

Text of: DIVORCE & EQUALITY
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Dedication

To my wife, for her support, wisdom and patience, during my years of researching the material for this book.

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Introduction

The Divorce Dilemma

Have we misinterpreted the Bible in regard to divorce and remarriage? Do divorced individuals, as well as the church itself, have erroneous views about what the Bible says concerning divorce and remarriage?

I offer this material especially for the healing of individuals who have gone through or are going through the trauma of divorce.

For too long a time, countless numbers of people have languished over being divorced, yet their dilemma has been generally ignored, especially by those considered best able to interpret the Bible. Past traditions have been insensitive toward those divorced; remarriage was yet a greater sin. Tradition is certainly not truth. Hopefully, our traditional attitudes can be challenged and conceivably revised along the way. Divorce is with us. The reality of it is not going to go away merely because it meets with disapproval. Even large numbers of the religious elite who in the past stood firm for permanent marriage have succumbed to divorce.

For centuries the acts of divorce or remarriage have produced much controversy. Many interpretations of this subject, and what the Bible has to say about it, have been discussed in the past. No clear resolution has settled the controversy which has raged for the past two thousand years.

A sensible understanding of the Bible's intention is imperative because present interpretations have left us with an apparent series of contradictions between God, Moses, Jesus, and Paul. I recognize that no one book is going to put an end to the controversy; in fact, it may even produce more controversy among certain individuals who will take exception to my views. Nevertheless, I present these views in all sincerity and good conscience, hoping primarily to help and heal where possible.

Chapter One

Success or Failure: Godly or Ungodly?

A particular word has become almost synonymous with divorce. The word is failure. Two persons unable to maintain their marriage are termed failures, or a person will hear the term "marital failure." The word failure may not be verbally expressed to divorced individuals, but the implication is strong in subtle and painful ways. Moreover, it is known that many divorced individuals use that word to describe themselves as they think about their contribution to the marriage failure. These are individuals who are emotionally scarred: people who are often filled with regret, blaming themselves that they did not do more to assure the success of their marriage relationship. I have met many of these people, broken in spirit and weary of life itself.

It's unfortunate that in today's society nearly everything falls under the heading of success or failure. For example, to be married is thought of as the successful alternative to being single; if a person remains single and does not marry, that person is thought of as failing to be married. Many persons, having preferred being single, have been asked, "Why aren't you married?", as though something is wrong with their preferring to remain single. Traditional thinking considers the institution of marriage to be a sort of cure all, in other words; it will cure all the problems of being single. We may be seeing individuals in many failed marriages who should never have married in the first place. Often, they are people who didn't want to be thought of as failures because they weren't married, so they got married but never adjusted well to the married life style.

I find myself asking why unhappily married couples are considered successful if they choose not to divorce. On the other hand, if an unhappy couple does divorce, they are considered failures. Consequently, divorce is not thought to be a reasonable alternative to an unhappy marriage. Also, if a divorced person remarries, that person might be thought of as failing at being divorced. In many cases, the stigma of remarriage is far worse than the problems the person encountered with divorce. Actually, what society has done to divorced and/or remarried people has been to attach labels that are not far removed from those fictionalized by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his masterpiece of American literature *The Scarlet Letter*.

Likewise, as marriage is equated with success, divorce is equated with failure, unfortunately. Many unhappy couples might prefer divorce if they would not be thought of as sinful failures. The Christian world, for instance, has decided that marriage is right; divorce is wrong. Traditionally, the thought has been that all marriage problems are cured if a couple is willing, whatever the cost, to remain married. The recommendation assumes that

God will bless such a noble effort. Most religions have determined that marriage is of God; divorce is never allowed by God, as though the most important thing is to keep the rules. I am reminded of the phone call received by one woman on the eve of her divorce a call from a highly respected, well known person in the Christian world. He urged her not to divorce and to "really work" at holding her marriage together. He assured her by saying, "Think of the book you could write after that!"¹ The caller had underlined in her thinking, deliberately, the idea that God would bless her efforts. Also implied was the idea that perhaps she hadn't really worked hard enough to make the marriage successful. Of course, little, if any, consideration had been given to the fact that the couple had invested 23 years of their lives in working to achieve marital compatibility. The woman recognized that her caller's intentions were well directed, but his statements, however well intended, did not erase the toll that had already been taken on the happiness and well being of herself and her four children as they struggled through day after day of marital misery. The divorce was secured but not without its subsequent cost to all involved, especially for the woman who instigated the divorce proceedings. At times she felt as if the scarlet letter had been emblazoned across her forehead and sewed on the back of her clothes.

This kind of traditional thinking which heaps guilt particularly on the one who asks for a divorce sounds inconsistent with the Bible's message of love for the whole world.

A Look at History

During the Victorian Age of the 1800s, far less divorce occurred than today. But what was thought of at that time as the ideal marriage was not necessarily the case. The women, generally speaking, were pure and faithful. Mothers trained their daughters to be morally correct and to live and act above any possible gossip or scandal. The women were discreetly proper. (One can't help but wonder if, at times, they didn't resent the restrictions placed upon them by the traditions of their day.)

But not so with the men! Many of the men took advantage of the high morals of their wives and society's rules. Knowing that their wives were at home faithfully performing their wifely duties, the men seized opportunities to engage in affairs with other women. The men had, from their own point of view, the best of two worlds. While the women were locked into the marriage, the men, conveniently for them, were relegated to one marriage but not, essentially, to one woman. Commitment to their wives, for many men, was not a phrase common to their vocabulary. Though less divorce occurred in those days, marital conditions were hardly ideal.

History records the predicament which women faced during the days of the pioneers. Many wives, unable to cope with the rigors of homesteading, had only two options open to them but neither option was divorce. Their options were either plead insanity or commit suicide. Of course, their third option was stick with the marriage, come what may, do a lot of praying, and devote one's self to the children. These options, it seems to me, are still the only recourses left to many women.

In Colonial days, some Indians joined the whites, but some whites also joined the Indians. What students don't learn in school is the claim of many historians that numerous white women, desperate to escape their demanding Puritan husbands, ran off to the Indians because they found no other escape. There they mated and melted into the tribes as best they could. They outnumbered considerably the Indian women who teamed up with the whites. The despair of Puritan women was so serious that the colonies exacted laws in 1660 designed to penalize husbands and children of wives who committed suicide.

Scriptural Grounds: "...except it be for fornication"

I recall one young woman who came for marriage counseling. She spoke with tear filled eyes. She was the picture of despair as she shared with me how her husband abused her, both mentally and sexually. He would accuse her of preferring other men, and on several occasions he threatened to kill her. She desperately needed help. She sincerely had worked at their marriage and wanted to stay with him, but more and more she was becoming terribly afraid of him. Finally, toward the end of our session, she asked in a trembling voice, "Would God think it alright if I divorced my husband?"

When I heard her question concerning God's attitude toward her, my thoughts went immediately to the phrase in Matthew 19:9: "except it be for fornication." At that time, because I felt my purpose as a Christian marriage counselor was to help hold a marriage together, I found it convenient to answer: "You can't divorce your husband unless you have scriptural grounds." What I meant, of course, was that divorce was not her option as a Christian unless she could prove that her husband was having an affair.

My Own Insensitivity

Without question, I placed the principle of no divorce above the person. In effect, what I was saying was that she would just have to continue to suffer through an impossible marriage situation even though her very life was at risk. I didn't realize what a hardship I was imposing on her; I took it for granted that God not only permitted but sanctioned my own insensitivity to the needs and feelings of another human being. I admit it mattered little to me the amount of devastation that religion inflicted on another person in the name of God. I am relieved to add that she did divorce her husband, later met and remarried a fine young man who has been good to her and her children. By the way, what about her former husband? He returned to his parent's home. His next victim? His mother!

What might have happened to this young woman had she accepted my appraisal of her circumstances? I'd rather not think of that. In defense of other pastors and marriage counselors who may still be offering that kind of advice and I'm sure there are many they, as I did, would judge her circumstances according to traditional beliefs, that is, that some manner of unfaithfulness (adultery or fornication) must be clearly evident in order for a divorce to be permitted.

Often, as both a pastor and a counselor, my heart has gone out to persons contemplating a divorce. Not many years past, when a question would be asked concerning permission to divorce or remarry, my first response was: "Do you have scriptural grounds?"

Quite frankly, when I would be asked the question: "Would divorce or remarriage meet with God's disapproval?", I was actually uncertain how to answer. Generally, I would inform the person that sufficient scriptural grounds would be necessary in order to divorce and still remain in God's good graces. But, I must admit, I wasn't absolutely sure what "scriptural grounds" really meant. I knew what it was supposed to mean according to the generally accepted interpretations. Usually the person or couple still did what they felt they had to do, which got me off the hook, so to speak. I mean, a pastor as a marriage counselor has to live with his conscience, too, doesn't he? Yet at the same time he must stay on good terms with the governing board of his denomination, not to mention his local congregation!

A few years ago, I counseled with a young couple who later divorced after two years of marriage. The couple was compatible only in that they went to the same church. They had met during their high school years while attending their denomination's school the young man's father had at one time been a pastor in the same denomination. They agreed to end their marriage since neither was happy; both agreed to a financial settlement they considered fair. For this couple, that was apparently the easy part. Their decision to divorce became complicated when they were called before the church board. Since both were active in their church (the husband taught a class and the wife led the youth group), they were under close scrutiny regarding their behavior, which was to be expected. The church board questioned them separately with the explanation that it wanted to be sure their reasons for divorce were valid. The board needed also to determine the couple's status regarding serving the church.

I received a phone call from the wife the evening after her appearance before the church board. She was extremely upset, insisting she hadn't done anything wrong. After she calmed down, she told me of her interview before the church board. The board members (all men) asked whether she had been having an affair; they wanted names, dates, times, etc. She could not understand why they would ask her such questions. Their line of questioning indicated they did not feel she or her husband had sufficient cause to divorce unless one of them had through unfaithfulness committed adultery. (I found myself stunned at the proposed biblical regulation that adultery must be committed for a couple to divorce; it finally dawned on me how little sense that made). Since I was counseling with the couple, she requested that the board permit me an opportunity to verify her claim that neither she nor her husband was having an affair; they were merely not happy together. I phoned her pastor the next day to substantiate their desire to divorce. I asked this pastor if he was aware of the trauma his church board's line of questioning imposed upon this girl? He answered: "I have to go by this little black book and it comes first before all else." I'm not sure whether he meant the Bible or the church's book of rules, but in either case their rules, regrettably, superseded this young girl's feelings. My own church training had always placed principle ahead of the person regardless of the circumstances, so I too was hardly a sensitive observer to this girl's anguish. I did wonder whether there were some way to love and understand a person, yet still maintain a code which is insensitive to their feelings. Churches, oddly enough, have faced this contradiction for quite a long time.

Probably the greatest pain suffered by divorced individuals is the shame and guilt which their families, friends, and/or their churches have imposed on them. Does God actually disapprove of them for their decision to divorce? Must heavier burdens be laid on those already at a breaking point? Must our insensitive principles always supersede the person?

I found it became more and more uncomfortable for me to be the one person others came to for understanding and direction especially when I was being paid for it and then have to give them such depressing counsel. Such is the role of the professional counselor and/or pastor. Relating something to a counselee which adds to, rather than helps relieve his/her pain, is hardly being supportive.

"...scriptural grounds?"

As time progressed, I began to discover that I was in conflict with the traditional interpretations of the term "scriptural grounds." My own conflict disturbed me and thus became the motivating factor for my researching this vital subject. As I proceeded through years of researching the Bible, the interpretation I derived came as somewhat of a surprise. I was seeking a fixed ruling for scriptural grounds, a ruling by which I, and others like me in the helping professions, as well as those coming to us for direction and counsel, could live with. I believe that my research has led to a sensible, biblical explanation in which divorce or remarriage are not judged as either right or wrong.

We Hurt You Because We Love You?

The right of a church, or a church board, to cause one of its members trauma or emotional stress has recently come into question. A court ruling, by jury, has stated that a church, or church board, does not have that right. The following case was featured during the April 22, 1984, television program, "60 Minutes," and also widely publicized in news accounts across the nation.

Tulsa, Okla. (AP) A divorced mother who filed a \$1.3 million lawsuit against the Collinsville Church of Christ and three of its elders for publicly denouncing her for the "sin of fornication" was awarded \$390,000 by a jury Thursday.

Marian Guinn, who claimed that her privacy was invaded and she suffered emotional distress when a letter criticizing her was read to the congregation in 1981, was awarded \$205,000 in actual damages and \$185,000 in punitive awards.

"I demand the right, on behalf of Marian Guinn, to lead her life the way she chooses to lead her life," Ms. Guinn's attorney, Thomas Frasier, said in his closing arguments.

Frasier likened the church's action to that detailed in the novel, "The Scarlet Letter," [sic] in which the heroine is made to wear the letter "A" as punishment for adultery.

But the defense lawyer told the jury it was the obligation of the elders to "shepherd the flock" of the church of 120 in Collinsville, a town of about 3,500 people 10 miles north of Tulsa.

If the jury finds in favor of Ms. Guinn, he said, "we shut down every fundamental group that believes in discipline."

Frasier retorted, "They loved her so much that they loved her right out of Collinsville. They branded her for life and they did it deliberately."

Ms. Guinn a 36 year old divorced registered nurse with four children, withdrew her membership from the church before a letter was read to the congregation in October 1981 instructing members to avoid her. "Woman Wins Damages Over Letter From Church," Omaha World Herald 16 March 1984.

My mind's eye will never forget the picture of that pathetic, despairing young woman representative of so many others being mistreated and her asking, "Would God think it alright if I divorced my husband?" Was she a failure because she eventually did seek a divorce? And was she acting in an ungodly manner when she remarried? I think that anyone who maintains that God judges either divorced or remarried persons has grossly misrepresented the biblical attitude of God.

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1. Helen Kooiman Hosier, *The Other Side of Divorce* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975). As related in her book.

Do Contradictions Exist?

If the Bible is understood solely from the the words we read in it, we are still faced with different interpretations that people have read into it, interpretations which may not necessarily relate its true meaning. Though many have gathered from the Bible the idea that divorce is wrong, that opinion is not actually supported by the Bible. I have found no scriptural evidence that proves divorce to be an offense towards God.

Probably the greatest argument claiming that divorce is wrong in the Bible are the words "God hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16). It's important to note that in this part of the Bible, the word divorce did not mean to leave someone, but instead, in the Bible the word meant to send someone away . This correct interpretation places an entirely different meaning on the word, quite the opposite of how it is used today. God simply stated in Malachi 2:16 that He did not want to send the nation Israel away when they were unfaithful towards Him.

Marriage, divorce, and remarriage have the same purpose today as they had in Bible times; that is, each, in itself, is a legal necessity, nothing more, nothing less. That purpose was precisely the reason Moses established a national, legal law of divorce (Deut. 24:1-4).

Ideal Relationship

One recent idea, among others, is thought to produce the ideal relationship. This idea refers to two persons so together that they think alike, have the same interests, and agree on everything. It also requires that two persons have a mutual dependency on one another. Consequently, it does not permit normal minor disagreements. Such a dependency is not beneficial for anyone. The statement "the family that prays together stays together" does not always translate into reality. If 100 percent results were attainable, surely, we could overcome all obstacles through prayer. Realistically, a pat method for marital success has not been actualized.

In the Scriptures, the debates regarding divorce or remarriage were neither theologically nor spiritually based. The debates were in respect specifically to the legal cause of divorce and/or remarriage. In the Gospels, Jesus added to the discussion on divorce and remarriage an in-depth, yet simple, explanation pertaining to the importance of faithfulness versus unfaithfulness.

Certain verses are generally interpreted by a number of Bible scholars to indicate that divorce is wrong. For example, permanent marriage is thought to be implied in Genesis: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

Later in the Old Testament, Moses wrote that divorce was permitted:

When a man hath taken a wife, and marieth her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and become another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. (Deut.24: 1-4)

Still later, in the Gospels Jesus spoke as though divorce could be allowed only under certain conditions: "And I say to you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9).

Paul wrote as though divorce could not be permitted under any circumstances: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband" (I Cor. 7:10).

Probably, the main controversy surrounding this subject involves the phrase, "except for fornication" (Matt. 19:9). This phrase is generally termed the exception clause . During past centuries, biblical scholars have deliberated over different renditions of this verse. Perhaps, if theologians agreed on one interpretation of divorce, we could then relax with this subject, but up to this point in time, their disagreements remain unsettled.

Scriptural grounds determine under what circumstances a couple is allowed to seek a biblically approved divorce. The dispute over this term has caused splits within church families, church denominations, and even rebellion within nations. Many denominations have warned their pastors that regardless of their compassion for their church members, they must judge divorce or remarriage as sins against God and the church. In some instances, if a pastor performs a marriage ceremony for any divorced member of his church, he may be disciplined by his denomination.

"innocent partner "

If one marriage partner has been unfaithful, the other partner then becomes the innocent partner and has the right to divorce. Some church groups have suggested that the innocent partner (the faithful one) must remain single and not remarry until the divorced partner dies. Another church group feels that the unfaithful partner is guilty, yet the other partner if even ten percent guilty must have shared in causing the divorce; therefore, neither divorced partner is free to remarry. 1 Numerous rulings for divorce and remarriage have become established dogma for various religious groups. It's interesting to note wife beating may be considered a sin, but it is not considered sufficient cause for a divorce. Many religious organizations agree that a married person must be unfaithful before a biblical divorce can be allowed, but then the adulterer is not permitted to remarry. Under certain circumstances some religious groups have changed their rules.

The inconsistency on the part of some churches only adds to the existing confusion for those (pastors or parishioners) who seek clarification as to what regulates divorce and remarriage. The concessions of some churches contradict the rulings of other churches. Which church is correct? Which church should we believe?

Church members find it especially difficult to understand how each church can interpret from the same Bible, yet disagree so extensively. Should a person be expected to transfer from one church to another in order to acquire a favorable ruling? Such a convenience can only further confuse our understanding of the Bible. It is important to note, apart from the number of Bible scholars and theologians, the vast majority of church members are the persons expected to, and for the sake of their own consciences, required to, abide by the opinions of theologically learned men. These same men have been designated to lead the masses through an earthly spiritual journey.

Still others have suggested that divorce could be prevented, or at least be deterred, should ministers warn church attenders that grave consequences will result if divorce is ever considered an option for an unhappy marriage. For example, every married couple should be warned that if they divorce,

the church will never allow either of them to marry again. These and other attempts to regulate divorce have become major hindrances within the religious community; its efforts to minister to all its followers have been greatly limited.

Did Jesus actually mean that an unhappy married woman must go and have an affair so that she could be divorced from her husband? He would be adding further tragic consequences to her life; it would be suicide for her to have an affair; she would be stoned to death as an adulteress. That act does not sound like fair scriptural grounds for divorce.

Certain other questions arise pertaining to this idea. What if a couple seeks a divorce when a third party is not involved, that is, when the couple has been faithful to one another? If the scriptural grounds (unfaithfulness) are strictly adhered to, we are faced with a real dilemma. The exception clause is spoken of as one of two acts, either "fornication" or "adultery" depending on which particular translation is being considered. As a result, a couple would not have the right to agree to a divorce because under this restriction one partner must agree to have an affair before they would have scriptural grounds for a divorce. Then, and only then, would that couple be allowed, within scriptural grounds, to become divorced. In other words, scriptural grounds to allow for a divorce, initially, demand that one partner must be unfaithful and be condemned so that the other partner can be free to get a divorce. Surely, that's not what Jesus meant.

Others, out of concern for those divorced, have written with compassion towards the ones who have divorced or remarried. Allowance is made for the divorced with the provision that the grace of God is sufficient through forgiveness.² That idea is well and good; nevertheless, divorce and/or remarriage remain scripturally wrong.

I became frustrated by what I saw as inconsistencies in a Bible I thought to be without error. I had never before realized how important it is to challenge some of the traditionally accepted interpretations of the Bible. I was shocked as I discovered disagreements between the words of Jesus and the words of the writers of scripture. For the Bible to be the true word of God, there had to be a way to explain these possible contradictions. The controversial history surrounding this subject demonstrates how the moral issue of divorce has been repeatedly questioned. This book presents a fresh understanding of divorce and remarriage, an understanding which will help relieve those who have been unfairly judged as displeasing God.

Apparent Contradictions

If, as interpreted, God had established the institution of permanent marriage (Gen. 2:24), then why did Moses (Deut. 24:1-4) provide for the legal right to dissolve a marriage? A second question to consider is whether or not Genesis 2:24 is actually referring to the institution of permanent marriage, or to something other than marriage?

The concept of a (one-female/one-male) monogamous relationship was almost unheard of during most of biblical history. As a matter of fact, the actual idea of marriage (though the word is translated marriage, it meant ownership) was rarely a monogamous relationship. Not until an estimated 2,000 years following the Garden of Eden account did the word for marriage refer to a monogamous partnership and then only because God spoke of it. An association between a male and a female was little more than merely living together. ³

Females Were Property

Our present-day concept of a marriage relationship is comprised of a man and a woman in a coequal status. Unlike today, the Hebrew words for a husband or a wife had very different meanings. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for husband meant that the husband was the master owner of a female. ⁴ The women were actually owned by the men. A man literally "took" a woman to be his; she became his slave or if he so desired, also his sexual partner. Generally speaking, the female had little or no voice in the matter as to which male would own her (Ex. 21:7). One specific exception in the Old Testament was the time Abraham sent his servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for his son Isaac. Isaac had little voice in the matter as to who would be his future bride. Rebecca, his wife to be, was allowed to consent to the arrangement, but only after the details had been settled by Abraham's servant and Rebecca's father and mother. Rebecca's consent was merely a formality. This particular case was far more civilized than most arrangements made for procuring female property.

Permanent Marriage?

Some have thought God commanded a couple to remain permanently married. God has never been opposed to permanent marriage. But the idea that Genesis 2:24 refers to permanent marriage misrepresents God's original design. God said the purpose for creating both a man and a woman was to ensure that the two together could reproduce another human.

Original Human Creation - Male/Female

The account of the original human creation is clearly presented: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" (Gen. 5:1-2).

Evidence from past literature establishes the original human creation as both a male and a female in one body. John A. Sanford, in his book *The Invisible Partner*, attests to this: "Our Adamic hermaphrodite [two opposite sides combined] masculine form, nevertheless carries about with him Eve, or his feminine part, hidden in his body." ⁵

The Hebrew word Adam is most often used as a collective noun, and as a collective noun refers to all humankind. Adam (humanity collectively) is used in the Old Testament nearly 2000 times. ⁶

The Hebrew wording leaves no doubt that the first human creation was a collective, plural creation. God created both a male and a female in the same day and in the same body. Additionally, Genesis states in verse 2 that God created the "them" both a male/female human creation. The "them," which God created, was also the Adam who was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26,27). This same "them" God blessed, and named Adam. (See author's note) ⁷

Literal Interpretation?

A particular point pertaining to literal interpretation needs to be made. If Adam was only a male, then only the male was made in the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26,27). To suggest that God later made the female from the rib of the male would imply that the female was made lacking a likeness of God or being a living soul (Gen. 2:7). A literal interpretation would require that both the likeness of God and being a living soul be transferred from a male's rib to the female.⁸ That process would mean the woman obtained her image of God second hand. That would suggest that God made a

mistake, which is inconceivable, so there must be a mistake in that interpretation. 9 The scriptures abound with the fact that equity between the male and the female was surely God's intention from the beginning. (See author's note) 10

In the gospels, as would be expected, Jesus detailed the truth of an equal human creation when questioned by the Pharisees on the subject about cause for divorce. Jesus' answer to the Pharisees will be explained in a later chapter of this book. Inequity between the male and the female of Israel was the traditional condition which Jesus encountered and disagreed with; he set the record straight lest it be thought that He condoned such a disgraceful condition.

Was the original human creation less than what it needed to be? Was it lacking in completeness? Was the original human creation not good enough? No indication in Genesis suggests that God had created an incomplete original human creation. God stated in Genesis 1:31 that "it was very good." This included the human creation. God did not later, in Genesis 2:18, say "it" was not quite good enough. 11

Because of this faulty interpretation of the order of creation, men declared themselves superior and the injustice toward women began. 13 Thus, when God created the first human creation (Gen. 1:27), He told them to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (v. 28); then, God said that He "saw everything that He had made; and, behold, it was very good" (v. 31). This collective male/female creation was without a doubt the best it could possibly be. 12

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2. Dwight Hervey Small. The Right to Remarry (Spire Books, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1977.), pp. 125-132.
3. James Strong. Strong's Concordance Of The Bible , Hebrew Dict. 5772. (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.) p. 86.
4. Hebrew Dict. 113 p. 8.
5. John A. Sanford. The Invisible Partners (New York, NY: Paulist Press, Copyright 1980), pp. 3-5.
6. William Wilson. Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies (McLean, VA: Mac Donald Publishing Co.), p. 265.

MAN, MANKIND

adam m. man , as homo in Latin; collectively, men, mankind; other men, in opposition to some already named; common men, in opposition to better men; or more noble, eesh : Isa.2:9;
male iysh

7. Author's notes: Adam , in Hebrew, is used two times in Genesis 2:7; and also in Genesis 2:8,15,16,18,19,20,21,22[2],23.(See note 6.) Up to verse 23, all references to "the man" are plural or collective nouns. The word Adam is preceded by the article "the" in (Gen. 1:27).
a "God created the man"; 2:7, "God formed the man"; " the man became a living soul."; 2:8, "He put the man"; 2:15, "God took the man"; 2:16, "God commanded the man"; 2:18, " the man being alone"; 2:19, "in to the man", " the man called it"; 2:20, "and the man gave names"; 2:21, "and a deep sleep to fall on the man"; 2:22, "from the man", "to the man"; 2:23, "And the man said,." Next, in verse 23, the collective (plural) shifts to the singular sense. As a result of the shift from collective to singular, the following portion of verse 23 would read paraphrased: For this shall be called woman for she has been separated from the original human form, which included also a male. Therefore, in sequence, a man (singular) shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his woman (singular) and they (together) shall become (reproduce) one added human being. This verse verifies God's prior announcement: "Be fruitful and multiply." The following source explains that when the article is used with a noun, the noun has a collective status. If the "man" was one male only, then the Hebrew word iysh would have been used. That Hebrew word for an individual male is used both in Gen. 2:23 and 24.(See (C) below).

(a) William Wilson. "Introduction To Hebrew," - "Of The Plural, And Of Collective Nouns," Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.)

1. "the" Besides the proper plural endings, the language employs some other means for the expression of plurality, viz. (A) certain words whose appropriate signification is collective , designating an indefinite number of a class of objects, and having their corresponding nomina unitatis, or nouns which designate an individual of the class,... (C) Nouns which gave the proper signification of the singular, but which are often used as collectives, e.g. adam man, the human race, Gen. 1. 26; iysh collect for men

8. Author's note: The word "rib" is a faulty translation of the Hebrew word tsela . It is translated rib only twice out of thirty-five times when used in the Bible(a). A closer look at the Hebrew word tsela reveals an interesting perception. The word tsela has the meaning "to limp" or "to curve". The word also refers to "a curving of the body", or "a side of a person." In Genesis 2:21-22, God had taken from the "curved side" of the dual-human, Adam . Perhaps this term refers to the natural curved side of the female which is unlike the straight side of the male. The object of the female's side being curved is so that each female is capable of carrying a child during pregnancy. This is a distinct, natural difference between the male and the

female. Possibly, Adam the dual human had one straight side (the male side) and also one curved side (the female side)(b). Young's Concordance lists this word's usage only twice as rib. The word is listed as side or side chamber 28 times(c).

(a) Thomas L. Holdcroft. *The Pentateuch* (Oakland, CA: Western Book Co., 1951).

In *Harmony Of Science And The Bible*, C. Theodore Schwarz declares that it was not Adam's rib but a portion of his side that was used by God. The author points out that the original Hebrew word *tsela* appears 35 times in the Bible, but that only in Genesis is it rendered "rib." The usual rendering is "a curved side."

(b) James Strong. *Strong's Concordance Of The Bible, Hebrew Dict.* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.), p. 100

6761. *tsela*; from 6760; a limping or fall (fig): --adversity, halt (-ing).

6760. *tsala*; a prim. root: prob. to curve; used as denom. from 6763, to limp (as if one-sided): --halt.

6763. *tsela*; or (fem.)

tsalah; from 6760; a rib (as curved), lit. (of the body) or fig. (of a door, i.e. leaf); hence a side, lit. (of a person) ...(single or collective., i.e. a flooring): --beam, board, chamber, corner, leaf, plank, rib, side(chamber).

(c) Robert Young. *Young's Analytical Concordance To The Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), *Index-Lexicon To The Old Testament*, p. 51.

9. Author's note: An opposing view might be, if the Hebrew word Adam referred to a singular male, then a singular male constituted the human race. There would be no further need for the addition of a woman. As unlikely as that sounds, some past interpretations consider this the actual account of human creation. If this account of creation were true, then it's logical to think that the female was an afterthought by God. But that assumes that God had at first created what He thought to be a suitable human race only to later discover He had made a mistake. God didn't make a mistake. A mistake in interpretation is actually the case.

10. Author's note: The original Adam was "alone" (Gen. 2:18); that is to say, the collective creation was one body alone before God separated the two from each other. In order for God to instruct "them" (plural) to reproduce, announce from which trees to eat, bless, breathe into their nostrils the breath of life, and instruct them to name the animals, it was required that God create and speak to both of them at one and the same time. That ensured exact equality between men and women. cf., Genesis 5:1-2.

11. Gesenius' *Hebrew/Chaldee Lexicon To The Old Testament*. Translated into English by Samuel P. Tregelles (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949.), p. 320.

a. (2) *auwb* concretely, that which is good, or best of any thing, i.e. the best part, Gen. 45:18,20.

12. James Strong. *Strong's Concordance Of The Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.) p. 45.

2898 *tuwb*, from 2895; "good" (as a noun) in the widest sense, esp. goodness (superlative concretely the best).

13. James Strong. *Strong's Concordance Of The Bible, Hebrew Dict.* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.), p. 10.

259. *echad*, a numeral from 258; prop. united i.e. one; or (as an ordinal) first: a, alike, alone, altogether, and,

258. *achad*, perh. a prim. root; to unify, i.e. (fig) collective (one's thoughts): - go one way or other.

Author's note: God said, "And did He not make one?" (Mal. 2:15), that is, one original male/female human form. Though God spoke to Israel, His words did not settle the inequity. Jesus repeated the same truth: "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE," (Matt. 19:4 NASB). The Greek word *kai*, translated "and" is best translated "also". "Also" shows that at one and the same time, Adam was both a male and also a female human creation. Jesus' words agree with the actual account of creation in Genesis.

God Requires Equality

Coequality between a man and a woman was next to nonexistent in Israel. Because of inequality, the Bible's discussion on divorce was initiated. Each time the Bible spoke about divorce in Israel, the reference was to the inferior status of Israel's women. It's imperative to grasp an understanding of the conditions during biblical times; otherwise, we might think God intended women to be less than equal.

God said "It is not good that the man [Adam] should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). (See author's notes for a more detailed explanation of alone and make) 1 For the original human creation to reproduce would require that God create a second identical human form, in other words, another combination male/female human being. As a result, the original creation could then mate with a second dual human creation. Their offspring would be an additional dual human; subsequently, each succeeding generation would consist of dual, male/female offspring. For example, the original creation would be like two sets of Siamese twins reproducing another set of Siamese twins, which would not permit individual males or females to exist independently of one another. Instead, individual humans were created with reproductive capabilities with which to reproduce after their own kind. God could have created the man and the woman individually if He chose to. God didn't choose to because some might think He created one before the other.

Conceivably, the two-in-one human form first spoke simultaneously as one collective voice (compare with Gen. 2:23). In this sense, both the male and the female then became separate persons observing that the other was, equally, "bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh(es)." In other words, they became two individuals from one collective Adam . Most important, they each became an individual "living soul."

The order of creation consists of what God did (Gen. 1) and how God did it (Gen. 2). In the beginning God followed His own unique creative process. In divine sequence, God created, then separated, or divided between. For example, God created the light (Gen. 1:3); next, God saw that the light was good (v. 4); after that God separated the light from the darkness. God made the firmament (v. 7), after which He separated the waters. Obviously, if there was light, there was also darkness; if there was the firmament, there was also water. Neither the darkness nor the waters were afterthoughts of God. If there was a tree, there was fruit and seed of the tree (note v. 12 "whose seed was in itself"). It's likely God used the same order in creating the original human creation. God first created Adam a dual, human creation which needed to be separated. Next in sequence, He separated them so that the composite two became two separate individuals.

The Gospels further explain this divine process. Jesus miraculously fed five thousand men, not counting women and children. He began with only five loaves and two fishes (Matt. 14:15-21). Not only were thousands fed, but after they had all eaten their fill, twelve baskets were still left over. Jesus' supernatural act demonstrated God's miraculous, creative process; that is, one element becomes more than one. Only God produces such miracles. One human cannot produce two more humans. Only through sexual intercourse can two humans naturally produce one additional human, or for that matter twins; nevertheless, reproduction must begin with two persons.

Israel's History - Male Dominated

Hebrew terms for males and females present some interesting points regarding especially male activity. God made His promises to the nation by speaking to, and of, the inhabitants of Israel in a contrasting manner. God spoke to the "daughters of Zion" assuring the nation of His presence, protection, and blessing. Zion was God's way of referring to His chosen. At the same time, His tender words toward the women were not disrespectful or at the expense of the men.

Israel's Male Rebellion

Jeremiah used the term "daughter of my people" to express God's favor and kinship toward the people of Israel. 2 Scriptures record, primarily, the active history of Israel's males. In essence, God spoke particularly to the men because only they could act on His words. Israel's male resistance toward God inundates the headlines of scripture. For instance, "Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity" (Psa. 106:43).

Many of Israel's men are individually mentioned in the Bible; however, God spoke tenderly to the nation using a feminine term. God's covenant relationship with the nation was primarily collective, rather than individualistic. Men initiated the calamities under which the nation suffered. Mothers had to give up their children to fight the battles which brought so much devastation to the nation. Consequently, as with all wars, the women and children bore the brunt of the misery. (See author's notes: 3 and 4)

Cleave: Be Together Sexually

The word "cleave" (Gen. 2:24) is often misinterpreted as marriage. In Hebrew cleave is used in regard to a physical attachment, especially with parts of the body; it also refers to physical closeness. 5 Scripture describes how the "belly cleaveth unto the earth" (Psa. 44:25) when one lies prostrate on the ground. Even more emphatic, the word "cleave" has primarily a meaning of sexual connection or human contact through sexual intercourse in both Hebrew and Greek. 6

Marriage Is Not Essential for Human Survival

The phrase "they shall become one" (Gen. 2:24 NASB), did not refer to marriage. This phrase refers to the composite unity of the two. The two become one during sexual intercourse. Their equal status provided for the sexual act. This phrase disclosed for the first time the natural oneness of the two. The result, of course, is the natural reproductive arrangement God selected for a man and a woman. The continued existence of the human race is not necessarily dependent on marriage. However, humanity's past, present, and certainly its future are all dependent on the procreation of human species. Through God's provision (biological organs for reproduction), the first man and woman begin to set in motion the procreation process. Though marriage is honorable, the oneness of the sexual act became the natural and essential human requirement which followed God's creative act. Each act of sexual intercourse is a reminder of the equal status God ordained between the man and the woman.

Marriage could become extinct without the human race itself becoming extinct. However, if humanity eliminated procreation, it would eliminate itself. Marriage can be beautiful and wonderful; it is important both legally and ceremonially. Nevertheless, of all that marriage is, one thing it is not; it is not essential to the survival of the human race. If God instituted permanent marriage (as interpreted by some), it has failed. God actually instituted equality of the sexes, to ensure that procreation would prevail throughout human history. As a matter of fact, oneness of the two expressed the positive theme of the Bible. New life is the message of God. We are "born of the flesh, ...born of the spirit" (Jo. 3:6).

Procreation Is Proof of Equality

From the beginning of human existence, procreation was, and still remains, a natural human activity. In Old Testament times, males and females were living together as young as twelve, thirteen, fourteen years of age. The legal marriage age during the old Roman Empire was fourteen for boys

and twelve for girls. Those same legal ages for marriage are not uncommon in certain countries even today. In Old Testament times, the consummation of a relationship was generally arranged by the fathers of the couple.

Obviously, males and females can be together sexually and become parents at a relatively young age. This act requires no form of marriage as a prerequisite. A couple might engage in sexual intercourse quite naturally, even before knowing the definition of marriage. Personally, I have no argument with the concept of marriage. I believe marriage provides a sense of stability for a couple. Marriage is a marvelous, voluntary expression of unity between two individuals. However, the natural expansion of human creation requires procreation through the sexual union of the two.

The "two become one" (Gen. 2:24) demonstrates the equality of the two as they become one in union. This sexual union is a picture of how they were at the beginning of human creation. Through natural, biological reproduction, this sexual act produces each additional human being.

Sexual activity between a male and a female usually requires a minimal amount of experimentation. Sexual enjoyment is probably the primary stimulant for procreation. Without sexual enjoyment little or no procreation would likely occur. Sexual attraction is probably the primary attraction for marriage; nevertheless, a marriage can exist without sexual activity. Evidently, a combination of sexual attraction plus sexual enjoyment perpetuates the human race. Sexual attraction is a natural and necessary component for producing children. Therefore, marriage, without sexual activity, could not accomplish this instinctively normal process. Consequently, natural procreation depends on natural sexual activities. Sexual attraction, sexual enjoyment, and sexual activity are each all inclusive, natural activities.

Polygamy was common during Old Testament times; many men had more than one sexual partner (for example, Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, to name only a few). It was nearly two thousand years after Adam and Eve before God actually stressed a one male/one female relationship (compare with Ex. 21).

Today, our concept of marriage is quite different from that of the Old Testament. During Old Testament times, the man did not date a woman; a couple did not become engaged and then, voluntarily, participate in a marriage ceremony. During Old Testament history, a man literally "took" a woman. Taking a woman was devoid of romantic courtship or romantic love. A man simply desired and took a woman. She then became his property. A woman's status was not that of a wife as we would think of the term in the United States; she was actually no more than a man's property. For women, there was no bill of rights. They were completely at the mercy of men.

To Protect Women

Something vitally important in scripture has gone largely unrealized. Many of God's proclamations were spoken with the specific purpose to provide protection for Israel's women. Women were little more than tolerated; they were hopelessly exposed to abuse, both sexually and socially. Women survived the best they could in a world dominated by males. The account of this regrettable condition is not too difficult to believe. Certain countries, yet today, consider women to be less than first class citizens. In some areas of the Arab world, a husband has the right to divorce a wife by simply speaking a word of divorce three times. The travesty of this right is the requirement that the wife must leave the husband's house immediately and is not permitted to take anything with her other than the apparel she's clothed in.

Recently, the nation of Iran's political structure passed through a transitional period. One mandate of the new governing voice required that women of that country no longer be allowed to attend the universities. Women of Iran, the young women in particular, were ordered to resume the practice of covering their faces with veils whenever appearing in public. Seven years after Iran's the revolution which overthrew the shah, a prominent clergyman in Iran said there is "no such thing as equality between men and women." He also said that women have smaller brains than men, and they must be covered from head to foot. He added that it's necessary to use violence towards women to force them to comply with what's best for them. 9 When Moses spoke his law of divorce (Deut. 24:1-4), organizations concerned with domestic violence or battered wives did not exist. As a matter of record, these organizations have had only a short history in this country.

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 3.

1. Author's notes: "Made" means that a whole produces a part. The Hebrew word *asah* translated "made" (Gen. 2:22) describes how God separated the "woman" from the dual human form(a). *Asah* means to produce something from something which already exists. In this case, the male and the female were both separated from the one, collective, dual Adam; the result, something was produced from itself. *Yentl*, a movie about Jewish tradition deals briefly with this same view. *Asah*, for example, means that a cornstalk produces both an ear of corn and corn; (i.e., a lone ear of corn does not produce corn). God, when creating, first produced a corn seed kernel or a complete cornstalk. The first human creation was already complete within itself, thus the whole produced two parts. As further examples demonstrate, a cow's stomach does not produce milk, a complete cow produces milk; a complete tree produces fruit, and so on.(b) God needed to produce a separate male and female because "it is not good" (practical) that Adam, remain (collectively) "alone" (Gen. 2:18). Being alone didn't mean Adam was lonely; instead, it portrays the inability of a dual human to procreate. Thus, separating the male and female was essential. The word alone is *badh*.(c) It required that the two sides be separated in order to be functional. It is not good (practical) that a dual human remain unseparated. *Badh* "alone" also refers to two poles that are used to transport, for example, a piece of furniture. One lone pole would not be sufficient; a second pole would be required to equalize the weight of furniture across both poles.(d) Dual humans being isolated or alone were unable to fulfill their purpose to reproduce after their own kind (human offspring). *Badh* represents an isolation of the dual human Adam (d). If it remained in its dual condition, it could not "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). In English, the meaning of isolate is quite similar(e).

(a). Gesenius' Hebrew/Chaldee Lexicon To The Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 657.

I. *asah*, "made", Gen. 1:7,16; 2:2; 3:1; 5:1; 6:6; Ps. 96:5; 104:19.

(b). p. 657.

to make anything , i.e. to produce it from oneself, is an expression used of living creatures, Isa. 7:22; Job 15:27; Gen. 1:11,12; Job 14:9; Ezek. 17:8; Hos. 8:7; Gen. 41:47; Hab. 3:17; Isa. 5:2,10.

(c). Theological Dictionary Of The Old Testament , Vol. I. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Revised Ed. 1977), pp. 473-474.

alone" badhadh ; badh ; badhadh .

(d). p. 474.

(e). The American College Dictionary (New York, NY: Random House Inc., 1963), p. 648

isolate- vt. to set or place apart; detach or separate so as to be alone. isolate- adj. that can be isolated.

2. Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament , Vol. I. (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute Of Chicago, 1980), p. 115.

R. K. Harrison says, "This unusual term expresses Jeremiah's sense of God's kinship with Israel."

3. Author's note: Because of the unity of the first human creation, the basic result of human creation is procreation without which human creation would cease to exist. For creation to proceed naturally, humans were provided with male and female genitals. The equal physical status of both the man and the woman was especially designed by God for the sexual union. In the sexual they again become one, as they were in the beginning. Daily, we witness the miraculous product of procreation in the miracle of new life. Though generally taken for granted, this provision, made possible by God, is without a doubt the grandest miracle observed by humanity. Within the miracle of each new life, we have opportunity to perceive the incredible result of God's original act of creation. This everyday event has been surpassed only by the resurrection of the human body of Jesus.

4. Author's note: As a boy I had an idea what marriage involved, but I was not aware that married couples engaged in sexual intercourse. Was I naive? Well, perhaps I was. Though a wedding was common knowledge, what happened on the wedding night was not openly discussed with my young generation. The wedding night was discussed among some of the adults, but only in whispers. I remember how the older kids would tell jokes and giggle a lot. Certain subjects such as sex definitely were not shared with our young minds. Apparently, the hushed attitude of my day was distinctly different from the early days of the Old Testament.

5. R. Laird Harris, etal. Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament , Vol. I (Chicago, IL: The Moody Bible Institute Of Chicago, 1980), pp. 177-178.

398 (dAbaq) cleave, cling, stick to, stick with, follow closely, catch, keep close to, join to, overtake.

Derivative

398a (debeq) joints, soldering.

dAbaq is used quite often in the OT of physical things sticking to each other, especially parts of body.

6. Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament Vol III Edited By Gerhard Kittel, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1965), pp. 822-823.

GEN. 2:24 Matt. 19:5 Mar. 10:7

"shall cleave"

kollaO .

On this basis we can see how kollasthai comes to be used for intimate association in the form of sexual intercourse. Thus we read in Mt. 19:5: kollEthEsetai This is a quotation from Gn. 2:24, except that the LXX has prosllethEsetai . According to the best authorities this is quoted literally in Eph. 5:31, while on the other side the textus receptus has proskollethEsetai , like the LXX, at Mt. 19:5 (- proskollaO).

proskollaO .

2. Mt. 19:5 text. rec . and Eph. 5:31 use it according to sense 2. of kollaomai to denote sexual intercourse. K.L. Schmidt

7. "'No Such Thing as Equality' Iran Using Iron Hand to Veil Women," UPI, Omaha World Herald , A.M. Edition, 7 June 1986.

God Speaks Out Against Female Abuse

Following the writing of the Old Testament, Jewish Rabbis debated its legal and religious intention. Debate over biblical divorce and remarriage remained prominent among the religious groups.

Hypothetically speaking, let us suppose the government of God were similar to our nation's government. Our nation's presidents appoint members of a Supreme Court. The Supreme Court interprets the laws of our land and defines statutes by which the entire nation is obliged to concur. The Word of God also requires interpretation. However, unlike the legal specialist of our nation, biblical specialists are unable to appear before the high court of the Supreme Author of scriptures. Consequently, biblical interpreters can not request God's assent or dissent toward their varied interpretations. It's imperative, if we are to correctly interpret the Bible, that we realize the social conditions which existed during biblical times. The customs in those days were very different from our present way of life.

Flagrant Promiscuity

According to the New Bible Dictionary on the subject of Marriage and Divorce, "the master of the household had sexual rights over all his female slaves. No doubt there were flagrant examples of such promiscuity but the Bible says nothing about it." 1

I agree with the former part of that statement that men had sexual rights over all their women slaves, but I believe the Bible does say something about it. First, though a woman is addressed as a wife in the Bible, she was really no more than a man's slave. Both, God, in the Old Testament, and Christ, in the Gospels, emphatically specified that the social and sexual rights of women were flagrantly violated by the men of Israel.

God's Ordinance For Equality

Flagrant promiscuity was precisely the reason for God's words in Exodus 21:1-11. It was an ordinance which God meant to benefit the entire nation. 2 Verses seven through eleven referred specifically to the promiscuity which ran rampant in the nation of Israel. Men had taken advantage of their physically weaker counterparts. God never intended that women be socially and sexually abused by men. Women were being sexually passed around from owner to owner; Moses called the female abuse an "abomination in the land" (Deut. 24:4). Therefore, God established an ordinance to stop the abuse (Ex. 21:7-11).

To paraphrase Exodus 21:7-11, if a man takes a woman slave as his sexual partner (the female had no voice in the matter) and then decides to also take another female slave for his sexual partner (polygamy was common), the owner must meet the following needs of each sexual partner: The owner must meet each partner's need for food and clothing, and He must meet each woman's rightful need for sexual intercourse. Each woman's needs must be equally met. And if the owner does not do these three things for each woman, he must then allow her to leave his house a free woman. Her family is not required to buy her freedom.

Polygamy Not Forbidden

God's ordinance did not directly forbid polygamy. His ordinance didn't deny a man his right to have more than one sexual partner. The pure intent of the ordinance was meant to provide equal treatment for all women. This sort of ordinance is typical of God; it supports faithfulness, respect, equality, fairness, justice, and especially the rights of an individual.

Adultery: The Negative Side of Unfaithfulness

God explained the negative side of unfaithfulness, that is, adultery (Ex. 20:14). Adultery means that a person cannot be faithful toward more than one person at one time. God constantly confirmed His faithfulness and lovingkindness toward humanity. Nevertheless, Israel's history exhibits countless acts of adultery as the nation sought other gods, 3 that is, gods other than their One True Living God. 4 God's teaching in the Bible was meant to open all our eyes to the value of faithfulness between two individuals. Unfortunately, though His ordinance espoused both faithfulness and equality, it went unheeded. Israel's male population ignored the ordinance. Its disregard toward it forced Moses to later write a law of divorce wherein a woman had at least a legal right to be divorced by a man. What God had earlier ordained, Moses later insisted upon. The condition had become so severe Moses called it an abominable offense in the land. Moses' law of divorce was sanctioned by God. Later, God spoke of its authenticity through Jeremiah the prophet. (See Jeremiah, 3)

By the time Moses wrote his law of divorce, abuse toward women had become a national disgrace. Genesis describes in detail how the patriarchs of Israel disgraced themselves before other nations. They lied that their wives were their sisters in order to protect themselves from harm (compare, Gen. 20:1-18).

The Bible gives us a realistic look at the nation of Israel and its attitude toward individuals' rights. Israel's traditional way of life permitted the oppression under which women were subjected. Certainly, God would not condone unjust behavior toward women of any nation.

Moses' Law of Divorce

Many Old Testament commentators seem intent on placing the blame for a divorce on the woman. They have suggested that a woman had done something so indecent that the man was left little choice but to divorce her. Whatever their reasoning might be, in the gospels, Jesus did not agree with that assessment (as noted in a later chapter).

I'll offer a paraphrase of Moses' divorce law from Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

Whenever a man decides he wants a woman and he takes her, he becomes her owner. If his eyes lose interest in her looks, the man must write the woman a legal paper which states that he no longer owns her. Next, he's to put the divorce paper in her hand and tell her to leave his house. She leaves his house and goes out and becomes owned by another man. And if that man tires of her or he dies in the meantime, the first husband or any previous husband who abused and divorced her can't take her as property again. The abuse that men impose on women is an abomination before the Lord. God did not create women less than equal with men. A woman was not intended to be a slave or the property of a man. This is a disgraceful condition men have caused in the land God has given them for an inheritance.

Moses did what he could to prevent further abuse toward Israel's women. His divorce law didn't necessarily limit a man to only one woman. Instead, it stated that if a man began to resent or hate any one of his sexual partners he was required by law to divorce her. That action could have lessened the abuse had the men agreed to divorce (send her away) and allow her to go free. However, though this law would provide some semblance of legal protection for women, the abuse toward them continued unchecked. Generally, Moses had little success persuading the nation to be sensible even when they would benefit from it. Moses often pleaded with the people to listen to God. Unfortunately, his attempts to convince the people they had the best God of all the nations fell on deaf ears.

The Innocent Woman

To illustrate God's concern for women, He established a provision formulated to protect them from false accusations. If a man made an accusation against a woman by falsely accusing her of being unfaithful, a test was supplied by which her innocence could be proven. Within Israel's legal system, a man was termed innocent until proven guilty, whereas, a woman was judged guilty by an all male court unless she could be prove her innocence. The provision is stated in Numbers 5:11-31. One Bible commentary explains these verses with the title: "Sentence of God Upon Wives Suspected of Adultery." That particular commentary claims that the object of these verses was "to warn fickle wives against unfaithfulness." 5

The commentary adds the following:

the woman's crime, of which her husband accused her, was naturally denied by herself, and was neither to be supported by witnesses nor proved by her being taken in the very act, the only way left to determine whether there was any foundation or not for the spirit of jealousy excited in her husband, and to prevent an unrighteous severance of the divinely appointed marriage, was to let the thing be decided by the verdict of God Himself. 6

Since men generally owned several female slaves (polygamy), why would a Bible commentary refer to that as "the divinely appointed marriage"? During that time, for a woman to be involved sexually with more than one man would without a doubt have been termed adultery, and she would have been put to death. Not so with the man; he was allowed any number of women he chose. Yet, not one of the women he chose had a right to be jealous or accuse the man of unfaithfulness. (See author's note on this truth test and jealousy) 7

Moses' law of divorce would prevent a man from accumulating a harem for himself at the expense of unwanted women. The Bible presents vivid descriptions of the antagonism between a woman considered the wife and the man's concubines.

The Danger of National Promiscuity

Evidence exists that open promiscuity causes damage to any nation in which it's permitted. Such evidence has been observed during periods in past history (For example, the Roman Empire or Russia).

When the Russian Czar was overthrown, the new government determined to allow the people as much freedom as possible. The new government set no legal requirement for a marriage relationship. The result of lifting all restrictions on a couple turned out to be extremely traumatic for the nation. Instead of the anticipated sense of freedom which was hoped for, the nation soon found itself in an alarming state of utter chaos. The freedom "to sleep around" with whomever each person cared to sleep with, without a legal requirement of marriage or divorce, took its toll on the necessary stability needed by any society for its own survival. The nation was destroying itself from within. The Russian people discovered that their new found freedom was systematically producing a lawless attitude in which the people soon lacked, in particular, a sense of belonging to anyone. The children being born had no way of knowing whom they belonged to. The fiber of the once normal family structure was deteriorating at a rapid pace.

The Russian leaders, realizing their mistaken idea of freedom was leading to the inevitable breakdown of both family and nation, rescinded their decision.

Stability for any people is dependent on laws which establish protection for all members of a particular society. The need for laws to govern and protect those involved in marriage relationships, or divorce proceedings, was as evident in Moses' day as it also is today. The need for a marriage license or a divorce decree is essentially a legal matter. A marriage, or a divorce decree, are to protect both partners. Moses' divorce law was mainly for the protection of women. From the standpoint of civil law, unlike today, Moses was unable to enforce his law of divorce. Any society, which allows open exchange of partners, will increasingly become uncivilized.

Sexual Promiscuity Will Destroy A Society

Dr. John D. Unwin studied over eighty civilizations that existed during a four thousand year period. His conclusion was that no society can long endure widespread sexual promiscuity. He found that all of the cultures he studied followed a similar sexual pattern:

During its early days of existence, premarital and extra marital sexual relationships were strictly prohibited. Great creative energy was associated with this inhibition of sexual expression, causing the culture to prosper. Much later in the life of the society its people begin to rebel against the strict prohibitions demanding the freedom to release their internal passions. As the morals weakened, the social energy abated, eventually resulting in the decay or the destruction of the civilization. The energy which holds a society together is sexual in nature. When a man is devoted to one woman and one family he is motivated to build, save, protect, plan, and prosper, on their behalf; however when his sexual interests are dispersed and generalized, his effort is invested in the gratification of sensual desires. 8

A society might restrict its couples to a monogamous marriage relationship, but if there is no appreciation for faithfulness between the couple, little is gained. The value of monogamy lies not in the restriction imposed by a law but in the willingness of each partner to give himself/herself freely to the other.

A recent article in Discover magazine, titled "The Steep Price Of A Promiscuous Husband," tells of a study that "clears up a long-standing paradox." The study shows that women in Latin American countries have the most reported cases of cervical cancer. It further states that a double standard exists in countries where men often visit prostitutes but women are expected to remain virgins. Moreover, promiscuous men may be the main cause of cervical cancer. 9

God's emphasis on faithfulness in monogamous relationships, especially among the people of Israel, was not to lay burdensome laws on them; more correctly, it was intended for the survival of their society. God gave the people of Israel opportunity to truly realize a gracious, loving experience.

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 4.

1. J. D. Douglas, ed. The New Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p. 787.

2. Merrill F. Unger and William White, Jr. ed. Nelson's Expository Dictionary Of The Old Testament (Nashville, TN; Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), p. 425.

Regarding the word "ordinance," the above reference states: "eduth "testimony; ordinance" The word sometimes refers to the entire law of God. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony [ordinance] of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

3. "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but My people have change their glory for that which doeth not profit" (Jer. 2:11).

4. "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and the everlasting King:" (Jer. 10:10a).

5. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. Commentary On The Old Testament Vol I, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1976.), pp. 29-30

6. p. 30.

7. Author's notes: Customs in Israel didn't require a man to defend himself in a similar instance because the woman had no right to accuse the man of adultery in the first place. Only the woman was obliged to defend herself before an all male judicial system. If a man were accused of having sexual relations with another man's slave, he could simply say that the woman enticed and seduced him. Then, rather than the man, the woman must defend herself. The word of a woman carried no significant weight. Consequently, a woman, with no right to voice her account of the alleged seduction, would be put to death. It is my contention that God prescribed a truth test . The purpose was not to convict the accused woman of a crime, but to defend her from a man's false accusations. This truth test , in reality, was the only hope a woman possessed to uphold her innocence. Evidently, the object of the truth test was to prove that an accused woman spoke the truth, rather than to prove that she lied. God's intention was to establish her innocence, if she were truly innocent, rather than to establish her guilt. Also in the context is an interesting usage of the word "jealous." Whenever the word jealous referred to God, it had the sense of an attribute. When the word jealousy was used about a human, it implied a negative characteristic. Would God be jealous of humanity? Was he insecure about His creation? God's jealousy is positive jealousy ; that is, God has everything beneficial to offer humanity. The following verse explains that there is no reason for God to doubt Himself:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent" hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num. 23:19).

Israel had gone away from God to seek out other sources of help even though there were no other sources. That's what God wanted them to realize:

"They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods" (Deut. 32:16a).

Humans experience negative jealousy ; it is jealousy based on self doubt. Self doubt when expressed toward another becomes negative jealousy. It is an emotion we feel when we think we have nothing to offer to another person that would cause the other person to appreciate us or want to be with us. Human jealousy is quite the opposite of God's jealousy. The Bible describes a man's self doubt which he experienced as negative jealousy. Jealousy, when experienced by a man, was directed toward a woman he owned. People might think a woman had more reason to be jealous, but that was not the case. A woman wouldn't experience self doubt because no man actually belonged to her, so she really had no prospect of losing a man. Since a man had as many women as he wished, he faced the risk of losing their loyalty. If an owner could prove unfaithfulness, no questions were asked; the woman was condemned to death (Lev. 20:10). But, the jealousy spoken of was based solely on an assumption (Num. 5). The assumption was not based on an act committed by a woman; to the contrary, his assumption was concocted strictly in his mind. Subsequently, God's truth test was actually a woman's only defense against male paranoia (Num. 5).

8. Article taken from Moody Monthly , (Published by Moody Bible Institute, date unknown.)

9. Viki Zunzunegui, et. al., Study in American Journal of Epidemiology , (The University of California at Berkeley's School of Public Health), Reprinted in Discover magazine, June 1986, p. 10.

Chapter Five

Biblical Terms Defined

Certain words in the Bible need to be defined because through the centuries their meanings have been changed. The meanings have been changed to agree with the definitions of the day during which the words are being interpreted. It's extremely important that we clarify the meaning of words connected with divorce . If we apply today's meanings to certain biblical words, we will not understand the conditions or circumstances these biblical words actually convey.

For example, consider our present day definitions of the following words and then compare our present day definitions with biblical definitions:

Present Definition Biblical Definition

Harlotry or whoring: to sell the Harlotry, lust, whoring (each body for sexual purposes. essentially has same meaning): to desire one or more than one sexual partner.

Fornication: to have sex before marriage or outside of marriage. Fornication: to have more than one sexual partner at the same time.

Adultery: to have sex with anyone other than the marriage partner. Adultery: to depart from one with the intention to go to another.

Moses' law of divorce was for the good of Israel. It provided that harlotry, fornication, and adultery (in the biblical sense) could each be avoided. In the Bible, a man committed harlotry if he desired another woman besides the one he already had. He committed fornication if he kept one woman while at the same time, he also had another woman. A man committed adultery if he decided, at any point in time, to dispose of the first woman with the intention to go to another woman.

Today, biblical fornication would be considered the same as polygamy or bigamy. Today, biblical adultery would be defined as unfaithfulness. Moses stipulated that when a man tired sexually of a woman, or simply didn't like her looks, he was to divorce her (send her away) before he took another woman. Thus, the divorce law, if observed, would have brought an end to polygamy in Israel (Deut. 24:1-4).

To help our understanding of biblical terms, we can compare them with our idea of having an affair . Suppose a married person wanted to have an affair; that affair would be the same as biblical harlotry. If a married person wanted to have an affair and still remain married, that person would commit biblical fornication. Whenever a married person divorces the spouse because he/she intends to go to another person, that divorce would be biblical adultery.

Consider Abraham's circumstance in the Bible. Had Abraham kept both Sarah and Hagar, he would have been committing biblical fornication. Had Abraham departed from Sarah with the intention to go to Hagar, he would have committed biblical adultery. Abraham did not commit adultery by having sexual intercourse with Hagar (that would be adultery according to today's definition). However, he would have committed biblical adultery had he left Sarah in order to go to Hagar (which he did not do). The arrangement between Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar (it was Sarah's idea) is today termed surrogate motherhood , though their circumstances were different. Today, a wife unable to have a child can agree with her husband to artificially implant his sperm into the reproductive organs of another woman. The surrogate mother agrees to carry the child as a service to the married couple. When the mother gives birth, the child becomes the property of its father's wife. This method differs from Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in that today no actual sexual intercourse occurs between the man and the mother of the child. After Sarah changed her mind, Hagar kept her child.

Suppose, prior to Israel's exodus from Egypt, God had spoken His words recorded in Exodus 21:10-11. During that time, Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, had two wives; he married sisters. Under God's ordinance, Jacob would have had to give equal treatment to each wife or send one of the two sisters back to their father's house. It's recorded in Genesis that Jacob favored Rachel (with whom he probably preferred to have sexual relations) over her sister Leah. But, both sisters were considered his wives. Jacob fathered children, not only with his two wives, but also with two handmaidens. Both Abraham and Jacob would have found themselves in a precarious situation had God's ordinance been spoken earlier, inasmuch as they openly practiced polygamy (bigamy) and fornication.

Apparently, even into the days when the gospels were written, God's ordinance had little effect on the male lifestyle.

God Cites Moses' Divorce Law

The prophet Jeremiah, in reference to Moses law of divorce , spoke of the acts of both adultery and fornication by the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah.

Jeremiah used the word "harlot" to describe the nation. They desired other lovers, that is, other gods. The nation committed adultery or figuratively speaking, "idolatry" when it left God in order to go to other gods. Adultery, in Hebrew, also has the meaning "to apostatize". 1

The seventh commandment (Ex. 20:14) cautions against any manner of adultery toward God (that is, leaving God in order to go other gods) because it only leads to hopeless despair. There are other women for a man to turn to, and other men for a woman to turn to, but humanity can turn to no other God. God has no equal (Ex. 20:3-5).

God made special reference to harlotry, adultery, and idolatry through the prophet Jeremiah.

God says, "If a husband divorces his wife, And she goes from him, And belongs to another man, Will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me" declares the Lord. (Jer. 3:1 NASB)

God quoted Moses' law of divorce (Deut. 24:1-4). The wording (Jer. 3:1), when compared with Moses' words, sounds confusing. We would misrepresent these two passages if we thought a man divorced a woman because of a flaw in her character or that the woman had been so immoral that the man could no longer bear to live with her. The phrase "Will he still return to her?" seems to indicate that a man had the right to refuse a woman permission to ever return to him. That would appear reasonable except for a legal restriction stipulated by Moses: "then her former husband [owner] who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife [property]" (Deut. 24:4).

God clarified the restriction, stating it in the form of a question: "Will he [the owner] still return to her?" The King James Version is clearer; instead of "still", the word is translated "again." "Shall he return to her again?" "Again" agrees with the Hebrew Old Testament text which says that the man could not take a woman (again) the second time.

Moses' Restriction

Thus, when God quoted Moses' law of divorce, He placed the restriction where Moses intended it to be. The restriction is addressed towards men. If women had rights, such as ownership, then Moses' divorce law would undoubtedly have also been addressed to them. Israel's women had no right of ownership. A woman could not divorce a man under any circumstances nor could she choose to be disowned by her owner. That fact explains why Moses insisted that if a man didn't want a woman, he must divorce her in writing and he was not permitted to own her again. If he didn't want her in the first place, he couldn't have her a second time.

Legal Rights

The United States' legal system can either license a marriage or decree a divorce. Without a legal system, this or any other country would be in chaos. Courts rule on child custody and determine the financial responsibility of either, or both, partners involved in a divorce. Both partners have legal advantages in our country; nevertheless, constant squabbles persist over matters of child support and alimony. Ours is not a perfect system, but it's far superior to the system described in the Bible. American women and men share equal, legal access to the courts. During biblical days, Jewish women possessed no legal recourse.

The Hearts of Men Were Obstinate

The gospels present several discourses on the same predicament. Jesus was asked by the Pharisees why Moses allowed a man to divorce a woman (Matt. 19:7-8). Jesus told them it was because their hearts were obstinate toward women (v. 8). Jesus confirmed that unjust conditions did exist during all of biblical history, up to and including the times when the gospels were written.

The hearts of Israel's men were primarily obstinate toward God. God declared that He had the legal right to divorce Israel for her adulteries (Jer. 3:8) in accord with Moses' divorce law (Deut. 24:1-4). Of course, God never divorced the nation, nor was His heart unkind toward them. Jesus told the Pharisees that men's hearts were, and had been, perverse throughout biblical history.

A question still remains. Why did God say that He did divorce Israel (Jer. 3:8)? Was God obliged to obey Moses? Scripture explains that God's thoughts and His ways are not the same as human thoughts and human ways. (See author's notes) 2

God Was Israel's Husband

God said He was the husband of the nation, so He had the legal right to divorce her. But, He didn't divorce her. Instead, and here's the irony of it all, the nation willfully left God and sought out false gods. The male population held the reins of rule in Israel; they represented the nation (in this case the wife). God referred to the nation as a wife in order to explain, especially to the males, the severity of their condition. The men both as individuals, and also as a nation, commonly practiced both fornication and adultery. God married the nation (Jer. 3:14) and promised to be a faithful husband to her, but the nation desired other lovers (Jer. 3:1). God explained that the nation had no right or reason to leave Him but, the nation continued to leave (Jer. 3:6) intending to worship idols. The nation always experienced terrible distress whenever it departed from God.

Here the analogy ends, that is, the analogy between God, as owner of the nation, and men, as the owners of women. God did not send the nation away nor tell her to depart from Him. He didn't insist that the nation be put to death for her adulteries; instead, God asked Israel and Judah to return to Him (Jer. 3:12-14). God, in His love and mercy, graciously promised to remain their Lord. The Bible here defines the difference between adultery and fornication. The one kingdom, Israel, refused to return from her adultery. God said "Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah" (Jer. 3:11 NASB .)

Judah, the other kingdom, agreed to return to God, but insisted on bringing her lovers with her so she could continue to have her idols. In other words, Judah, by continuing to worship its idols, "committed fornication." In response to this, God said Judah did return but in deception (See Jer. 3:10). To put it another way, Judah wanted both, to return to God and also keep on having her affairs with idols.

Scandalous Conditions

Whenever God spoke to the nation, apart from prophetic announcements, He most often dealt directly with the existing conditions. We cannot begin to imagine the circumstance under which Israel's women lived. Were the conditions for women so serious that it required this degree of prominence in scripture? Inasmuch as women make up half of all human creation, there's no doubt God did deem their mistreatment as serious. Surely, God would regard the mistreatment of any member of His creation as serious. Israel's female abuse was a national scandal. Jesus later addressed the scribes and Pharisees as the children of the men who had killed the prophets God sent to warn them (Matt. 23:31).

Had Old Testament conditions been different, God could have spoken directly to women, rather than to the men. Would women exhibit more compassion toward the men? Probably, as God knows, women also realized how fragile men can be. However, under those existing circumstances, His words would have been merely a token gesture at best. If God had spoken directly to women, they would have suffered even greater frustration. Women were helpless to act on His words. Israel's women possessed no legal, religious, or social authority on which to act.

What If God Is a Woman?

Some have suggested that God is a woman, a She, rather than a He. With that in mind, John 3:16 would read: For God so loved the world that She sent Her only begotten Daughter that whosoever believeth in Her shall not perish but have eternal life. It's not my intention to be facetious. On the contrary, the point I wish to make is that had the Savior of the world been a woman, not only would she have been killed for disagreeing with the Pharisees, she, also, would never have been listened to by any man. She would have had no disciples. She would not have been allowed to speak in a synagogue, let alone be allowed to teach Her doctrines. She would have been ignored by all males and probably even by most females. Granted, a female prophet may have been heard during Old Testament days, but no woman could have been a prophetess during the time of the gospels. The prevailing traditions would not have permitted it.

How were Israel's men able to inflict such unjust treatment on the women of Israel? Israel's men didn't outsmart, outthink, or outwit the women; they merely outmuscled them. Israel's men forced their unjust will on women through physical intimidation!

Could God have freed the slaves in Israel as President Abraham Lincoln had done through a Civil War? Had God used the same measures as were required by President Lincoln, it's quite probable the persons willing to go to war for the civil rights of women would have been only women.

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 5.

1. The American College Dictionary (New York, NY: Random House Inc., 1963), p. 59.

2. Author's notes: In Genesis 18:12, Sarah addressed Abraham as her lord (small "l"). In Hebrew, the word means "master and owner".(a) Abraham was Sarah's master and owner. One word in Hebrew, which describes God is adonai . The Bible describes God as "Master - Owner" of all His creation. After God called Abraham, He promised to make him a great nation. God promised to be "Lord" of that nation. When God made a covenant with them, He said the nation belonged to Him; He owned them. God chose to be the Husband of Israel. God said the nation chose to leave Him; He said, "You forsake the Lord [Master - Owner] your God" (Jer. 2:19). God told the nation it left the One who owned them, the One to whom it belonged (Jer. 2:17).

(a) James Strong. Strong's Concordance Of The Bible (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.), p. 8.

adon ; from an unused root (meaning to rule); sovereign, i.e. controller (human or divine):--lord, master, owner.

Chapter Six

The Pain of Adultery

Marriage is certainly a sensible idea, and without question God accentuated monogamy. However, because of the prevailing conditions, God said it was best at times that an unhappy couple separate (Ex. 21). The separation God prescribed was not an ethical pronouncement. The separation He suggested was neither a right or wrong alternative. It was a necessary injunction designed to prevent further cruelty toward women. God's restriction actually fostered monogamy. A man was told he was to provide equal treatment toward each woman who lived with him. He must provide food, clothing, and meet the sexual needs of each woman (meeting the sexual needs would be the most demanding). If he failed to do so, he must allow each neglected woman to return to her own family. Jesus verified that a man will fail to be equally faithful to two women at the same time (Lu. 16:18). (This idea will be covered in a later chapter)

Why hadn't God advised women to leave abusive men? Consider the consequences. If a woman left a man, her life would be in jeopardy because her leaving would violate the rights of the man who owned her. She could have been accused of adultery and probably would have been severely punished, or killed. Or, had God suggested that a man leave a woman so that he could go to another, His suggestion would have caused the man to commit adultery. Later, Moses' divorce law permitted a woman to go to another man after she had been divorced. In that way, she could not be accused of, and punished for, adultery.

Within a marriage, adultery requires a triangle (three separate persons). Invariably, distress is felt by at least one of the three. Initially, the person being left will probably suffer the most. The person doing the leaving and/or the person to whom he/she is going might be troubled at a later time. Each person experiences a different sort of pain. For example,

- (1) the person being left will most likely feel rejected. This same person probably will feel also like a failure (that is, one who was less than a satisfactory partner of the one leaving). Women of Israel surely experienced these feelings.
- (2) The person intending to go to another often feels unloved; this person might feel guilty for leaving. Generally, the act will remain in his/her mind a longer time although, during biblical history, few men would ever experience guilt because male adultery was the ordinary way of life.
- (3) Today, the other person in an affair may never know whether or not he/she is truly loved or is merely a replacement who's expected to alleviate (possibly imagined) unloved feelings. Was he/she the one preferred or merely a second choice to the one actually preferred? This question may be answered later if still another person becomes the object of the one doing the leaving. Actually, a person needn't be married to undergo this type of pain.

Is Suffering Beneficial ?

Today, if divorce was not considered wrong, most of the above discomfort could be avoided; that is to say, divorce, as an alternative to an unhappy marriage, could take place before an affair is started. Still, what about an unhappy married couple who have been told they must remain together in spite of how unhappy they are? If we consider the following options available to an unhappy married couple, then can we decide which is more reasonable or unreasonable?

- (a) To continue to live together and remain unhappy?
- (b) To turn to an affair rather than separate?
- (c) To be forced to separate when the inner emotions become so bottled up that an emotional breakdown is imminent? or

(d) To be allowed to separate without being scarred by the merciless stigma which insists that separation is wrong or sinful?

A separation of a couple may be unavoidable in order to relieve or escape pain. Is it beneficial for people to suffer? Beginning with Cain, many consider it their right to inflict pain on others; that type of person is abnormally sadistic. Others need pain because they are abnormally masochistic. God does not encourage such abnormal, behavioral attitudes.

Separation Is an Alternative to Unhappiness!

Today, as well as during biblical history, adultery could be avoided were married couples permitted to separate before an affair begins. In that way, each person's dignity would be preserved. Separation is not now, nor ever was, a "cure-all" for a couple's unhappiness. It's simply a sensible alternative to unresolvable conflicts between two unhappy persons. This bind is the one couples most often find themselves facing whenever they're unhappy together. Yet, the alternative of separation is not a permissible option open to them. However, God did permit separation. He understands we can't guarantee that our intended lifelong choices will never change. God realizes we are not omniscient.

Today, whatever God's attitude is thought to be toward a man and a woman divorcing, the Old Testament clearly shows how God required that unpreferred, female, sexual partners be allowed a separation from their owners (Ex. 21:10-11). The King James Version in translating this chapter uses the terms "betrothed" when referring to the owner buying female slaves, and the term "wife" is used in reference to the first, second, or however many sexual partners a man owned. "Marriage" and "wife" are both overstated, idealistic terms considering the sorrowful predicament of Israel's women.

Moses was dealing with a male population estimated to be in the millions. His divorce law was less than persuasive and, for the most part, went unheeded. It's evident that at times, Moses pleaded, begged, even threatened the people hoping to force upon them an awareness of God. We might say that Moses found himself between a "Rock" (God) and a hard place (the nation).

Most of what God spoke was addressed primarily to Israel's men (Jer. 4:3). God was not prejudiced toward men, nor did He favor women. God spoke mainly to the men because only the men had a right to act on God's words (Lev. 20:10).

Chapter Seven

Divorce Debated

Preceding the birth of Jesus, Jewish Rabbis both studied and debated the Old Testament, especially its legal content, which included divorce and remarriage. There were two major schools of thought. Rabbi Hillel, a liberal scholar of the Old Testament Law, thought there were many causes for divorce. Rabbi Shammai, a conservative scholar, stated that adultery was the only cause for divorce and could be committed only by a woman. Today, the debate regarding divorce is whether it is right or wrong. In the Bible the debate concerned only the cause for divorce.

Jewish Tradition

Unfortunately, Jewish, national tradition distinguished men as superior to women. The men were probably unaware of the disparaging plight of women. Though conditions for women were shameful, the men had a legitimate right to overlook circumstances they perceived to be routine.

It appears, from the content of the Old Testament, that ongoing debates were in constant motion. One particular debate between God and the male population of Israel was over equality, male and female and Jewish and Gentile equality. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, stressed this very point proclaiming that "there is neither Jew nor Greek ... neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). It's quite possible males of Israel thought they alone were the chosen people of God.

Jesus Questioned Jewish Tradition

It's recorded that Jesus taught as no man had ever before taught (Mar. 1:22-27). His teaching questioned both the legal and religious Jewish traditions. The Pharisees especially reprimanded Jesus whenever He questioned their traditional beliefs. Even His disciples could not understand His concern for Jewish or Gentile women. Jesus' disciples were often confused by His open disregard for tradition.

The Pharisees Anticipated a Messiah

Most religious teachers, including the Pharisees, believed they pleased God by doing good. Righteousness, it was presumed, required keeping the law. However, the devout Pharisees had gone beyond the general view of the law. They believed theirs was the one and only correct way to please God. In their anticipation of a messiah, they probably believed he would readily agree with them, champion their cause, and pronounce them righteous. Thus, the Pharisees found little comfort in Jesus' views (Lu. 5:29-32).

The Sermon On The Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is extremely important to our discussion on divorce because much of the misinterpretation about this subject has come from a portion of that sermon. Up until that critical time in Israel's history, it was presumed that a person produced righteousness primarily through human effort, that is, by keeping the laws of the Old Testament. In fairness to the Bible, we need to recognize the value of the Old Testament Law; it deserves no criticism. Unlike anything previously or since written for the good of a society, the Old Testament Law remains faultless. During His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reaffirmed the value of the Old Testament Law claiming it to be the Word of God (Matt. 5:17-18).

What Did His Sermon Mean ?

A great deal of discussion has taken place on the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. Some scholars have suggested that it represents a future Kingdom Age; still others think it prescribes a model for Christian living. To expect all Christians to follow this model would be met with inevitable failure. The demands or expectations of the Sermon on the Mount exceed human capabilities (note especially Matt. 5:48).

Oscar Wilde once said "Nothing worth learning can be taught." If we are to understand truth, we must first unlearn the untruth we've been taught. It seems that we humans, by nature, possess a need to exhaust our own ineffective efforts in order for us to learn what is effective. Experience results primarily from making mistakes; making mistakes is the most natural, human thing we do.

Divorce - Remarriage in His Sermon

Jesus' sermon is quite significant, inasmuch as He spoke of divorce and remarriage for the first time. An especially important common ground exists within His teaching on divorce and other subjects. The main point Jesus made in this sermon was that the Old Testament law had been misrepresented.

Jesus' sermon contained an important lesson for the disciples, which as it turns out, became the theme of His entire discourse. He didn't offend the disciples by disputing the sincerity of their faith, nor did He suggest they close their minds to their traditional teaching. He respected their right to

hear both sides of a religious issue. His teaching was sensibly fair, not intended to burden His hearers. Jesus informed the disciples that humans, though well intended, are unable to produce righteousness.

When first reading this sermon, it appears that Jesus agreed with their traditional teaching (Matt. 5:20). Surprisingly, Jesus didn't warn the disciples that it was a mistake to believe the doctrine of good works. Instead, He taught the disciples how through the process of trial and error, they might realize that no amount of good works could ever produce righteousness.

New And Improved

Today, we're all familiar with certain commercials that claim a product is now "new" and "improved"; that is, the manufacturer may have added a feature, hoping to make the product more appealing when it was never really any good to begin with.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proposed a new and improved method, which, out of necessity, must surpass the spiritual process of the Scribes and Pharisees. God intends for us to understand our human limitations. Jesus explained that no matter what lofty spiritual goal we strive toward, our well intended efforts can produce no tangible results. Finally, it's because of our inability to produce something Godly that we learn this truth.

The Pharisees balked at Jesus' inference. To the contrary, they considered His behavior both unrighteous and disgusting. They faulted Him for healing on the Sabbath, talking to women, having dinner with publicans and sinners.

During His sermon Jesus purposely followed the same line of thinking as the scribes and Pharisees (righteousness is produced by what humans do or don't do). Jesus systematically rehearsed for the benefit of the disciples what the Pharisees and Scribes regarded as righteous behavior (Matt. 5:21). He told the disciples that if they continued in the false righteous process advocated by the Scribes and Pharisees, they must further improve on that process because, as it was, it produced nothing but false hope. Jesus made it clear that the validity of the Law would not be diminished. No one is to detract from God's Word (Matt. 5:17-18).

Have We Misrepresented God's Word?

Matthew 5:17 begins a transition which moves from a positive fact in verses 17 and 18, to an entirely different viewpoint in verse 19. Jesus appears to contradict His earlier statement. He declared that nothing should be added to the Law; however, in verse twenty one, Jesus begins to do exactly what He said must not be done. Either Jesus, inadvertently, made a mistake, or He was quite sure of the direction His words were taking.

Jesus did add something in this chapter. Jesus added more words but not more words to God's Words. He added words to a misrepresentation of God's Word. His primary purpose was to teach the disciples that a misrepresentation of God's Words had become the traditional belief of that day. Jesus' words raised yet a higher standard to the traditional beliefs. He wanted to teach them that their efforts to live up to their traditional, ethical standards could not produce anything of spiritual value. He didn't say that righteousness must be earned. He said that true righteousness doesn't cost anything.

The Pharisees erred; they took the keeping of the law seriously, even to the point of believing they could successfully keep the law and by keeping it attain for themselves a place in heaven. The Pharisees didn't adhere to orthodox religion, which included temple worship. They were an independent group which went beyond the Rabbis. The Pharisees believed they were superior to the religion of that day. They also maintained an unfriendly attitude toward the national religion.

Traditional Beliefs

During His sermon, Jesus explained to His disciples how futile it was for them to think they could to do enough to gain access into heaven. He presented this fact by overstating the deeds they must do to achieve a reward. He intended that they realize all their efforts were useless. Jesus prescribed unrealistic deeds which, if attempted, were doomed to failure. It was totally impossible to complete an adequate amount of good deeds. He pointed out that what they hoped to gain was actually freely given to them. 2

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 7.

1. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life And Times Of Jesus The Messiah*, Vol II (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 333-334.
2. Author's note: In the case with the disciples, they would not fail to do enough to live up to the standard of the Pharisees. Nevertheless, they would have failed to do enough to surpass the scribes and Pharisees because they had no way of knowing if or when they had done enough. They couldn't actually settle on an unknown minimum nor reach an unknown maximum. There would never have been a way to know when enough was enough. Under those circumstances the disciples would really be making judgment on themselves for their own failures, regardless of their successes. They would have been become horribly disappointed in themselves. This disappointment might, hopefully, have allowed them to give up trying to do enough, as was witnessed by the attitude of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22).

Chapter Eight

"You Shall Not Commit Adultery"

During those days, whenever adultery was committed, the concentration of judgment was towards the woman involved. A classic instance of that happening was recorded in an account in which a man and a woman were caught in the act of adultery. However, the Pharisees accused only the woman (note Jo. 8:1-11). Subsequently, the Pharisees excused the man but didn't hesitate to charge a woman with adultery and proceed to stone her to death. Jesus told the Pharisees, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7b). Since, Jesus was the only one among them without sin, He, alone, would have been the first one to throw a stone. But, Jesus was probably the only one who didn't intend to stone the woman.

Israel's males had taken Moses' divorce law (Deut. 24:1-4) and applied its provisions to suit themselves. They allowed themselves to pick and choose as many women as they wanted. A man could accumulate any number of women and be legally protected. The laws were initiated and enforced by men, so any laws they added obviously favored themselves. Bigamy (polygamy) was a way of life in the Bible, whereas, today in the United States, bigamy or polygamy is illegal. A woman feels hurt when a man transfers his interest away from her to another. No woman can feel loved under

such conditions. In the Bible, a woman was compelled to remain with the man who owned her. Unfortunately, her misery was further increased because no other alternative was open to her.

Changing Lifestyles

To summarize Bible conditions up to this point, throughout most of Old Testament history, males possessed all rights of ownership. They maintained all political, religious, and social representation. God didn't object to males having rights; however, He was concerned that females had no rights. The males had usurped authority which was not justifiably theirs and used Old Testament laws for their own benefit. 1

Lifestyles Reversed

God had reversed the male lifestyle (Ex. 21:10-11). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also reversed the male lifestyle.

During the time of the Gospels, a man desired all the women he found attractive without any restrictions. However, for a woman to watch men was considered impure. Even a Rabbi's wife was granted a minimal amount of dignity. Some Rabbis placed rigid restrictions on their wives. They would lock their wives inside the houses, not allow the wife to talk to neighbors, or refuse wives permission to be seen in public. 2 To place such restrictions on wives was not considered possessive; it was their legal right. Still, some Rabbis were less restrictive with themselves. They justified their watching women, other than their wives, take baths. 3 Rabbis' wives had no social or moral right to complain to or about their husbands. Furthermore, a wife had no legal right to divorce her husband, regardless of his behavior toward her or his other wives.

In John 8, the Pharisees did not bring to Jesus the male caught in the act of "committing adultery." If a woman "slept around," she was labeled an adulteress. Subsequently, she was stoned to death and, supposedly, doomed to hell's fire. If a man slept around, he was within his normal rights. If the same thing happened today, a man might be labeled "macho," a woman labeled a "tramp." Perhaps, some attitudes haven't really changed that much.

The Pain Of Unfaithfulness

I recall one woman, married for twenty six years, who had come for marriage counseling. Her husband was having an affair, which was not his first. But, in this affair, the other woman called him on his home phone and sent love letters to his home address. He admitted his anticipation was like that of a young school boy. His wife was extremely distraught over what she felt was an intrusion into her very existence as a woman. She was emotionally and mentally devastated. She had come to the final point at which time she said she'd had enough. She had lost all feeling for her husband but was willing to stay in the marriage, as was her husband, but on her part, only for the sake of her grown children and grandchildren. Probably no greater emotional pain can be experienced than to being married to a person who's unfaithful.

Similarities In Old And New Testaments

Similarities are apparent between God's words in the Old Testament and Jesus' words in the Gospels which refer to marriage, divorce and remarriage:

- (1). Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, their words were directed to the men. Had they directed their words toward women, women could not lawfully act on them.
- (2). Men believed adultery could be committed only by women.
- (3). In both testaments only men had rights.
- (4). Women were traditionally subservient to men.
- (5). Both God's and Jesus' words supported female/male equality.
- (6). Neither God nor Jesus forced men to extend equality to women.
- (7). Men rejected the equality which God intended from the beginning of human creation (Gen. 5:1-2; Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:8).
- (8). During the Gospels, Jesus reiterated equality (Matt. 19:4-8).
- (9). The male lifestyle assumed superiority over females.
- (10). Finally, both God and Jesus scanted a reverse of the lifestyle in Israel.

Lust Is Adultery

Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye have heard" (Matt. 5:21) indicating that someone had previously told them something. The disciples had already heard teaching about adultery. Jesus didn't go on to say it is written in the Word of God. Instead, He stated "it was said." The sequence, beginning with verse twenty seven, was in regard to the male and female lifestyles.

You have heard that it was said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"; (Matt. 5:27 NASB).

What the men had heard was that only women commit adultery. Jesus reversed that thinking.

But I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:28 NASB).

Here, Jesus began to reverse the male lifestyle. First, He makes it clear what adultery actually is. His definition agrees with God's definition, in other words, to leave one partner while intending to go to another (note Jer. 3).

Jesus said that to look on a woman with lust (desire) in the heart is to commit adultery. Why is lust defined as adultery? What did Jesus mean when He said that if a man desires a woman, he's already committed adultery with her in his heart? "Lust" means to desire. It's difficult to define since it refers to any degree of desire.

Another important word is the Greek word for heart, *kardia*, from which we take our word for heart, cardiac. *Kardia*, in Greek, can mean either the mind or the emotions or both the mind and the emotions. In this case (v. 28), it describes a man who desires a woman within both his mind and his emotions. Jesus suggested that a man, by desiring a woman, had, in essence, committed adultery with her in his mind and emotions.

Internal Adultery

Before thinking of verse twenty eight in a literal sense, we need to consider its implication. For a man, the entire sexual act can begin and be finished solely within the thoughts and imagination of his mind and emotions. The act can be achieved entirely without requiring any actual physical contact with a woman. In successive order, a man is capable, within his mind and emotions, to desire a woman with his eyes, undress her in his mind, and

perform sexually with her within his mind and emotions. Then, at the conclusion of the sexual act, he will commit adultery against that woman by departing from her, to go (with his eyes) to still another woman. The act of lust, solely within the boundaries of the mind and emotions, becomes an internal act of adultery. Jesus' statements broke with the Jewish tradition that had allowed men unrestricted sexual privileges.

It's conceivable while observing a group of women at a beach, a man might experience internally an entire orgy simply through the sexual exercise of his eyes, mind, and emotions. A man might engage in similar sensuous gratification by looking at pictures of women. Though Jesus is referring specifically to a man, a woman might also experience the same sort of sexual imagery.

During the time of the Gospels, many double standards existed. A woman was allowed only one husband; a man was permitted any number of wives. According to Jesus' comparison between lust and adultery, if a woman deserved death for committing adultery, a man deserved death for lusting after a woman. Retribution would be equal for both men and women.

Jesus' Paradox

Jesus didn't mean that it was wrong for a man to desire a woman. His statement represented a paradox, a paradox meant to expose the diversity of lifestyles between men and women. God didn't intend for women to be merely sexual conveniences for men. His paradox displayed before men the injustice confronting women. The men of Israel could never appreciate women as long as they endorsed their own sense of superiority.

The full impact of Jesus' paradox is realized through a series of hyperboles. He made a number of extreme statements which He never intended be taken literally. For example, "And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matt. 5:29 NASB).

Why would Jesus suggest doing something that would be so damaging to the body, in this case "tear out your eye"? Since the Pharisees believed adultery would be judged punishable in hell's fire, lust became just as serious an offense as adultery. It meant that lust also was punishable with death in hell's fire.

Jesus explained to His disciples that if they thought like the proud Pharisees and hoped to escape eternal damnation, they too must stop doing wrong. To further make His point, Jesus added another excessive statement. It was better for them to remove any part of their body that might cause their whole body to be thrown into hell. His hyperbole suggested they control their eye and what it looks at, or tear it out and toss it away. Jesus did not intend that they take him seriously as seen in verse thirty. He added, just to be on the safe side, "Also be careful what you touch or you may have to cut off your hand and throw it away."

Suppose we would add an extra hyperbole, not to be taken seriously. If a man dreams about a woman and during his dream he desires her sexually and has a nocturnal emission, that man must never again go to sleep for fear he might have a lustful dream. From that day forward, to prevent the man from lusting for a woman, he best have a mind altering lobotomy to escape the penalty of hell. No one could possibly keep such stringent restrictions, regardless of how hard he/she tried, for example, trying never go to sleep to avoid having a lustful dream.

Realistically, no matter how much effort a person put forth to prevent himself from doing wrong, he still could never be certain of escaping hell's fire. It would become a hopeless situation. A person can put forth a lot of effort but still never know, religiously speaking, how he stands. He could be given an "E" for effort but nothing more nor less. No sensible person would ever agree to that effort, and Jesus never expected the disciples to agree with His extreme recommendations.

Jesus' told the disciples they were, so to speak, spinning their wheels because all their efforts were ineffective. The unknown effectiveness of their efforts didn't produce contentment. Instead, it resulted in anxiety and frustration. Jesus intended to ease their future anxiety.

Jesus spoke truth; however, at that time He possessed no authority. On the other hand, the Pharisees had both legal and religious authority. Unfortunately, their own pride prevented them from being objective even toward themselves. Pride is very subtle; initially, it's meant for good, but eventually it inflicts injury on all those on whom it's imposed. As an example, one might say to another person, "Love me the way I want you to or you'll force me to hurt you."

Women's Rights

Jesus spoke about divorce to show men that women's rights were nonexistent. If men listened to the paradox about their lifestyle, they were forced, essentially, to react in one of two ways. Either, they would realize women were treated unfairly and perhaps correct the condition, or they would reaffirm their superiority. Apparently the Pharisees, in particular, chose the latter. One notable exception might have been Paul. Paul's Jewish lifestyle shows through in his writings. A devout religionist, he describes his struggle with Jewish attitudes toward women. Similarly, the Catholic Church has traditionally opposed the ordination of women to the priesthood. Many Protestant denominations have yet to ordain women to the ministry. Our lifestyles, as in the Bible, are deeply imbedded with tradition.

God had reversed the traditional male lifestyle through an ordinance intended to correct the inhuman treatment toward women (Ex. 21:10-11). Jesus reversed the traditional lifestyle for the same reason (Matt. 5:27-32).

Up until this time women were the perpetrators of any male/female discord. When men committed adultery women were charged with seduction. Jesus' injunction reversed that injustice. Now, men were the perpetrators. According to Matthew 5:28, men, not women, became the seducers. Jesus said now men's lust was as serious an offense as women's adultery. Men assumed they had the right to look at and desire any and every woman they found attractive. Men also assumed their rights exceeded the rights of women. Jesus' paradox contradicted the traditional status of men. They no longer had a right to seduce all women they so desired. His paradox established what might have been called a new and better lifestyle for Israel. The misconceptions and misrepresentations prevalent in that day were grossly contrary to what God had intended.

Is Sexual Desire Grounds for Divorce?

These verses take on a sexual connotation if Jesus meant them to be taken literally. Since adultery is considered by many the only grounds for divorce, a literal interpretation of these verses could conclude that all who sexually lust for another, other than their spouse, have committed adultery. Subsequently, whenever either marriage partner even desires another person, the other partner has substantial grounds for divorce. The major implication here insists that every married person who lusts to any degree has produced grounds for divorce. D. Martyn Lloyd Jones apparently interpreted these words literally in His book, *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount*. 4 Former President Jimmy Carter has admitted to the act of lust which would mean that Rosalynn Carter has grounds for divorce.

The interpreter should ask another question: Is lust (desire) for another person morally right or wrong? If it's implied that desire is wrong, the word takes on a whole different condition. Sexual desire for a person of the opposite sex, rather than a normal attraction toward a possible mate, becomes an immoral craving. If we take Jesus' words literally, they place an entirely different significance on normal desire. At what point normal desire becomes lust can not be known. A literal interpretation, in all probability, would increase rather than decrease the number of divorces. Everytime one spouse spotted the other looking (lustfully) at another person, he/she could head directly toward the divorce court.

Many religious leaders believe the Bible must be taken literally, but not to the point of being inconvenient. That interpretation, however, would presume that Jesus meant what He said only part of the time. Jesus didn't intend that He be interpreted literally every time He spoke.

Persons who insist that every word Jesus spoke be taken literally place themselves under a serious obligation. In this instance, the one who lusts with the eye is obliged to tear his eye out and throw it away, or if a man touches a woman, he must cut off his hand. It's possible the average man would eventually die from self mutilation.

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 8.

1. John Lightfoot, A Commentary On The New Testament From The Talmud And Hebraica Matthew - Mark, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 121.

The Jews used polygamy, and the divorcing of their wives, with one and the same license: and this, that they might have change, and all for the sake of lust. ...But they restrained this, not so much out of some principles of chastity, as that lest a man, being burdened with many wives, might not be able to afford them food and clothing, and due benevolence: for thus they comment concerning this bridle of polygamy.

2. p. 121.

3. p. 118.

4. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies In The Sermon On The Mount , Vol I (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted May 1981), p. 239.

Chapter Nine

The Exception Clause

I remember one particular husband whose wife had divorced him. Neither was involved with someone outside the marriage. He didn't want to be divorced; however, his wife told him she had to be honest about her lack of feelings for him. She could no longer hide her unhappiness. He was very lonely without her. Several weeks after the divorce was final, the minister of his church dropped by his place of business. His pastor asked "What do you plan to do with your life?" He told his pastor that he was so unhappy he didn't want to live the rest of his life alone. He hoped someday he'd meet another woman and remarry some day. His pastor warned him "You must understand, the Bible says that you can't remarry once you're divorced." The man tried to explain to his pastor that he wasn't the one who wanted the divorce.

He struggled with wanting to remarry, but he was afraid he would offend God. He said he prayed that God would help him to know what to do. Two weeks later, he met a woman whose husband had died a few years earlier. She, too, was left alone with young children to raise. Eventually, they fell in love and were married. He felt uneasy at first; however, later, he believed God brought them together. Undoubtedly, God understood their individual needs.

It's difficult to know for sure just how God deals with these types of circumstances (and there are many). Nevertheless, knowing how well this couple adjusted (they had their struggles) makes one conclude that God approved of their marriage.

Were Jesus to make a personal announcement today about divorce, He would probably commend our civil laws which give both men and women a legal right to seek a divorce. Fortunately, He would speak to a society which has an entirely different view towards the civil rights of women. Jesus could speak openly about our present conditions because we enjoy freedoms never before known by previous civilizations. Ours is not a perfect society, but we've come a long way from the barbaric times of centuries past. Today, divorce is a legal matter as it was also in Bible times. But unfortunately, today divorce is also seen as a religious moral matter, a presumption based solely on biblical legal conditions. We've made a moral issue out of a legal issue. We've attempted to establish a moral cause for divorce from what in the Bible was actually a legal cause. This attempt is why we haven't as yet arrived at an absolute, moral cause for divorce. A moral cause was never suggested nor considered in the Bible. Jesus made a statement about divorce which was strictly a legal pronouncement, a pronouncement that was hardly given notice by anyone except His disciples. No religious or moral judgment was implied in the Bible. Jesus' entire purpose in speaking about divorce and remarriage has been grossly misrepresented.

Jesus' first mention of divorce and remarriage followed the same extreme form He used in the preceding verses (Matt. 5:27-30). He spoke about a legal matter that exposed the outrageous conditions of that day!

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. (Matt. 5:31-32)

Jesus' statements often puzzled His disciples. On many occasions, He took them aside, answered their questions, and explained His teachings. Again, with a paradox, Jesus reversed the order of the Jewish lifestyle. The key phrase, often referred to as the exception clause, has been the topic of much controversy. The phrase reads "saving for the cause of fornication" (Matt. 5:32), and its other usage is "except it be for fornication" (Matt. 19:9).

From a technical standpoint, these two phrases appear to be the same; however, a Greek word translated "saving for the cause" (Matt. 5:32) is not in Matthew 19:9. The word's omitted (Matt. 19:9) because the circumstances were different. Jesus actually spoke to two different groups at two different times. He spoke primarily to the disciples (Matt. 5:32) during His sermon on the mount. At a later time, He spoke directly to the Pharisees answering their question regarding the legal cause for divorce (Matt. 19:3-9).

"....saving for the cause of fornication"

Fornication meant to desire or possess more than one partner. "Saving for the cause" is the key phrase. "Cause" is translated from the Greek word *logou*; it's a word taken from the root *legO* which means to speak a word. *Logou* is also a form of the Greek word *logos* which means a word or a word spoken. Therefore, it's especially important to understand that this phrase could be translated "unless a word of fornication is spoken" by the woman.

Jesus did not recommend that a woman literally desire another man other than the man she belonged to. Nor did He imply that she live with both men. Neither did He suggest nor sanction fornication.

Jesus first alluded to Moses' divorce law; that is, whenever a man grew tired of a woman, he must give her a written legal document stating that she was no longer his property. However, according to Jesus that practice would change. Jesus announced that a man could not divorce a woman until the woman stated verbally that she desired another man besides him. Then, and only then, could the man divorce her. To paraphrase Matthew 5:32, "I say to men, if you no longer want a woman, you can't divorce her until she tells you that she prefers another man besides you."

Forced Adultery

Jesus further explained His paradox. If a man divorced a woman before she told him she preferred another man, he forced her to commit adultery. A woman had no control over her own circumstance; subsequently, when she left one man she had no way to support herself. If she went into prostitution to survive, she was risking being stoned to death. She had only one alternative; when forced to leave one man, she could only go to another man, which in essence was adultery. She was compelled to submit to another man or starve to death. Perhaps, she was better off an abused slave rather than a starving slave?

Jesus' intention can be understood only from a legal perspective, not a moral. The way Jesus put it, the risk of adultery on the woman's part was also reversed. The woman would become the one who determined who divorced and remarried her. She could not be forced to go to another man unless she chose another man.

Another phrase "and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Matt. 5:32) also is not recorded in Matthew 19:9. Suppose a man married a divorced woman who hadn't chosen to be divorced. He would marry a woman who was still married. According to Jesus' stipulation, every man who divorced a woman without her consent and every man who married a divorced woman should to be stoned to death for adultery. According to Leviticus 20:10, a man committed adultery by marrying a woman who was still another man's wife.

If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (Lev. 20:10 NASB)

This statement meant that if men continued to divorce and remarry as they wished, without women's consent, all men would eventually be stoned to death. Thus, the man who took a woman, not legitimately divorced, was to be put to death. Added to this act (not that Jesus meant this literally), whenever a man lusted toward (desired) a woman (which Jesus said was just as serious as adultery), as a consequence, the man was to be stoned to death (Matt. 5:28). The only way a man could avoid being stoned to death for lusting was to wait for a woman to choose to marry him. The only way men could avoid committing adultery and being stoned to death was to wait for their wives to choose other men.

In other words, each man would be limited in his marriage. He would be permanently married to the same woman; that is, if she so chose. Jesus' suggestion would not have resulted in the type of marriage and divorce laws we have today. Now women have the same right to divorce as men.

The paradox Jesus presented reversed the traditional procedure regarding divorce. Jesus did not remove a man's right to divorce a woman. However, under Jesus' restriction, a man could not divorce a woman whenever he simply tired of her. Jesus didn't say a woman could be divorced whenever she tired of him. On the contrary, He said she could be divorced only when her preference changed. Today, if marriage, divorce, and remarriage were determined strictly according to individual preference, there would probably be fewer unhappy marriages and fewer bitter divorces.

Jesus actually shifted the cause determining divorce away from men and over to women. Within this plan every man would eventually be limited to only one wife at one time. Within Jesus' stipulation, the woman would at least determine when her present husband could divorce her. She would also choose the man she preferred to remarry. Perhaps for the first time in Israel's history, a woman's preference would determine who married her, who divorced her, and who remarried her. The ramifications involved must have stunned the men, even though Jesus hadn't altered their legal rights. Men would still do the marrying and the divorcing.

Jesus didn't actually intend to establish a rule for divorce. He presented this precept so that men might understand the predicament with which women had historically contended. He knew His proposal was certainly unprecedented; it would never become a national law. His social, educational, and religious background did not license Him as either a legal or religious authority.

Jesus hadn't delivered this plan to women; that act would have been a waste of time. Women had no legal recourse with which to enact legislation in behalf of their rights. Unfortunately, men were unable to comprehend a precept so totally foreign to their traditions, traditions in which only men decided the cause for divorce. A woman could be the cause for being divorced if she grew old and unattractive. Biblical commentators agree that Jesus' paradox was not openly accepted. 3

Jesus' new requirement was met with stubborn resistance by the scribes and Pharisees. 4 His purpose was to expose their prejudicial teaching of the law. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his book *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount*, affirms that men held a dim view of women. He adds that divorce during Moses' day was completely out of control. Men got rid of their wives at will blaming them for any reason they might devise, causing much pain for women and children. He further states that divorced women were sent away subjected to the mercy of the world. 5

After hearing Jesus discuss divorce with the Pharisees (Matt. 19:1-9), the disciples began to perceive the injustice Jewish women faced. 6 At a later time, they proceeded to offer their solution to the conditions of male/female inequality (v. 10). Surely, the disciples found it extremely difficult to overlook their own traditional prejudice toward women. They too had questioned His willingness to speak to women--especially the Samaritan woman--(Jo. 4:27). They protested His healing women and discouraged His taking time for children.

A Revolutionary Concept

Jesus' suggestion was a revolutionary concept. Obviously, the Pharisees, many of whom were lawyers, knew exactly what Jesus had proposed. If women heard His conversation with the Pharisees, they probably considered His proposal too good to be true. Certainly, the Pharisees discerned the nature of His proposal. That discovery was verified by their question: "The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away [divorce] his wife for every cause?" (Matt. 19:3). Instead of answering their question (which they asked only to trick him), He proceeded to clarify God's attitude toward men and women.

In response to the Pharisees, Jesus made sure they understood that God created both the male and the female as one composite body. He quoted from Genesis 1:27, and Genesis 2:24, to affirm the certainty of human equality.

And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say to Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? [Or why did Moses give us the right to treat women that way by allowing us to get rid of the them?] He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

It would be wonderful if God caused each couple to be completely faithful to one another. We could be married once and be assured of living together the rest of our lives. But God did allow polygamy, unfaithfulness, divorce, and remarriage to occur among His chosen people. The nation did, however, survive its many indiscretions. Perhaps the most crucial issue regarding divorce and remarriage is whether or not today's interpretations of these particular verses are biblically sound. Are existing rulings on divorce and remarriage substantiated in the Bible? Or, are the regulations an attempt to control divorce? Whatever the purpose may be, divorce has not been controlled.

Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). This phrase seems to suggest that all marriages are made in heaven. The Greek verb translated "joined together" is the indicative mood which denotes certainty. If permanent marriage was God's intention, there would never be a divorce. If Jesus had permanent marriage in mind, every marriage would, without exception, continue permanently. At the same time, no man would ever be able to separate a marriage. Obviously permanent marriage has not been the case. If God said something will happen, it will certainly happen.

Did Jesus Propose Divorce?

Had Jesus meant permanent marriage to be the norm, He would not have included the words "except for fornication." That phrase permitted a couple to seek a divorce, that is, if women chose to be divorced (v. 9). His proposed cause for divorce contradicted the prospect of permanent marriage.

Unfaithfulness Was Not Grounds for Divorce

The exception clause, "except for fornication" (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) differs from today's definition of fornication (sexual activity before marriage). Today's definition of fornication would not have been grounds for divorce during biblical times. Sexual activity before marriage was not uncommon at that time. Cohabitation (a couple living together) was common within the Jewish community and was not frowned on by Jewish society.

Adultery: A Male Convenience

Let's suppose the exception clause meant that no divorce was allowed except for adultery. This conclusion is a valid supposition since some New Testament translations do insert the word "adultery," in place of fornication, as the cause for divorce. A recent translation of the New Testament, The New International Version, translates the exception clause as "except for marital unfaithfulness." That particular translation agrees with today's definition of adultery; in other words, sexual intercourse with a person other than the marriage partner. However, to attribute that meaning as a regulation during the time when Jesus spoke would not have disturbed the men, especially the Pharisees, who had asked the question in the first place (v. 3). If the regulation had specified adultery as the cause, it would have been welcomed by the male population. The Pharisees would have agreed with that restriction. Inasmuch as men could, lawfully, have as many women as they wished, they couldn't be legally unfaithful. Had adultery been the cause for sending women away, men could conveniently rid themselves of unwanted women. Had Jesus actually suggested that women be unfaithful, He would have condoned the Pharisees' desire to stone to death an adulteress, subsequently contradicting His words in John 8:1-11. Therefore, fornication was the cause for divorce. That is, the man could not divorce a woman until she told him she desired another man.

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 9.

1. The Analytical Greek Lexicon (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, Fifth Printing, 1970), pp. 248-249.

2. Over a thousand years after the gospels were written, Jewish woman gained a legal right to divorce their husbands. That in itself for women was a giant legal step forward considering they were dependent on men to provide them that privilege. Apparently, some men later sensed the condition of inequity Jesus emphasized in the Gospels.

3. The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. I, ed., W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1974), p. 110.

Matt. 5:32 "except on the ground of unchastity" RSV "Jesus raised the previous question, and asserted a more radical right of woman - not to be put away, except when she put herself away by unfaithfulness." "...a most important exception which has given rise to much controversy that will

probably last till the world's end. ...It would certainly be in accordance with Christ's manner of teaching, using strong, brief, unqualified assertions to drive home unfamiliar or unwelcome truths.

4. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount* , Vol. I, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted May 1981), p. 253.

"He [Jesus] is comparing not the law of Moses, as such, with His own teaching, but rather the false interpretation of this law by the Pharisees and scribes. ...our Lord's purpose was to correct the perversion, the false interpretation of the law which was being taught to the people by the Pharisees and scribes. ...That, of course, is precisely what He does with regard to the question of divorce. He is especially concerned to expose the false teaching of the Pharisees and scribes with regard to this important matter."

5. pp. 254-256.

6. p. 256

"Next we must consider the teaching of the Pharisees and scribes because, as we have seen, it was to this especially that our Lord was referring. They said that the law of Moses commanded, indeed urged, a man to divorce his wife under certain conditions."

7. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* , Vol. I ed., W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1974), p. 245.

Matt. 19:3 "Whether the interrogants knew what Jesus had taught on the subject of marriage and divorce in the Sermon on the Mount is uncertain, but in any case all scribes and Pharisees knew by this time what to expect from Him."

Chapter Ten

Jesus Confirms Male/Female Equality

In historical sequence, Jesus spoke of the beginning of human creation (Matt. 19:4). Quoting from both Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 5:2, He asked if the Pharisees had not read that in the beginning, God made a dual human being. Jesus emphasized the plurality of the original human creation. He asked if they had not read that God's original creation was a "them," a plural creation, made up of both a male and a female.

A Key Word

Jesus used a key Greek word, a word, if overlooked, confuses the text. The Greek word *kai* is often translated as the conjunction "and" (Matt. 19:4). In this usage *kai* meant "also". 1 Also is the connecting word used to describe the original creation as a male and also a female. 2

Jesus explained the reason for a dual human creation. He said God had made a dual creation because they were both equal human beings. Jesus then explained God's words in Genesis 2:24. Jesus explained that every time a man and a woman engage in sexual intercourse, the sure evidence of true equality is demonstrated. A man and also a woman become one, as in the beginning when the two bodies were one body. Therefore, in this way, their true unity is realized.

Jesus was saying to the Pharisees, "Don't you see this truth?" When two persons (a man and a woman) engage in sexual intercourse, then "Consequently they are no more two, but one flesh" (Matt. 19:6). Actually, every act of sexual intercourse demonstrates the unity of the first human creation. The act of equality is further demonstrated each time a man and a woman together produce a child. The woman and also the man are each equally indispensable.

Paul declared the exact same truth. He said "...do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH" (1 Cor. 6:16 NASB). Paul had stated that whenever a man has sexual intercourse with a prostitute, he's no better than her because they are equally one body. Paul adds "...the one who joins to the Lord is one spirit [spiritual body] with Him." (1 Cor. 6:17 NASB). Paul goes on to explain the importance of oneness of the body with God, or with another person.

Jesus then shifted his emphasis from male and female to humanity (Greek *anthropos*). *Anthropos* does not represent a male; it represents humankind. When Is Equality Undeniable?

Equality is absolutely undeniable in the process of procreation. Jesus' own humanity began with, and was dependent on, a woman. The Pharisees, by tradition, may have been oblivious to the obvious; that is, a woman is the one who conceives, carries, delivers, nurses, and mothers every child a male shares in producing. This fact is the one sure way by which males can comprehend equality. That fact alone, when recognized, gives a man an opportunity to truly appreciate his wife as his equal.

Procreation and fertilization, biologically, require that the male's sperm be introduced to, and be received by a female's egg, the result of cleaving together . 3 Probably men of that day thought they alone produced children. The male semen, during sexual intercourse, has always been the only visible contribution to reproduction. In the sixteenth century, an Italian anatomy researcher named Gabriel Fallopus discovered that women had fallopian tubes, but it took another three centuries before science realized their role in fertilization. When the Bible was written, a woman's reproductive egg, which is invisible to the eye, was not known to be a contributing component for reproduction.

In Matthew 19:5 Jesus brings out the certainty of equality. The Greek verb "shall be" is the indicative mood, which designates certainty. 4 Some have suggested that this phrase speaks about a man and a woman becoming one in marriage. That thought has worth; however, that is not what the text is saying. Unity in a marriage has never been a certainty.

In Hebrew, the word "one" refers to one by union (v. 6), the union of the two cleaving together sexually. 5 The equation in verse 4 is how God creates: one becomes two or (1 = 2). The equation in verse 5 is how humans copulate: two become one, (2 = 1). 6 Thus, Jesus added they are no longer two; the two have become one unit. Jesus certifies gender equality with these words.

Put Asunder - Make No Distinction Between

"What therefore God hath joined together [as equals], let not man put asunder" (v. 6). The Greek verb for "hath joined together" expresses "completeness." Male/female equality was complete from the beginning. Jesus then said, "let not man put asunder." To paraphrase, no person is to cause an inequitable distinction between a male and a female. To put asunder means to divide between the equal status of a male and a female. Our word dichotomy is nearly a direct translation of the Greek word for put asunder. Furthermore, the Greek word translated "put asunder" implies certainty. 7 It means separation of this complete human unity is impossible. (See further note) 8

The phrase, "let not man put asunder," is used often during marriage ceremonies. If Jesus had marriage in mind and God had intended marriage to be unseparable, then without a doubt, no human could ever separate a married couple. But married couples have been separating for centuries. Actually, God instituted human equality; although abused, it can never be refuted. Therefore, it is impossible for male/female equality to be put asunder (separated). It may not always be acknowledged; nevertheless, it's an absolute fact.

The Pharisees knew what Jesus meant; that fact is indicated by their next question. "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" (Matt. 19:7).

The Pharisees said to Jesus, "If God created the female equal with the male, why did Moses allow us to treat them with so little dignity? Moses said, whenever we get tired of a woman we can give her a document of divorce and get rid of her."

Jesus said Moses' issued a divorce law for women's benefit, not for men's convenience. "He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." (Matt. 19:8). To paraphrase, Jesus said to them that the reason Moses insisted that they divorce their wives was because their attitude toward women was cruel and hard hearted. A legal bill of divorce was required not to allow them to further abuse the same woman a second time. Moses hoped to provide some semblance of protection against the mental and physical abuse suffered by women. It wasn't fair that women were expected to stay with men while they preferred other women. God didn't object to Moses' divorce law. God, as well, said women had a right to be divorced by men rather than remain as unwanted partners (Exodus 21:10-11). One Rabbi insisted that a doxology must be uttered each day, "Praise God that he did not create me a woman." But the abuse, inequality, slavery, and male dominance over the rights of females were never God's intention. God never intended that women be merely property owned by men.

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 10.

1. James Strong, Strong's Concordance of The Bible (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co), p. 39.

2532. kai , appar. a prim. particle, having a copulative and sometimes also a cumulative force; and, also. even, so, then, too, etc.; often used in connection (or composition) with other particles or small words:- and, also, both, but, even, for, if, or, so, that, then, therefore, when, yet.

Note: As a cumulative(a) kai means "also", "both", "even", "then", "therefore", "when", "yet" (b).

(a) The American College Dictionary (New York, NY: Random House Inc., 1963), p. 295.

cumulative adj . 1. increasing or growing by accumulation or successive additions. 2. formed by or resulting from accumulation or the addition of successive parts or elements.

(b) W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1966), p. 50.

ALSO KAI (kai) has three chief meanings, "and," "also," "even." When kai means "also" it precedes the word which it stressed. In English the order should be reversed. In John 9:40, e.g., the R.V. rightly has "are we also blind?" instead of "are we blind also?" In Acts 2:26 the R.V. has "moreover My flesh also," instead of "moreover also..."

Note: Kai has a far greater purpose in usage than merely as a conjunction.(c)

(c) William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek - English Lexicon of The New Testament (The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 392.

kai conjunction.. found most frequently by far of all Gk. particles in the NT; since it is not only used much more commonly here than in literary Gk., but oft. in a different sense, or rather in different circumstances, it contributes greatly to the distinctive coloring of the NT style.

6. kai ... kai both ... and, not only ..., but also

II. Rather as an adv. also, likewise -I. simply the other one also Mt. 5:39; cf. vs. 40;

3. Theological Dictionary of The New Testament Vol III, Ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 822-823.

GEN. 2:24 Matt. 19:5 Mar. 10:7

"shall cleave" kollaO .

In the NT we find only the mid. or pass. The act. of the verb, which is found in older and later Greek texts, means "to glue together," "to join together," "to bind," kollasthai means "to cleave to."

2. On this basis we can see how kollasthai comes to be used for intimate association in the form of sexual intercourse. Thus we read in Mt. 19:5: kollEthEsetai This is a quotation from Gn. 2:24, except that the LXX has proslEthEsetai . According to the best authorities this is quoted literally in Eph. 5:31, while on the other side the textus receptus has proskollEthEsetai , like the LXX, at Mt. 19:5 (- proskollaO).

proskollaO.

2. Mt. 19:5 text. rec. and Eph. 5:31 use it according to sense 2. of kollaomai to denote sexual intercourse. In the second passage this shows how close is the relation between Christ and His - ekklesia . K.L. Schmidt,

Note: Nicoll agrees that verse 5 has a reference to physical sexual cohesion:

The Expositor's Greek Testament , Vol I, Ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1974), p. 245.

"The sex principle imperiously demands that all other relations and ties, however intimate and strong, shall yield to it. The cohesion this force creates is the greatest possible." ".The reference is primarily to the physical fleshly unity."

4. The Analytical Greek Lexicon (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. Fifth Printing, 1970), p. 168.

Matt. 19:5 "shall be" 3 person, plural, future tense, indicative mood.

5. Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies In The New Testament Vol I, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1946), p. 212.

Shall be one flesh. Lit., "shall be unto one flesh." The preposition expresses more graphically than the A. V. the becoming of one from two. So Rev., shall become.

6. R. Laird Harris. et. el. Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), p. 292.

"In this way, to refer to someone as being of one's own "flesh and bone" (Gen. 2:23) was to say more than that they shared the same bodily heritage. Again, to say that a man and woman become one flesh in the sexual embrace (Gen. 2:24) is to say more than that they are united bodily."

7. The Analytical Greek Lexicon (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, Fifth Printing, 1970), p. 440.

3 pers. sing. present, indicative, active. to sunder, sever, disunite, Mat. 19:6; Ro. 8:35,39;

8. Author's Note: Jesus used the word "put asunder" as an impossibility. Strong's Greek Dictionary shows this word, if a possibility, as a definite separation(a). The word speaks of a condition rather than an act. Equality is a condition not an act. It is in the active voice, indicating, in this case, action which can certainly take place(b). However, Jesus is speaking of the word as to the contrary; that is, it can't happen.

(a) James Strong, Strong's Concordance of The Bible (Mc Lean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co.), p. 78.

Greek Dict. = 5563. chOrizO Kho-rid-zo : from 5561; ...to place room between, i.e. part; reflex. to go away: - depart, put asunder, separate.

(b) p. 77.

5490. chasma khas-mah; from a form of an obsol. prim. chaO (to "gape" or "yawn"); a "chasm" or vacancy (impassable interval):- gulf.
5117. ...i.e., location (as a position, home, tract, etc.); fig. condition, opportunity;

Note: If this phrase meant to actually separate a marriage into two parts, as is obviously possible to do, that act by someone or something would be described by the Greek word dichotomeO (c).

(c) Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament Ed. Gerhard Kittel, Vol II (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1965), p. 225.

dichotomeO . In Mt. 24:51:... we see from the context that the reference of dichotomein is to punishment, i.e., the ancient punishment of parting asunder with the sword or saw. ...Lk. 19:27; Hb. 11:37. dichotomein itself is cutting or dividing or cleaving or hewing into two parts. ..The Heb. equivalent is pi , which means "to divide." "to cleave," whether of men (Ju. 19:29; 20:6) or animals (Lv. 1:6; Schlier .

Note: The word demonstrates that one can not exist without the other, in speaking of the positive equality between males and females(d).

(d) William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek - English Lexicon of The New Testament (The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 899.

chOris pantOn = apart from everyone) Ate chOris CHristou Eph. 2:12; chOris emou apart from me" Jo. 15:5. neither (is) woman (anything) apart from man, nor man from woman I Cor. 11:11.

Note: The word chOrizetO "let not put asunder", in Greek grammar, is 3RD pers. present, indicative, active. It speaks of action that is both continuous and certain, (i.e., it was never possible for such a separation of equality to take place). Thus, the Pharisee's next question for Jesus: If God formed "them" (Matt 19:4) as "one" (Malachi 2:15), why then did Moses allow men to treat women as though they were no more than property? Jesus answered: "Because of the hardness of the male heart, Moses insisted that males, legally, put away the unwanted sexual partner." Paul acknowledged that a married couple actually could be, or were, separated, chOrizetO (I Cor. 7:10-11), whereas in Matt. 19:6, Jesus used the word chOrizetO in the negative sense stating that male/female equity cannot be separated and that fact is certain. For Paul, gender equality was a whole different way of life, yet Paul understood from Jesus' teaching that gender equality was a reality. Paul said "Nevertheless neither is the man without chOris the woman, neither the woman without chOris the man, in the Lord."

Chapter Eleven

The Paradox Explained

God, Moses, and Jesus, all agreed on the scriptural grounds for divorce. Each said that the "hardness of the hearts" of men was the legitimate cause for divorce. Thus, the cause for divorce was paradoxical . Jesus' described men's inward attitude toward women as harsh and unreasonable during all of Israel's biblical history. As a matter of fact, hardness of the male heart remained the biblical cause for divorce throughout the Bible. However, this particular cause didn't mean that women could divorce men.

During the past 2,000 years, women have had every right to ask why, if Jesus knew the conditions women were subjected to, He didn't speak out in opposition to such obvious injustice. Jesus, the one person without any personal partiality, did acknowledge that all people have a right to equal status. Jesus did recognize the condition. He did speak out on behalf of women, especially, regarding divorce and remarriage. Jesus surely agreed

with Moses' attitude; such a condition was an abomination in the land which God had given Israel. Jesus concurred with Moses' reason for initiating a law of divorce. He explained to the Pharisees (Matt. 19:8) Moses' law of divorce was not a special privilege to satisfy men and that the purpose of divorce was to spare women further mistreatment. Jesus intended that the Pharisees realize Moses actually allowed women the privilege of being divorced by men. The disciples understood the condition to which women were subjected. Later in chapter 19, they thought they should deprive themselves of women companions in order to rectify the situation (Matt. 19:10).

The Pharisees questioned Jesus regarding His comments on divorce and remarriage (Matt. 5:32). They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away (divorce) his wife for every cause" (Matt. 19:3)? The cause they had in mind was the restriction Jesus had spoken of earlier, "saving for the cause of fornication" (Matt. 5:32). Though the actual cause for divorce was the hard hearts of men, Jesus said that women deserved the right to determine the cause by voicing their desire to have another man. 1 Jesus restated the same divorce cause to the Pharisees "except it be for fornication" (Matt. 19:9); therefore, the paradox remained the same. His paradox nullified Jewish tradition. There have been a number of questions regarding the meaning of fornication as it's used in Matthew 5:32. The noun is definitely not an action; the noun describes a condition. Thus, the word *logos* (speak) meant that a woman was not to act out fornication, but she was to say that she desired a condition of fornication; that is, she desired another man besides the one she was with. 1 Jesus brought to the Jewish community an entirely new and different attitude toward women. 2

The Paradox Reversed Roles

The paradox was presented to the Pharisees in a slightly different manner than it was to the disciples during the Sermon on the Mount. The word cause is left out in this phrase in Matthew 19:9. When Jesus spoke of cause for divorce (Matt. 5:32), He didn't mean that women were to engage in physical fornication, that is, sex with another man. Jesus said that another man was not allowed to marry her until she said she wanted another man (Matt. 5:32). A second man could not take her because she was still a married woman. God explained the difference between biblical adultery and fornication in Jeremiah 3. (To review, see chapter 5 of this book). History has provided important insight into the word fornication. To repeat the biblical meaning: fornication is the act of having more than one lover (men, women, wives, husbands, gods) The idea is to keep one while having another. 3

Ironically, Jesus' restriction would limit each man to one woman, but a woman could have more men if she chose, especially if her husband chose not to divorce her. A restriction was not His real intention. The object of the restriction was to show how these privileges would shift away from men over to women.

Apparently, the disciples did grasp His paradox (Matt. 19:10). They suggested a rather extreme remedy, hoping to stop the mistreatment of women. They said no longer should men be permitted to have women. They felt they could solve the problem of female abuse. 4 Jesus understood their good intentions. However, He explained that judgment toward themselves would not benefit women. He didn't expect the disciples to correct those conditions. Even if the disciples deprived themselves of women, they would have little influence on the national tradition. One unfair extreme cannot be resolved by still another unfair extreme. Only men who recognized how unfair the conditions actually were would be affected by His teaching. Nonetheless, Jesus exhibited no lack of respect for men in spite of their lamentable attitude toward the dignity of women.

Unnatural Deprivation

Humans, for a long time, have engaged in self-judgment through various types of self-deprivation. Jesus assured His disciples they were neither right nor wrong in their past behavior. They had adapted themselves to a traditional way of life which probably had existed throughout most of Israel's history. Such action by the disciples would only further misrepresent God's original intention for the sexes.

He went on to explain how their recommendation was similar to the unnatural deprivation of a eunuch (Matt. 19:12). Jesus described how certain men were born eunuchs. They couldn't have relationships with women. Some eunuchs were made that way by someone. Other eunuchs made themselves that way, hoping God would honor their sacrifice.

In His teaching about eunuchs who hoped to impress God and gain a place in heaven, Jesus referred to a kingdom of heaven which the self-made eunuch thought would be a reward for his sacrifice and self-mutilation. The idea that such an action makes a person better in the eyes of God has no basis in scripture. If God gives rewards for this type of thinking or acting, Jesus would surely have told the Pharisees they would be honored for their efforts and sacrifices. Nowhere in scripture is this type of human sacrifice a prescription for becoming more Godly. Many seek an unnatural love relationship, some with other humans, and others with God. (See author's notes on verses 10-12) 5

Many biblical Greek language scholars and theologians have implied in their writings that for a man to inflict some unnatural deprivation on himself so that he might better serve God is an admirable sacrifice. Jesus declared that self-judgment is not a solution for anything. Paul stated that self-deprivation is an unnatural act on the part of a human being (Col. 2). Finally, the Old Testament makes a clear statement about self-deprivation. 6

Paradox Summary

Jesus' words to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:27-32), as well as His discussion with the Pharisees (Matt. 19:4-9), contradicted the normal male and female lifestyles of that day. His paradox dealt specifically with the cause for divorce. His words challenged also the inequitable condition between the men and women of Israel.

REFERENCE NOTES: Chapter 11.

1. Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms Of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, ninth printing, Oct. 1976), p. 288.

"as the correlative to the words on the lips" ...as *logos* is by Aristotle defined (Poet . XX. II).

2. *Theological Dictionary Of The Old Testament* , Vol VI (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Revised Edition 1977), pp. 590-591.

D. The New Testament.

A further result of this is a basically new attitude to woman. She is no longer man's chattel but a partner of equal dignity before both man and God.

I. The Proclamation of Jesus. The forgiveness of Jesus was enjoyed precisely by these women whom the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and the Rabbis had abandoned, Lk. 7:47.

3. pp. 580-582.

Secular Intercourse Outside Marriage. ...In antiquity a constant source of prostitution was slavery, which made people mere chattels. Female slaves were at the mercy of their masters' lusts.

Note: Not only in Israel, but throughout the Greek speaking world the conditions for women were inequitable(a).

(a). p. 582.

Even the married man was permitted extra-marital intercourse as he pleased so long as he did not violate a civil marriage. On the other hand, all extra-marital intercourse was forbidden to the wife. ..Plato tries to solve the problem by compromise. Intercourse with harlots is permissible so long as it takes place in secret and causes no offense, Leg., VIII, 841a-c. With complete injustice to the wife, who was kept at home, a man sought with the hetaira [female paramour] what he could not find in his wife.

Note: Old Testament fornication agrees with God's explanation (Jer. 3f). Fornicate meant "to turn aside from God", Hosea 1:2; 4:12, rather than, to turn away from God. The idea was not to completely turn away from God, but to turn also to other gods, which were represented by idols. There's little question that inequality was a way of life for Israel's women(b).

(b). p. 585.

II. Fornication in National Life in the OT. It should not be overlooked, however, that [the word for fornication] refers only to the woman. Extra-marital intercourse on the part of a man did not come under this concept and was not forbidden so long as he did not take the wife of a fellow-countryman. This significant distinction is probably grounded in the unequivocal patriarchalism of the OT and it is a result of the unambiguously patriarchal stamp on the view of revelation and religion in Israel.

Note above: Israel's women had no rights so they could hardly have become leaders! The description of a fornicator was one who could never be satisfied, no matter how many, or how much of anything the person might have(c).

(c). pp. 587-588.

Later Judaism.

1. Later Judaism shows us how the use of porveia [fornication] etc. gradually broadened as compared with the original usage. In the first instance porveia is mostly "harlotry," "extra-marital intercourse,"

2. The fornicator who is sexually so insatiable. Sir. (23:17) that "all bread tastes good" (v. 17) ..Wis. Sol. in its battle against pagan idolatry has the comprehensive judgment that the beginning of porveia (in the context apostasy from God) is the devising of idols (14:12), and Wis. sees in sexual licentiousness (14:24-26) a consequence of the abnegation of the true God. Fornication involves esp. the sin of paganism.

Note: The present-day definition of bigamy would match Old Testament fornication(d).

(d). p. 588.

3. Bigamy is also branded as fornication.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls fornication is thus a mark of metaphysical dualism (1 QS 4:10)

4. Philo also allegorises [sic] the concept. porvoi stand for polytheists (Leg. All., III,8).

Note: The dative case shows that a woman actually "committing fornication" was not the cause; instead, the key word is "except." A woman's authority is exhibited when she verbally speaks a word of fornication. Note below how the dative confirms Jesus' meaning (Matt. 5:32., Matt. 19:9)(e).

(e). William F. Arndt, A Greek - English Lexicon Of The New Testament (Chicago, IL: The University Of Chicago Press 1957), pp. 286-287.

epi II. with the dative - fig.- a - over of power, authority, control of or over someone or something. Matt. 24:47; Lk.12:44.

b. to, in addition to he added this to everything else Lk 3:20. in addition to our comfort 2 Cor 7:13.

g. of that upon which a state of being, an action, or a result is based; depending on your word Lk 5:5 on the basis of faith Ac 3:16; Phil. 3:9; on the basis of hope , supporting itself on hope Ac 2:26. on the basis of the testimony of two witnesses Hb 10:28.

4. The Expositor's Greek Testament Vol. I, Ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1974), p. 246.

Vv. 10-12, It was a new reading of old texts by one who brought to them a new view of man's worth, and still more of woman's. The Jews had very low views of woman, and therefore of marriage. A wife was bought, regarded as property, used as a household drudge, and dismissed at pleasure.

5. Author's note: For a man to look at a woman, especially if she is attractive, and yet not desire her to some degree is actually unnatural. An asexual person, as well as the homosexual person, though not judged as wrong, is considered unnatural. For a person, male or female, to prefer to remain single simply because he/she is not interested in establishing a relationship with another person, is considered natural. However, for a male or female to prefer celibacy in order to better serve God, or in a sense, establish a closer love relationship with God is unnatural. Both the Essenes and Pharisees could say to others who were less devoted or committed: "We have something you don't have and something you can't have unless you agree to be exactly like us." Our wanting to be like them would prove to them that they are better than others. The human norm of desiring and loving another human is quite natural. It would be unnatural to expect this natural human norm to be substituted by a love affair with God. God is not, and can not be, the natural human lover for any of humankind. God is Spirit, so a (human to human) love relationship is not possible. Nevertheless, many insist that they have a close, intimate, human relationship with God.

6. Author's note: "Some eunuchs were born eunuchs" (Matt. 19:12). The verb "were born" is in the aorist tense, indicative mood, passive voice, which means that the eunuch had certainly been born a eunuch from within his mother's womb, indicating an unnatural, passive condition over which a child would have no control. The next reference to eunuchs is "eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men." These eunuchs are described by Jesus, in the Greek aorist tense, indicative mood, and passive voice. These eunuchs were made, by other men, to be unnatural. Jesus also adds to this list "eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." The Greek verb "made eunuchs" of themselves is in the aorist tense, indicative mood, and in this instance, active voice . This is saying that for their own purpose, these men emasculated themselves. Their objective was to obtain the kingdom of heaven. Not at any point in the Gospels did Jesus ever give the impression that a human act of self deprivation meets a requirement of God. God does not consider such an act to be a human quality.

Chapter Twelve

Faithfulness And Unfaithfulness Defined

Recently, a husband called for an appointment for himself and, hopefully, also his wife. They had been married for twenty two-years. He explained that his wife had, a few days earlier, told him she was going to get a divorce. He said he told her that God didn't want her to get a divorce. He said he warned her that if she divorced him God would punish her. He said she responded with "then that's the way it must be." Both came in for the first appointment. His major complaint about her was she was too cold sexually. He had never been satisfied with her. For most of their marriage, he was angry at her. He admitted that at times he abused her physically because of her lack of interest in sex. It came out later that, for at least twenty of their twenty-two year marriage, the husband drank excessively. He reasoned that if she had been more responsive sexually, he wouldn't have needed to drink so much. He had pleaded with her not to get a divorce. He described how after she told him about the divorce, he'd pointed a gun at his head to end his life. She told how she'd thought about divorce or five years but couldn't tell him because she knew he'd get mad at her. She felt that after they were divorced, he could probably find a woman who'd be better for him. Each was experiencing his/her own kind of pain. I found myself wanting to give the husband hope. However, realizing that the wife saw herself as the failure in the marriage, I knew that giving him hope would be the same as telling her she hadn't tried hard enough. As I explain to all couples with whom I counsel, I can help them understand why their marriage got to this

point but, I don't have the right to tell them what they should do about it. I think that telling a couple how to live their lives is an insult to their own intelligence and preference.

When I began my research on divorce, my aim was to understand both why and how something so vitally connected with the Bible would result in so much pain. I was, admittedly, insensitive toward those who, supposedly, had failed to live according to the dictates of their religious teaching. It's really tragic that divorced persons, throughout past centuries, have been unable to justify their need to divorce. Countless numbers have suffered both guilt and shame because the Bible's teaching on divorce has been misrepresented. Did God actually sanction all, or any, of the callous judgment imposed on divorced and/or remarried people? My research has shown that God did not initiate nor authorize this attitude.

The seventh announcement from God is "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). Though it was announced to all humans, the Bible records the distress encountered by those directly or indirectly involved in adultery, especially the nation Israel. On an individual scale, a person who leaves his/her spouse and intends to go to another is committing biblical adultery. As a result, the spouse being left alone often suffers a horrible sense of emptiness. Many people have discovered that no real sense of satisfaction ever results from acts of adultery. Nevertheless, many married partners have sought out new partners while still married, unfortunately, because of the stigma that divorce is a disobedient act towards God.

A Change In Location

In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Jesus explained that adultery is far more than an act of unfaithfulness. In Mark 10:10-12, Mark's wording sounds similar to Matthew's record of the discussion of divorce; however, the phrase "except for fornication" recorded by Matthew was omitted by Mark. It's important to note, Jesus spoke to two different groups, during two different occasions, and at two different locations. As stated earlier, the exception clause determined the grounds or cause for divorce.

"...in the house"

Matthew 19:3-9, records a conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees. The disciples were also in attendance. Matthew recorded a conversation between only Jesus and His disciples which took place at a later time (Matt. 19:10-12). Mark 10:2-9, records the same conversation as in Matthew 19:3-9. This vital conversation, between only Jesus and the disciples, took place in a particular location. That conversation took place "in the house" (Mark 10:10). "And in the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery." (Mark 10:10-12 NASB).

Women Could Not Divorce Men

In Israel, it was common for men to divorce and remarry another woman. However, Jesus' statement was quite uncommon. He spoke about a woman divorcing a man and then remarrying another man (Mark 10:11-12). At that time in Israel's history, it was not legally nor socially possible for a woman to actually either divorce or remarry. Thus, Mark 10:12 further complicated Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage. Why would Jesus make such a statement? Surely He knew women possessed no legal right to divorce men, let alone remarry other men. They would jeopardize their lives. Bible scholars, whom I've researched, all agree that this statement is very puzzling.

Jesus dealt specifically with Jewish law. Roman law allowed women to divorce or remarry as they chose; however, Jewish law had no such provision. Again, in both Mark 10:11, and 12, the Greek word kai becomes prominent (See reference notes, chapter 10). Kai is again interpreted simply as the conjunction "and". This word could easily be overlooked as bearing little, if any particular significance to Jesus' meaning. However, again, in this instance, kai is a cumulative particle; it means "also" or "too." This usage sheds new light on the exact point Jesus intended to make.

Jesus Defined an Unfaithful Mind

Jesus said women can think and act the same as men whenever both are in the same manner of circumstances. Adultery could be, and can be committed today, by either a man or a woman. Jesus taught that adultery exists in the mind. A person who's in the process of leaving a spouse but has already, in his mind, (also) kai selected another person to go to, has committed adultery. Jesus' definition of adultery hasn't changed. It's as valid today as when He taught it in Mark's Gospel.

Can Adultery Be Avoided?

Of course, it's possible to divorce a spouse without intending to go to another. It would simply be a divorce without committing adultery. A more appropriate term, which might sound less traumatic, would be for a couple to agree on an annulment to their marriage.

Adultery occurs when an unhappy spouse, seeking happiness, looks to a person outside the marriage to produce what he feels he's lacking in the marriage. Jesus made the point that it's possible for a couple to divorce (annul a marriage) without unfaithfulness being the required grounds. It appears in Matthew 5:31 and 19:9, that Jesus insisted that adultery be committed before a divorce could be permitted. His explanation in Mark shows why that view is completely the opposite of His teaching.

The Pain Of Unfaithfulness

Today, we think of adultery as sexual unfaithfulness. Yet, adultery in the biblical sense, does not require sexual unfaithfulness. A person needn't be sexually involved outside the marriage to commit adultery. If, in his mind, he desires another person while still married, that's adultery. The severest emotional and mental pain a person can feel is knowing the spouse has already preferred another person. Jesus understands the pain we feel when we experience unfaithfulness.

However, many, who are unhappy in a marriage, have been taught that God disapproves of divorce. Subsequently, rather than seek a divorce, a person will often try to sustain the marriage. Perhaps, an unplanned affair begins, which in turn results in pain for all those involved. Fortunately, the Bible does not judge divorce as wrong. Divorce can be an alternative to unfaithfulness. Thus, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus gave the true definition of adultery.

Faithfulness Defined

The Gospel of Luke presents another view on adultery. In Luke 16:18, Jesus gave the true definition of faithfulness. In Luke's Gospel, He spoke primarily to the Pharisees, many of whom were lawyers. For the sole benefit of the Pharisees, Jesus presented a different concept of divorce. "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery" (Lu. 16:18 NASB).

Jesus stated the same maxim in Luke's Gospel as was explained in Mark 10:11-12. However, in this instance, He stated it differently. In this case, it involves only the actions of a man. Jesus said that a man who divorced a woman, while at the same time also preparing to marry another, committed adultery. His teaching in Luke's Gospel on divorce and remarriage coincided with the laws of that day; that is, Jewish law permitted only men to divorce.

Jesus taught that no one can be equally faithful toward two different entities at the same time. Therefore, it's especially important in Luke's Gospel that by explaining what faithfulness is not, Jesus' taught what faithfulness truly is in marriage. Faithfulness is a composite unity between two persons. In the preceding verses, Jesus had explained, "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Lu. 16:13 NASB).

The Pharisees scoffed at Jesus because they loved "mammon" (money) (Lu. 16:14). To further clarify His point, Jesus explained that no man can love two women equally at the same time. He added, if a man truly loves one he can not love the other the same (Lu. 16:18). Unfortunately, the major impact of His statement was probably disregarded.

Faithfulness Is Monogamy

A paraphrase of Luke 16:18 maybe more appropriate for today would read as follows: No man can love two women equally. A husband who loves his girlfriend can not love also his wife equally. Jesus proclaimed that faithfulness can exist only in a monogamous relationship.

Paul's View

The apostles carried on Jesus' teachings about equality . For example, Paul's views on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, are presented in part I Corinthians: 7. Paul made several references to divorce and remarriage, as well as to male and female relationships. In his writings, he spoke often of family life, individual rights, and also of the rights of slaves.

Jewish tradition was deeply engrained in Paul's mind. He may have questioned the procedure of synagogue attendance, but the carry over from his days as a devout, traditional Jew, allowed him a minimal degree of respect for the rights of Jewish women. Synagogue procedure, to which Paul was accustomed, did not permit women to pray or speak publicly. Subsequently, women were dependent on men for instruction in the Old Testament Law. Therefore, when we read Paul's writings today, it's nearly impossible to align them with our present day customs. His writings on divorce and remarriage contain several significant facts (1 Cor. 7). For example, Paul wrote that in order for the Corinthians to avoid fornication, it was best that each man have only one woman (I Cor. 7:2). Generally, it's been thought this chapter speaks about the spiritual condition of husbands, wives, and children, especially the first sixteen verses (1 Cor. 7:1-16). However, that interpretation misrepresents Paul's intended practical mening.

Corinthian Lifestyle

Paul did not impose Jewish divorce or remarriage laws on the Corinthians. However, he did offer Corinth citizens a series of practical alternatives to their own traditional lifestyles. The Corinthian lifestyle was in many ways similar to his own Jewish background, but the Corinthians depended mainly on civil law, whereas the Jews incorporated their civil and moral laws into their religious laws.

In chapter seven, Paul discussed several subjects including marriage, being single, fornication, and unfaithfulness. The Greek word which in many Bible versions has been translated, "unbeliever" or "unbelieving partner," might be better translated unfaithful partner (I Cor. 7:12). The Greek word translated in this text as "sanctified" might also be translated "to separate" physically from a partner (for example, verse 14). To gather a spiritual meaning from these verses generates more questions than answers. Paul's practical application provided the Corinthians an alternative to their traditional lifestyle. Their over-all lifestyle could be described as anything goes. Paul dealt with a chaotic social condition in Corinth. This social condition would appear to have been part of the question about which the Corinthians had earlier written him. I am sure Paul did grasp the meaning of Jesus' teaching pertaining to male/female equality. I think we would stretch the point of Paul's comprehension to assume that Paul was not torn between his own traditional view of male superiority and Jesus' teaching of equality. Paul appears to have wrestled with that new concept in his other writings (See I Tim. 2:12). Changing a tradition is a gradual process.

International Equality

Jesus didn't demand or propose legislation to provide equality between men and women. In reality, equality, like love, can only exist when it's voluntary. True equality is true love in that it believes no one is less than anyone else. Divorce conditions caused Jesus to voice His teaching on the unethical lifestyles which existed. Throughout the New Testament the emphasis on equality continues. In the book of Acts, especially chapter fifteen, the apostles evidently struggled with their Jewish traditions. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he mentions a confrontation with Peter (Gal. 2:11). Paul claimed that Peter considered the Gentile equal with the Jew, that is, until the Jews chided him about it. He reproved Peter for not maintaining his position toward international equality , yet Paul obviously had difficulty with the fact of male/female equality.

Chapter Thirteen

Conclusion

Both the Old Testament and New Testament presented principles which were intended to benefit all of humanity, not only a few. Both God and Christ emphasized equality between male and female especially as it pertains to marriage and divorce. However, Paul was steeped in a tradition which elevated men above women. Like Paul, my research has shown me how our traditions dictate our individual status. I have become more aware of the inequities that exist throughout the world today. Inequality, as damaging as it has been throughout the history of humanity, continues to thrive, depositing its misery on its promoters as well as inflicting hardship on its victims. But equality makes pure, good sense. The principle of human equality was spoken by an angel of the Lord, "Peace on earth goodwill toward man" (Lu. 2:14).

Fairness Toward Divorce

The Bible supports an attitude of fairness toward those divorced and remarried. Up till now, they have been thought of as offenders of God's Word. What about those persons who have been divorced and/or remarried? Many divorced and remarried persons have been ostracized by families, religious organizations, and by society in general, a terrible injustice often imposed supposedly in the name of God.

The ramifications of such an injustice may never be actually known nor the pain suffered by those who have been judged guilty by other humans. Who, other than God, has the right to throw the first stone, if a stone is to be thrown? Jesus declined to make that kind of judgment. God never intended that divorce be judged as wrong.

I trust this account of the Bible's teaching on divorce and remarriage will relieve much of the pain which has resulted from centuries of misrepresenting the scriptures. I hope this book will open new doors to understanding the dilemma of divorce and remarriage.

The End