godly Marriage

With one out of every five marriages ending in divorce in our nation alone, there is no doubt that we need a change in our moral philosophy. God says, “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Proverbs 14:34). Divorce is most definitely a sin that our nation and every family can and should learn to live without. Our nation is made up of individuals who constitute our society, our homes and families and the church. Whatever touches the righteousness or unrighteousness of the individual eventually touches the home, our local communities, the church and the nation as a whole. Divorce and remarriage therefore tears asunder the very fabric of any nation from top to bottom. Only the excellence of true, godly marriage can restore the moral fabric and righteousness of society.

The excellence of God approved marriage is the backbone to any great and successful society. Husbands and wives, who love one another as God intended, become the happiest of homes in which earth’s future citizens are to be raised. Homes filled with booze, drugs, gambling, and filthy language and without God become a breeding ground for Satan’s world. A world without morals is a world that is unproductive, neglectful, selfish and unloving. Godly marriages however provide an atmosphere free of physical and verbal abuse, and where emotional scars are unheard of. A marriage patterned after God’s will, finds the husband loving his wife as Christ loved His church (Ephesians 5:25), the wife taking care of her family (Proverbs 31:10-31) and the children obeying and respecting their parents (Ephesians 6:1).

The contributing factor for most divorces today is not what you might think – it is selfishness and immaturity. While most have matured physically, it is the emotional and mental immaturity of most adults that cause divorce. Most unhappy marriages result from the man, the woman or both bringing into the marriage their selfish and childish behavior.

Always having to have things their way and never seeing their own faults; but only the faults of their spouse and others. Such are individuals who are totally wrapped up in self, never seeming to care about the needs of others. The immature are never grateful for the blessings they have been granted, they have no sense of obligation or responsibility and they never seem to finish anything they start. Immature individuals are unable to confront and work through life’s problems. But instead will react by kicking and screaming, running home to mama or divorce court.

Great godly marriages that last as God intended are founded upon love. Yes there needs to be the type of love that attracts us to one another and that shows itself physically, but the type of love that endures is what most marriages are lacking. God is the source of love, as well as the perfect model for what love should be. “*God so loved the world that He GAVE His only begotten Son...*” (John 3:16). In order for our marriage to be excellent, both husband and wife must possess this same degree of love that God had for the world – a giving love. Agape love is the highest form of love known to exist in the world. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 describes what this type of love will do, and how it will react, “*Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends....*” (RSV)

When God-like love dwells within our hearts, we will seek the best possible life for those whom God has put into our care. Our love will move us to make sure that there are as few bumps on the “*marriage*” road as possible. When loved ones become ill, we will take care of them and not leave that responsibility to others. We will not be selfish, immature, hateful, abusive, etc. True godly love means that a couple will sit down together and work their problems out in order to save their union. It means that they will communicate at all times, so that there are no surprises that could cause

discontentment. Let’s keep in mind the vows we took the day we were married.

To love, honor & cherish/obey: Most couples tend to forget their vows hours after they have stated them before witnesses. The wife vowing to love, honor and obey her husband (Ephesians 5:24). Yet how many wives today think they must obey her husband, or even to honor them? The same can be said of husbands who vowed to love, honor and cherish their wives. Both Husbands and wives need to read and consider 1 Peter 3:17 and Proverbs 31:10-31.

Til death do us part: God does not allow “*til we can’t get along or fall out of love do we part.*” Only by natural death is the marriage contract broken. The vow ‘*til death do us part*’ is a serious matter with God, and should be with us as well. This joining together by God is a permanent commitment that no man – neither spouse nor the government can dissolve: “*What God has joined together let NO MAN put asunder* (separate)” (Matthew 19:6).

Cleaving together as one flesh: Jesus said, “*A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh..*” (Matthew 19:5-6). Unity is a clear Bible teaching concerning the church, religious doctrine and marriage. Paul used the unity of Christ and His church as an illustration of how a husband and wife are to cleave to one another. As the woman is to submit herself to her husband as she would to the Lord, so the Husband is to love his wife as Christ loved His church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:23-33). How many marriages today truly demonstrate this type of unity? Most couples have separate lives, cars, jobs, friends, vacations, etc. Being ‘*one*’ is essential for a great marriage. It is those couples who will not cleave to one another that end up looking for companionship elsewhere, or a divorce lawyer.

Marriage must be considered a most serious and sacred institution that is acceptable to God and looked upon for the entire life of both involved. Only with God in our lives can our marriage be what it should be – excellent.

What about Divorce & Remarriage

The home and family have been under attack for several decades now. Divorce has increased in our nation over 800 percent since the Civil War. The marriage vows of “*til death do we part*” have become a sham and a mockery. Most people today seek not God’s will for their lives, but instead turn to men who will sanction the sin they have decided to practice. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16)! Our so-called “*Christian*” nation has rebelled against God’s law by making divorce available to anyone for any cause.

It is true that God allowed the Israelites in the Old Testament to give a bill of divorcement for any reason (Deuteronomy 24:1). But that law was given only to the Hebrew people under the Law of Moses, which is no longer binding on men living today (Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14). God now commands all men and women everywhere to marry for life. In Matthew 19:3-9 Jesus was confronted with the question of marriage, divorce and remarriage. The Jews ask Jesus if it was legal to put away (divorce) their wives for any reason. Jesus answers them with the history of marriage, stating that it has always been God’s plan for one man and woman to be married for life (vs. 4-6). The Jews then ask Jesus why Moses commanded them to divorce their wives (vs. 7). The answer - because they would have done it anyway having hardened their hearts, so God allowed it under the Old Covenant (vs. 8). However, it has always been God’s will that there be only **ONE** reason for divorce, that being fornication (vs. 9).

It is here that God gives commands concerning the marriage union. A man or woman may with God’s blessing, terminate their marriage if their spouse has committed fornication (any sexual sin). The innocent party is not required to divorce their spouse, but can if they so choose. Should the innocent party put away their unfaithful spouse, he or she is then free to marry another and still be pleasing to God. The guilty party however, is not

free to remarry, and must remain celibate for the rest of his or her life.

It should also be remembered that although the Lord allows the innocent party the right to divorce their husband or wife because of fornication, no one has the right to push their mate into an immoral situation. God requires both husband and wife to be sexually faithful to one another, which includes not making excuses for not having sex (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). God will not recognize an innocent party who withholds sex from their partner, hoping they will commit fornication so that they will then be free to marry another. There are many different ways that men and women can be just as guilty as the one who commits sexual immorality, but they will not be free to marry another.

What About the Guilty Party?

The term “*guilty party*” is of course not specifically found in the Bible, but it is implied. When we say “*guilty party*” we are referring to the individual (man or woman) who is guilty of fornication – having unlawful sexual intercourse. Jesus said that the only exception allowed for divorce is sexual unfaithfulness (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Because God’s law for marriage is one man and one woman for life, and the two are to be one flesh as long as they both shall live, the right to marry or remarry can only come from God. In 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 the apostle Paul gives commandment concerning marriage, saying that a wife who leaves her husband has no right to marry another. Therefore, the issue before us is not whether the marriage bond is broken, or whether a man and his wife are free from each other. The issue is whether or not God grants the “*guilty party*” the right to marry another.

The commitment of immorality is a crime of enormous consequence that unfortunately the world is willing to overlook and tolerate, while God is not. The consequences of fornication sentence the guilty party to a life of celibacy. Although the Bible teaches that a person can repent and be forgiven of any sin he commits, neither repentance nor baptism allows anyone to continue living in a sinful

situation. The “*guilty party*” will always be committing fornication when he or she is involved with someone other than their first spouse. The same is true of a murderer, or thief, or homosexual. They can repent and be forgiven as long as they remain uninvolved in sin. The best way to avoid the penalty involved with unfaithfulness is to keep the vow you made before God and witnesses, and to be totally committed to your spouse as long as you both shall live. Only when men and women grasp the seriousness of marriage will the divorce problem begin to fade.

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By Michael S. Demory