

THE THORNY ISSUES OF MARRIAGE, ADULTERY AND DIVORCE

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Levitical Laws Regarding Marriage And Divorce, Sensitivity Of The Topic, My Personal Research, Marriage And Divorce Basics, Defining Uncleaness, Defining Fornication, Moses Gave Them The Law Of Divorce Due To The Hardness Of Their Hearts, End Result Is That Divorce Is Still Wrong, Love And Forgiveness Beat Divorce, Remain Single After Divorce Or Be Reconciled, Moses: A Man Should Not Take Back His Wife After She Has Been With Another Man, Divorce And Adultery, Love Mercy Compassion And Forgiveness Are Best Solution, Conclusion, Reading List

Recently, an online friend of mine made some interesting comments regarding the rather difficult issues of marriage, adultery and divorce. While so doing, he pointed another person who was involved in the discussion to the following verses which are found in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy:

"When a man hath taken a wife, and married 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 be 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."

Deuteronomy 24:1-4, KJV

Let's be frank about this. Marriage, adultery and divorce are rather tough, very complex, and for many people, quite

sensitive issues to discuss in our modern society. In fact, many people simply prefer to avoid them altogether, either due to personal failures in their own lives, or due to some other reason. Honestly speaking, I by no means claim to be an expert in this particular area. In fact, I will candidly admit that my current understanding could be flawed.

After reading what my online friend had posted, I decided to review all of the verses which I include in the "Adultery, Fornication, Marriage and Divorce" KJV Bible Verse List on the Bill's Bible Basics website. In short, I read everything that Moses wrote, what Jesus said, and what the Apostle Paul wrote as well regarding marriage, divorce, fornication and adultery. In approaching this subject, I think the wisest thing to do is to start with the basics. That is to say, how the Bible defines a marriage relationship, being as we are primarily concerned with marriage amongst Christians. What I am sure of is the following:

1. God-ordained marriage can only occur between a man and a woman, and NOT between two people of the same gender.
2. Marriage was designed to be a covenant for life.
3. Children resulting from a God-ordained marriage are a blessing from the Lord.
4. God does not like divorce, because human marriage is a reflection of the marriage between Christ and the Church who is His spiritual bride.
5. Due to the hardness of their hearts, Moses allowed divorce if "uncleanness" occurred.
6. Love, mercy, compassion, repentance and forgiveness always beat divorce.

Uncleanness. Exactly what does this word mean? Well, I then decided to look up this unusual word in my Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew Aramaic English Lexicon to better understand it. Derived from the Hebrew word "ervah, it is defined in the following ways: nakedness, nudity, shame, shameful exposure, indecency or improper behavior. In the New Testament, when referring back to these very passages written by Moses, Jesus calls uncleanness "fornication".

So, I next looked up the original Koine Greek word in order to determine exactly what is meant by fornication, although I generally always assumed that it meant sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Derived from the Greek word "porneia, it means illicit sexual intercourse, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc., sexual intercourse with close relatives.

So this appears to be what Moses meant by the phrase "some uncleanness". In other words, uncleanness was not limited to just one specific illicit activity. Rather, it could be any one of the aforementioned activities. But the catch is this. While Moses wrote that divorce was permissible under these conditions, Jesus basically said "Wait a minute! Not so fast! Let me point out that Moses allowed you to get a divorce due to the hardness of your hearts!"

In other words -- this is my personal understanding -- Jesus appears to be saying that divorce is still basically wrong, even under these conditions, because the right thing to do would be to forgive your spouse, and to not divorce them in the first place. This is genuine love. This seems to explain why Paul wrote that if a woman left her husband, "let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" in 1 Corinthians 7:11.

So Paul seems to be saying that such a woman should either remain single after she leaves her husband, or else if she can be reconciled to her husband, that husband should agree to accept her and not put her away. He should not divorce her. He should forgive her and take her back so that their marriage can be restored. This seems to be what Jesus was saying as well. In other words, instead of hardening his heart and asking for a divorce, that man should be willing to forgive her and take her back if she repents.

But this is where the issue becomes somewhat complicated, because Moses interjects another factor into the equation. He says that if after a man divorces his wife due to some uncleanness -- a.k.a. fornication -- she goes and marries another man -- which was permissible according to the bill of divorcement -- the original husband can no longer take back his wife. Moses in fact writes that to do so is an abomination, which means a disgusting thing, according to

the original Hebrew word which is used there.

Why does Moses say this? My personal understanding is that it is because she has been with another man who is not her original husband. As a result, she is now defiled. In other words, regardless of the reason for their divorce, she has now committed adultery being as her original husband is still alive. So, as difficult as it seems, it appears to me that if the original husband were to take back his wife after she has defiled herself with another man, it would be a case of what we might refer to as "double adultery for lack of a better term.

Please notice that while the Apostle Paul wrote that a woman should be reconciled to her husband in a best case scenario, he said absolutely NOTHING about doing so AFTER she had been with another man. So I interpret this to mean that Paul is saying that the couple should be reconciled, just as long as she has not been with another man during their separation. This seems to be in agreement with what Moses wrote.

So going back to what I stated earlier, Moses appears to be saying that by allowing a man to divorce his wife if she is guilty of some form of uncleanness -- or fornication -- he is pretty much putting her in a position where she will more than likely go and marry another man, which is technically adultery, even though Moses permitted it. Jesus appears to have stated the same thing, as we can easily confirm by the following verses which are found in the Gospels:

"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."

Matthew 5:31-32, KJV

"And I say unto 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."

Matthew 19:9, KJV

"Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another,

committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

Mark 10:11-12, KJV

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."

Luke 16:18, KJV

So then, that is my personal understanding regarding this particular issue. As I said, it is a thorny, sensitive and complicated issue, so I could be wrong about this. However, one thing I am not wrong about is the fact that love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness are always the best solution in any human relationship, be it marriage or otherwise. After all, as the Apostle James writes, love is the Royal Law, and love covers the multitude of sins. Consider the following set of verses:

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"

James 2:8, KJV

"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."

Proverbs 10:12, KJV

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

1 Peter 4:8, KJV

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Ephesians 4:32, KJV

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

Matthew 18:21-22, KJV

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt

forgive him."

Luke 17:3-4, KJV

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Matthew 5:7, KJV

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:"

Luke 6:36-37, KJV

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14-15, KJV

"But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Matthew 9:13, KJV

"But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

Matthew 12:7, KJV

"Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Matthew 18:32-35, KJV

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Matthew 23:23, KJV

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto

him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."

Luke 10:36-37, KJV

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Galatians 6:1, KJV

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. It is my hope that you have found it informative, enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you'd take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were either mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server. To read these articles, simply click or tap on any link you see below.

Abortion: The Slaughter of the Innocent
Age of Accountability and Parental and Divine Discipline
Biblical Marriage Ceremonies
Forgiving and Forgetting: It Can Be So Hard!
Future of Same-Sex Marriage
Love, Mercy, Forgiveness and Chastisement
Murdering Millions by Mail: The Abortion Controversy
The Fruit of the Womb
The Marriage of the Lamb
The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love

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