

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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December 16, 2018

Volume 38, # 51

WHO CAN AND WHO CANNOT MARRY WITHOUT COMMITTING SIN?

For a number of reasons, questions about marriage are among the most interesting and important to human beings. And, among the most important of those questions is this: *who can marry without committing sin in so doing?* The Bible answer is plain. The Bible makes clear that, ideally speaking, God intends that marriage is to be a *lifetime* contract (Rom. 7:1-4). Jesus gave one exception. He sets out one ground upon which one may put away his companion and marry another: that of marital unfaithfulness (fornication, Matt. 19:9).

God *joins* together two people in marriage *only* when both parties to that marriage are *eligible* (according to *Bible standards* of eligibility) to be married. Even if a person is eligible to be married, if he/she marries someone who is *not* eligible, then he/she commits adultery.

With the above introductory matters in mind, may each reader prayerfully consider those who, according the Bible, are eligible to be married (and who, therefore, can marry *without committing sin* in so doing).

1. Those who have never been married previously may, without sin, marry - so long as they themselves marry an eligible (in the sight of God) partner. "But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned" (1 Corinthians 7:28; cf. 1 Corinthians 7:9).

2. Those who *have been* previously married but whose former companion is dead. Paul stated the matter in this fashion: "For the woman which hath a husband is bound by law to the husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of the husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man,

she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband be dead, she is free from the law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Romans 7:2, 3).

3. Those who have been previously married but whose former companion was guilty of fornication (unfaithfulness to the marriage vow). Here, our text (Matthew 19:9), shows plainly that Jesus gave to the *innocent* party the right to seek another marriage partner. If Jesus had given no exception, his language would have taught that *every* person who puts away his companion and marries another is guilty of adultery. But Jesus did not do that - he *did* give an *exception*, making it clear that those whose companions have been guilty of *sexual unfaithfulness* may put them away and marry another, not being guilty of adultery in so doing. This means *physical* unfaithfulness - the actual act of sexual intercourse - not merely lusting in one's heart (Matthew 5:28).

The negation, put in simple terms, is a setting forth of those who *cannot* marry without sinning in so doing. Or, it might be stated as follows: those who *do* sin when they marry. Just who are these?

1. Those who have a living former companion who was not put away because of fornication. According to Matthew 19:9, Jesus forbade divorce and remarriage except on the ground of marital unfaithfulness (fornication).

2. Those who marry anyone who has a former companion (still living) who was not put away because of fornication. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery" (compare Matthew 5:32).

3. Those who were put away because of their marital unfaithfulness (fornication) (Matt. 5:32; cf. 19:9). The *guilty party* (that is, one who has been put away because of fornication) is not free to marry.

The teaching of Jesus on this matter is too plain for denial. It was with *infinite wisdom* that God has set forth the privileges and the bounds of marriage, divorce and remarriage. It is by *God's* wisdom that fornication has been designated the *one* and *only* ground for divorce and remarriage. It was *God* who instituted marriage. It was *God* who has protected it by setting the *limitations*.

When men and women ask, "But isn't that too hard?", Jesus answers with love and compassion, "No, it is not. These limits have been set for good of all human beings." Charles H. Roberson, former Head of the Bible Department of Abilene Christian University, said, "There is no more grievous wrong against society than divorce for the

purpose of remarriage" (What Jesus Taught, p. 193). He further said, "The divorce courts are doing little more than legalizing adultery" (Ibid.). Still further, he said, "Marriage must be elevated in the minds of men. Its inviolability must be reasserted anew and men persuaded to recognize it as the sovereign cure for all those heart-rending tragedies that destroy the peace of the family" (Ibid.).

It is sad - yea, even tragic - that today even religious leaders cry, "Does your husband complain about your cooking? Then get rid of him and get yourself another one! Does your wife criticize the fact that your shoes are not shined? Then get rid of her and get yourself another one! Are you tired of your wife? Then go commit fornication with another woman and thereby free yourself to get rid of your wife and marry another woman!" And so, on it goes today.

It still remains a fact that Jesus' teaching on the matter is very strict and those who wish to go to heaven had better listen to what He has said (John 12:48).

The Bible teaches that men and women must be willing to pay any price in order to be faithful to God. One must be willing to give up property, family, freedom, (and, thus, go to prison), and even one's life in order to be faithful to the Lord (Rev. 2:10; Luke 14:26-27; Prov. 23:23; Acts 21:13; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:1-5; et al.). Since God demands all of these great sacrifices, why should it be thought strange that God would demand much of us in order to protect the sanctity of home and marriage?

While our hearts ache for those who are involved in marriages which the Bible makes clear are not pleasing to God, it would not be the loving thing to counsel those so involved to stay in sinful relationships. The wise and loving counsel is always, "Obey the Lord. If you do, He will never leave you or forsake you." Let each of us remember: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

- Thomas B. Warren, *The Spiritual Sword*, April, 1984

Intolerance from a Brother?

In forewarning His disciples about persecution that they would have to endure, Jesus made them aware of the reason for it. "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me." (John 16:3). He is speaking about people who think that they are serving God (vs. 2). Have you ever been the target of some "Christian brother's" intolerance? Please consider this quote:

This ignorance of God and Christ lies at the root of all spirit of persecution. Could the tender love of God as revealed in the Son, his long suffering and compassion, be known, it would end all intolerance. The hard-hearted, cruel and exacting, whatever they may pretend, do not believe in the true God and the Son. They may believe in some being whom they call God, but it is not the God who "so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son to save the world." They may believe in a being they call Christ, but it is not the tender, loving and compassionate Savior who taught, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." All intolerance is born of spiritual pride, selfishness and self-worship. The Pharisees, the most bigoted and self-righteous sect of the Jewish nation, were the bitterest opposers of Christ.

[B.W. Johnson, *The New Testament Commentary, Vol. 3, John*, p. 240]

Training Our Children

Children are a blessing from God (Psalm 127:3-5). They can bring great joy and comfort to their parents. One of life's great pleasures is seeing one's children grow up to be healthy, well-adjusted and faithful to God (Prov. 10:1). Children must be guided and trained in order to become responsible, law-abiding Christians (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4). If correction and full discipline are withheld from them, the children can become the saddest and greatest burdens their parents have (Prov. 23:13, 14; 22:15).

When one brings a child into the world, he faces a God-given responsibility. The child's needs must be supplied. His life must be molded, and the parents are primarily responsible for his development. Parents use institutions such as schools to provide training in certain, areas of learning, but they must recognize that those institutions are not qualified to be a full and proper standard for moral and spiritual training, and parents cannot afford to shift their own responsibility in these fields to secular institutions.

Children *can* be molded. They have varied capabilities and temperaments, which must be taken into account in training them. Their abilities must be developed and their temperaments balanced through wise discipline. A strong-willed child should not be able to conquer his parents. Pity the parents and the child when the parents say of a little one, "We just can't do anything with him!"

Children learn through the *example* and *influence* of their parents as emphatically as by their words. The parent who would teach his child well must show him the way. Children recognize hypocrisy and are impressed very unfavorably by it. They also recognize

sincerity and conviction and are impressed favorably by it. Let us use the wise counsel of God's word for the wisdom to accomplish this great work.

- Gilbert Alexander, 1991

- > "He who ceases to learn cannot adequately teach!"
 - > "Throughout history, the most common debilitating human ailment has been cold feet!"
 - > "Repentance is never too soon; it may be too late!"
 - > "The Bread of Life never becomes stale!"
 - > "The roughest road oftentimes goes straight to the top of the hill!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Our Relationship to Truth!"* (Text: 2 Thess. 2:13-17); Sunday evening: *"Preparation for Persecution!"* (John 15:18 – 16:4, Part 2).