

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

By David Padfield

One of the greatest threats to the survival of this nation is the alarming number of divorces. Every divorce decree is a monument to broken promises and shattered lives. It is difficult to find a single family that has not been touched by divorce in some way. While Hollywood glamorizes open adultery and multiple marriages, let us always remember that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16).

### The Marriage Covenant

The marriage contract is a covenant between three parties: the man, the woman and God. Some men in the days of Malachi had been unjust to their wives. The prophet reminded them that *“the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant”* (Mal. 2:14). The immoral woman of Proverbs 2:17 had forsaken her husband and forgot the *“covenant of her God.”*

In every wedding ceremony I remind the couple before me that their wedding vows are made in the presence of God; He is their witness. The time might come when their earthly witnesses would encourage this couple to divorce, but they need to remember that God will not forget their vow to cleave to each other *“till in death we do part.”*

There are many obligations in the marriage covenant. The husband is to love his wife *“as Christ also loved the church”* (Eph. 5:25). He is also to provide for his family (1 Tim. 5:8). The wife is required to be in submission to her own husband *“just as the church is subject to Christ”* (Eph. 5:24). They are both required to render the *“affection”* due the other (1 Cor. 7:3). In addition, they are *“bound by the law”* to their spouse as long as they live (Rom. 7:1-4). This is obviously the law of God, and not the law of man.

### Divorce For Any Cause?

When the Pharisees questioned Christ about divorce *“for just any reason,”* He reminded them that God had intended for one man and one woman to live together in marriage for life. He also said that in marriage a couple is *“joined”* together by God himself (Matt. 19:3-6). They asked why Moses had allowed them to give a *“certificate of divorce”* and put away their wives (Matt. 19:7). Jesus explained that while God had tolerated their immorality for a while, *“from the beginning, it was not so”* (Matt. 19:8). The Pharisees had many reasons to *“put away”* their wives, but our Lord stated there was but one reason for a man to *“put away”* his wife and be married to another, i.e., adultery (Mat. 19:9).

In the Divine order, God said the *“putting away”* had to be because of *“adultery”* (Matt. 19:9). This rules out the Waiting Game played by some today. The game is played when a couple gets divorced and one party waits for the other to commit adultery. They claim this would then give them the right to scripturally remarry. Please be reminded that Jesus said the adultery had to come before the *“putting away”* (Matt. 19:9).

Since God is the one who joins a couple together in marriage, He is the only one who can release them from the contract. It is possible for a couple to be married by the laws of the land, but not joined together by God. This is the case in Mark 6:17,18. In this passage John the baptist told Herod *“It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”* Herod was married according to civil law, but John said the marriage was not *“lawful.”* The woman in Romans 7:2, 3 was still bound by God to her first husband as long as he lived, even though she

might be married to another man!

## Will God Forgive Divorce?

What happens when an individual has been unscripturally divorced and wants to obey the gospel? Will God overlook his previous marriage(s) and allow him to continue his present marriage? Sometimes brethren want to wrangle over the efficacy of baptism and its role in the forgiveness of sins. We need to remind them that baptism is ***“for the remission of sins”*** (Acts 2:38), not the remission of marriages.

As far as I can determine, the discussion should not center around the role of baptism but rather the meaning of true repentance since it precedes baptism. If a man is living in an unscriptural marriage (i.e., adultery) repentance demands that he cease the practice of sin and forsake his unscriptural mate.

Repentance is defined as ***“The change of the mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both a recognition of sin and sorrow for it and hearty amendment, the tokens and effects of which are good deeds...”*** (Thayer, p. 406). Repentance carries with it evidences which the world cannot question. In the Old Testament God demanded restitution be made when a man repented of his sins (Num. 5:6-8; Lev. 6:1-7). Our repentance is vain unless we bring forth ***“fruits worthy of repentance”*** (Matt. 3:8). Yes, the blood of Christ will remit all our sins as we are buried with him in baptism (Rom. 6:1-4; 1 Pet. 3:21), but prior to baptism I must repent of my sins (Acts 2:38). If I am living in adultery, repentance demands I put away my unscriptural mate!

In John 8 we find the account of the woman who was caught in the very act of adultery. There can be no question our Lord forgave her. But what did Jesus mean when He said ***“go and sin no more?”*** Could she go back to the man she was sleeping with? I believe the Lord forgave her, but also warned her not to commit this sin any more.

## Are Non-Christians Subject To The Law Of Christ?

Some have argued that non-Christians are not subject to Christ's law on marriage, divorce and remarriage. When Jesus gave the command in Matthew 19 He was talking to the Pharisees, men whom he called ***“hypocrites,” “blind leaders of the blind”*** and children of the devil. To these men Jesus said ***“Whosoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery”*** (Matt. 19:9). The word ***“whosoever”*** covers all men, Christians and non-Christians alike.

## Break Up Our Happy Home?

After explaining the law of God to couples living in sin, you are often asked, ***“Would God want us to break up our happy home?”*** In the days of Ezra many men had married pagan women from the surrounding nations. God had prohibited them from marrying women from any one of the seven nations listed in Deuteronomy 7:1-5. When the men of Israel realized their sin and came to repentance, Ezra said, ***“You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives”*** (Ezra 10:10-11). ■

*“The marriage, divorce and remarriage issue will probably never be resolved for all. It is not because the Word of God is not clear on the matter, nor does the real issue hang upon the definition of some words used in the Bible. The issue is difficult to resolve because of human involvement and situations with emotional overtones that cry out for some favorable answer from the Word of God to justify that human element. Many doctrines reign from the same “background” (H. E. Phillips, Introduction to ***Smith - Lovelady Debate***).*

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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