

MARRIAGE



AND DIVORCE

In and Out of the Church

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“. . .That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

INTRODUCTION

Let me first give honor and acknowledgement to a worthy and noted writer, Brother Witherspoon for the majority contents of this booklet, addressing one of the most sensitive relationships that is divinely structured and ordained by only God to mankind: marriage of man and woman. As the current presiding officer of the Pentecost Church of Jesus Christ, Inc., International, by the will of God, I fully agree with the content of this booklet and feel honored to share in the furtherance of the referenced subject of Marriage and Divorce.

This printing is not intended to diminish any part of the subject matter, but it attempts to expand and reflect upon male and female relationships that we are confronted with today. While the gross immoral and depraved acts of today's society is growing with intensity, we feel we have an obligation to "cry aloud and spare not" against the sins of this generation.

The sanctity of marriage as set forth in the scriptures, seems but a thing of the past, with fewer marriages by God's order and report of an ever increasing divorce rate above 50% in America. Apostle Paul strictly addressed the time when men would change the truth of God into a lie. As it is written in the book of **Romans 1:21-32**, "God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly. . ." It behooves true believers who have received an infilling of the Holy Ghost to not be deceived by false churches, preachers and teachers prevalent in the world today.

The effeminate issue is also addressed by Apostle Paul in **I Corinthians. 6:9-20**. "All unrighteousness is sin" (**I John 5:17**). "Be not deceived, God is not mock: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (**Galatians. 6:7**). Also read **Leviticus 18:22, 20:1; Romans 1:27; & I Kings 15:12**.

PREFACE

This booklet is the first one of a series of New Testament Church Order Booklets, which the writer has been moved upon to send forth. Please note that we say “New Testament” Church, having reference to those who are sealed with the Holy Ghost, as we believe the epistles were all written to those having this experience, who are the true church, and are, therefore, under obligation to obey the New Testament Church rules.

With all that can be rightly said concerning the saints being the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost, etc., it must be remembered that the church as a collective body was scripturally organized during the days of the Apostles. The form and order of such organization was clearly set forth in the scriptures, especially in Paul’s letters to Timothy. But not only is disorder harmful to the work of God, but differences of opinion and teaching has of-times kept the minds of the saints confused and divided. We are commanded “*to speak the same things,*” but how far we are from it! This is largely due to the fact that we have “conventions,” where the times is taken up with passing laws, etc., rather than Bible conferences, where our points of difference are settled by the word of God.

No subject has perhaps caused more anguish and division than the question of “Marriage and Divorce.” Much has been written on the subject, and the writer can do nothing less than give what he believes to be the Bible point of view.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

In and Out of the Church

What Saith the Scriptures?

We realize that this is a *delicate subject*, and one that must be handled with care and in the fear of the Lord. It has to do with *family life, broken up homes* and *heart's affections*. There is no doubt that the intent and purpose of God was that marriage should be dissolved *only by death*. The questions are: Does God permits its' dissolution; and if so, on what grounds? Furthermore, in case it has been dissolved contrary to the Word of God, what steps can Scripturally be taken by the offender that he may be restored to fellowship with God. It must now be noticed that God not only instituted the union of one man with one woman in the bond that we call marriage, but that *He also was the first one to authorize the giving of a divorce*. See **Deuteronomy 24:1**. And as marriage was to be binding, so, also, *divorce could not be retracted*. In **Deuteronomy 24**, the man who had given his wife a divorce, because he found some manner of uncleanness in her, was not permitted to take her back after she had become the wife of a second man. With all our prejudice against divorce, we must admit that it was here used by God because the hearts of the husband and wife were too hard to bear with one another. As the world has grown more and more wicked, who can say that God's curse rests upon the thing that He, Himself, instituted? *The curse is upon the thing that causes divorce*. This is clearly indicated by His strong rebuke of Judah and Jerusalem in **Malachi 2:14, 15** where he accuses them of dealing treacherously *with the wife of their youth*.

OLD TESTAMENT

We are dealing now with the question “**under the law**” or we should more correctly say—**not under grace**. Basically, judgment begins at the house of God, and the divorce of one who has been baptized in Jesus Name and sealed with the Holy Ghost must be treated different from those cases which occur outside the body of Christ. This is prefigured in the occurrence in **Genesis 34**, where an Israelite maiden, Dinah, had committed sin with Hamor, the Hivite. Her marriage with this uncircumcised man would be strictly contrary to God's command. However, the young man offered to be circumcised, together with all of the men of his village. This was agreed to by Jacob, who evidently considered that

circumcision would make them one with the Israelites. You will remember that Simeon and Levi, sons of Jacob, were so enraged over what had happened that they went to the village and killed all of the men after they had been circumcised. Jacob mourned this breach of trust to his dying day, and his final word to Simeon and Levi was a strong rebuke for their cruelty. The point is that after the young man was circumcised, his status was changed.

In favor of putting away companions that were married in a sinful or backslidden state, some use **Ezra 10** and Nehemiah 13, as an instance of putting away “strange” wives. Please notice, however, that in each case, it was strange wives, and not husbands. Wives could not be circumcised. Under grace, all (both men and women) can receive circumcision of heart.

NEW TESTAMENT

We now come to Jesus’ teaching, and treatment of divorce in the New Testament church. In **Matthew 5:31, 32**, Jesus clearly states that if a man puts away his wife, *saving for the cause of fornication*, he causes her to commit adultery. Here Jesus leaves *no room for divorce in His church, for “hardness of heart,” incompatibility, non-support, etc., etc.* As a matter of fact, in allowing divorce for fornication, *Jesus makes no provision for the dissolution of the marriage tie. The one who commits fornication has by his act dissolved that union.* Man and wife are to be one flesh, and when either one commits illicit intercourse, there is nothing remaining of the union but the legal tie. *The marriage relation makes them one flesh*, and when either has committed fornication, they have broken that unity, and have become “one” with the one with whom they sinned. See **I Corinthians 6:16**.

Do not think that we are holding the legal phase of this union lightly. As a matter of fact, *marriage is an earthly institution* for the purpose of proper regulation of society in the matter of happy homes, legitimate children, etc. Therefore, *there is no such thing as spiritual marriage* (except with Christ), “true marriages made in heaven,” etc. Being an earthly institution for the regulation of society, a marriage is legal or illegal, according to the laws of the land in which the marriage takes place. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder” could not mean anything more than legal and scriptural marriage. Too many try to find a loop-hole out of their trials by saying that they were not

“joined by God.” *If you are legally married, you are married under contract which God honors, however unwise your choice might have been.* You do not tamper with the law of the land and advise people to after they are legally married. As a pastor, I have found that a whole lot of questions relative to the scripturalness of marriage are asked by folks wanting to get out of a bad bargain.

May we say right here, that one common error in the teaching of the marriage and divorce question, is the *definition of fornication and adultery*. We have been taught that fornication is the act of a single person, and adultery the act of one who was already married. This could not possibly be, as a man could not put away his wife for fornication if this definition is correct. Neither would this definition stand the test of Acts 15:20, Romans 1:29, I Corinthians 6:13, I Corinthians 7:2, I Thessalonians 4:3, etc. In all of these scriptures, fornication is mentioned, and could not possibly mean only single persons. A careful study of the scriptures convinces us that fornication is the actual physical contact; and adultery is the spiritual and moral contamination of the act. *“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already **in his heart**.”* In this case, the desire has entered the heart through the eyes, and the one doing this feels the contamination and guilt, although no act of fornication has been committed. Legitimate and scriptural divorce, as a matter of fact, could not be given on the grounds of “adultery” only. No woman could get a divorce from her husband simply because he looked upon another woman, and admitted he had a desire for her. The actual act must be proven. In support of this, read **John 8:3-4** where you will note that the accusers of the sinful woman told Jesus that she was taken in adultery—**in the very act**. It was necessary for them to add *“the very act”* because they knew his definition of adultery included *lust in the heart*, for which she could not be stoned. Therefore, they had to make a specific charge.

Many writers on this subject seem to be content with laying down hard and fast rules, and disregarding the condition of a great many people in the Pentecost movement who are unscripturally and unfortunately entangled, and need help. We know precious sisters who are married to lazy, and sometimes brutal husbands, who will not support them. In some cases it cannot be proved that they are guilty of fornication, and it might seem that these sisters are doomed to a life worse than death. But we believe that God has arranged for every honest heart to be at their best for Him; and so Paul says in **I Corinthians 7:10, 11**—*“Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled (return) to her husband.”* Here is a case of a woman living in unbearable conditions with no case of fornication against her husband.

She is left to weigh the matter carefully as to whether she can live alone, and perhaps support her children, and be freer to serve God than to continue to live with such a husband, and bring forth more children, perhaps for society to take care of. If she desires married life, however, more than freedom, she must go back to her husband.

The fact that a child of God is joined to an unbeliever is no grounds whatever for a divorce. Paul plainly states that they are to be allowed to remain, and that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her husband, “else were your children unclean.” This does not mean that the unbelieving companion is cleansed from sin, but simply means that their marriage relations are sanctified, so that the children (up to the age of accountability) are under the sanctified parent, and not under the curse of the unsanctified one. Remember, this is a case where the father or mother was saved after the marriage, and not a case where a saint married a sinner.

Summing up all New Testament scriptures concerning divorce, we can find *no grounds except fornication, for dissolving the marriage tie between a man and wife who both have the Holy Ghost.* Also, we wish to state that *divorce on the grounds of fornication is a privilege and not a command.* A fallen companion may have been overtaken in a time of weakness, or under stress of unusual circumstances. If the wronged companion feels that the repentance is genuine, and that there is a chance for reformation or salvation, it would certainly be the Christ-like thing to forgive, especially where children are involved. But if a companion seems bent on a life of illicit relations, it would be foolish and dangerous to continue to live with him.

We have still many more complicated cases in the matter of those who have been saved and have fallen away from God and divorced their companion, and in some cases remarried; or who have been saved and gone out and married sinners. Here, it must be remembered, “*for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*” In many cases, the birthright has been sold, the whole status of the life has been changed, their reproach will never be removed, their testimony has been broken, and God knows that however kind or considerate we may be to them, they will have an awful load to carry. I am speaking now of those who return humble, broken, penitent, and fully realizing their sin, and are willing to do anything to get back in favor of God and the fellowship of the saints. You can’t dissolve the marriage; that would be tampering with the law. The chances are they never can hold the honorable positions in the church they could otherwise had have. However, in such cases, let us desire God’s mercy and favor rather than His wrath. I am

certainly not speaking on behalf of those who commit such deeds and treat the matter lightly, and denied fellowship until they give evidence of real Holy Ghost conviction.

Then comes the question of a saint remarrying after they have obtained a divorce on scriptural grounds. Who is there who has any right to order a normal man or woman of youth or middle age to live their life without a companion. Some preachers lay down rules that they themselves could not follow. When the unbelieving departs (and presumably gets a divorce), a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. Who then could say that a brother or sister, whose former companion was untrue and dissolved the marriage union, must remain single?

One reason why there is so much confusion over the marriage and divorce question is because that it is impossible to lay down any general rules that will fit each individual case. We do not mean that the Bible is indefinite or inadequate on the subject, but we do mean that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and in many cases, takes advantage and follows out instructions in the letter but not in the spirit. To illustrate, we once knew a brother whose wife was very much opposed to religion. He suffered her opposition for many years and she finally left him and got a divorce. He later married a sister in the Lord. According to the letter, he seems to be clear; but as a matter of fact, I fear eternal lost. The fact of the case that he treated his former wife with such a "holier than thou" attitude and with such coldness, that she naturally had no confidence in him and hated his religion. It proved afterward, also, that he had had his eyes on the woman he had afterward married long before his wife left him, so that sin and hypocrisy were at the bottom of the case, which on the surface looked clear enough. There are doubtless many such cases. Only God knows the heart of man, and each one will have to answer to Him for the steps they take. Paul says' "*if the unbelieving (companion) depart.*" He does not say "*if the believer **departs** them by unchristian conduct.*" We know of a number of cases where men of God have fallen, left their saved companions, their children, and gone out into a life of sin, disgracing themselves, and bringing great reproach on the way. On the face of it, it just seems there could be nothing good said of such offenders. Their deserted wives receive much sympathy, and all the blame is put on the husband. Certainly, such a husband will have an awful account to settle before God and man, but I have found a number of cases, that preceding their fall, they were tortured day and night by a whining, complaining, jealous wife, who drove them a distraction and into the arms of someone who seemed so much better. Only God can rightly sum up all cases and give final judgment.

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL AND HAPPY MARRIAGE

Marriage is as old as the family of man. It was instituted by Jehovah God in the Garden of Eden. Rightly regarded, marriage is the highest and happiest of human relationships, the preserver of true love, and the foundation of the home.

The key attributes to sustain and maintain a good marriage and home marriage are: **love, prayer, respect, faithfulness, trust, and due benevolence.**

As we are instructed in the word of God, “wives submit yourselves unto your own husband as unto the Lord. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it” (**Ephesians 5:22-28**).

Utmost importance is that your belief and faith in God are the same, because a house divided against itself shall not stand. You are hereby admonished to stay true to God, and He will bless your whole marriage always.

In conclusion, let us go carefully, faithfully, warning our people against pitfalls, but using wisdom and love in the cases of those who have already fallen. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”—married or single.