

## ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS OUTSIDERS MOST OFTEN ASK US

### Part II: Answering The Five Questions Believers Most Often Ask Us

#### C. Answering The Question On Divorce And Remarriage

##### I. Introduction

- A. Though many people have many questions about our Christian faith, we have noticed over the years ten questions that people outside of our Church *most often* ask us, and 1 Peter 3:15 calls us to **answer** them.
- B. Five of the questions come from unbelievers, and five from believers, so we answer them in this lesson series, and I am indebted to Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 405-424 for the format of the lessons.

##### II. Answering The Question On Divorce And Remarriage.

- A. We state the question as follows: "Certain Bible verses are used by many evangelicals to teach grounds for divorce and remarriage, and due to physical abuse, is not divorce and remarriage justified in some cases?!"
- B. First, we note that *no* Bible passage allows for divorce or for divorce and remarriage for Christians today:
  1. Some claim Jesus allowed for divorce due to infidelity via the "except for fornication" clause in Matthew 19:9, but the New Testament context and Jewish practices reveal this clause does not apply to us today:
    - a. The same event recorded in Mark 10:1-12 has Jesus **not at all** using the "except for fornication" clause, and this is due to Mark's Gospel being written to Gentiles where Matthew was written for the Jew (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 16, 99), and **only JEWS** were **required** to heed the "exception clause" (Howard Hendricks, Christian Counseling for Contemporary Problems, 1968, p. 111-113): (1) If a Jew married a Gentile, it was "fornication" that required a divorce to comply with the Law, Ezra 10:10-17. (2) If a Jew who was betrothed committed immorality with a non-betrothed partner, it was called "fornication" that could result in breaking the betrothal that legally required a writ of divorce, cf. Matt. 1:18-19. (3) If a Jew married a close relative in violation of the Mosaic Law, it was "fornication," and they had to get a divorce.
    - b. As none of these conditions applies to Gentiles or to Christians in the Church era due to cultural changes and due to our release from the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Law, we ignore the "exception clause" and heed the words of Jesus applicable to us in Mark 10:1-12 -- that there are no grounds for us to initiate a divorce.
  2. Some might claim (like the Pharisees in Matthew 19:7) that Moses commanded divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, but the KJV mistranslates that passage: the "then" clause should not start at verse 1 as it does in the KJV, but at verse 4 as in the NIV, ESV and NASB: Moses actually taught that *if* a divorce were to occur followed by one of the partner's remarriage to another, and *if* that second marriage **also** ended in divorce, **then** the *original* couple could **NOT remarry!** Thus, Jesus rightly said in Matthew 19:8 that Moses *suffered* or "put up" with divorce in Israel because it was so rampant -- he did **not command** that it occur!
  3. Some claim 1 Corinthians 7:15 teaches that if a believer lets his unsaved spouse initiate a divorce against him, the divorced believer is then free to marry another as he is "not under bondage." However, (a) Paul's goal in the greater context is to save the original marriage following a divorce (1 Cor. 7:10-11). Besides, (b) allowing a believer to marry another party contradicts 1 Corinthians 7:16 that one might save his original spouse, for marrying another party only distances the believer from his original partner rather than wooing him to Christ and salvaging his initial marriage! (c) The "not under bondage" clause thus means that God does not require a believer to oppose his unsaved spouse from initiating a divorce against him!
  4. Some claim 1 Corinthians 7:28 teaches that a virgin does not sin if she marries a divorced man, but Paul is referring only to virgins in that passage, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 519! Besides, Matthew 5:32 states that whoever -- including a virgin -- marries a divorced person commits adultery in God's view!
- C. Second, in cases of marital abuse, God calls the abused to separate spatially, not divorce, 2 Timothy 3:1-5.
- D. Third, if a believer allows the unsaved spouse to exercise divorce against him in heeding 1 Cor. 7:15, and after the divorce, the unsaved partner dies, the believer is free to remarry a believer, Romans 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39.
- E. Fourth, if a believer sins by initiating a divorce, and then his partner dies, though some believe the divorced one is free to remarry, I hold it violates 1 Cor. 7:10-11 due to the issue of one's testimony, 1 Cor. 10:32-33.

***Lesson:*** *Scripture does not permit Christians to initiate divorce and remarriage, for marriage is the joining of a man and a woman into a "one flesh" union that is broken only by death, Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 7:1-3. Only if a believer is wed to an unbeliever is the believer to let the unbeliever initiate divorce proceedings against him, and that only to keep good ties with the lost partner that he might eventually be saved and the marriage then salvaged!*

***Application:*** *May we hold that marriage is for life, and answer all who ask us about divorce and remarriage.*