

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **Loopholes and Slipknots**

The divorce and remarriage issues among brethren have been with us for many years, but it seems that recently the controversies have increased greatly. From my perspective there are several factors which have contributed to this escalation of turmoil related to this topic:

1. There seems to be no end to the number of loopholes brethren come up with to “justify” remarriage after divorce. This is alarming given the fact that our Lord gave only one reason that authorized a faithful husband or wife to put away a spouse and marry another (Matt 19:9; Mark 10:11-12). In fact, fornication is the only authorized “cause” for initiating divorce, and Jesus said that the one who does so for any other reason is the “cause” of any future fornication on the part of the one put away (Matt 5:32).
2. The great number of people who practice “trial and error” marriage until they end up with one that is to their liking, have undoubtedly influenced some among us. We want to find a way for the ones who now have a happy marriage to be right with God and remain in a pleasant relationship. The more we are exposed to a sinful practice, the less sinful it seems to us. However, how we come to view it has nothing to do with how God views it. Man’s ways and thoughts are not God’s ways and thoughts (Isa 55:8).
3. Sound teaching regarding marriage and divorce has made evangelism more difficult. Who hasn’t studied with people in adulterous marriages who, when they were taught what the Bible says on this subject, rejected the Lord’s offer of forgiveness? Admittedly, such a situation is heart-wrenching, but we do the prospects no favor by offering immunity from true repentance. That this issue is a deterrent to evangelism may be undeniable, but the same

is likely to be said in the near future concerning the Bible teaching on homosexuality as that sinful perversion rapidly becomes increasingly acceptable in society.

4. We really don't like being different. I know we teach and preach that we must not be conformed to the world around us (Rom 12:2), but I fear that we have yet to really learn to "come out from among them and be separate" (1 Cor 6:17). This admonition was given in the context of avoiding idolatry. Any willingness to adjust our convictions in order to conveniently blend in with society or the religious world is a form of idolatry. Let's face it! Jesus was different, and the world hated Him for it, and He warned that His followers would also be hated (John 15:18-20).

5. All of us have loved ones who have been affected by unscriptural divorce. This has a tendency to color our thinking on the subject. There is a human inclination to make excuses for those we love, making submission to the plain teaching of the New Testament difficult. This is where the aforementioned "loopholes" find their origin. This also is where our attitudes toward the authority of the scriptures are tested.

We used to describe a wedding ceremony as "tying the knot," indicating something permanently binding. When God binds a man and woman in marriage it is not with a "slip-knot," and we must not treat it that way by inventing and "greasing" loopholes.

By Al Diestelkamp, written in 2004

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## **Resolving our Differences**

It may be a bit embarrassing, but it's still undeniable: good brethren sometimes disagree. At times, these disagreements are over matters of judgment, matters of opinion. But sometimes the disagreements are about what the Bible actually says. There are times when one brother reaches an honest conclusion that a certain activity is not authorized, while another brother's study leads him to conclude that the same action is authorized.

These honest differences over what the Bible teaches occur for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, it's because we are at different levels of spiritual maturity: one has more knowledge than the other, or more Bible study experience. Sometimes, it is because we have different abilities: one may

have more Bible study skills than the other, or one may have a greater ability to grasp certain Biblical concepts. Sometimes it is because we have different backgrounds: we have been influenced by different circumstances or different people. Sometimes it's just that one is more careful or careless – than the other. But because of these differences in maturity of skills or backgrounds, we, at times, honestly reach differing conclusions about what the Bible actually teaches.

Let me say that these differences are not matters of opinion, but matters of conviction or faith! And when someone expresses (or preaches) his genuine conviction, he is not expressing or preaching his opinion! He may be wrong in what he believes, but it is his conviction – its not just his opinion. And all one can do if he is a man of honest conviction is express that conviction and stand for it. As the apostle Paul once said, “I believe, therefore I spoke” (2 Cor 4:13).

What do we do when we reach different conclusions about what the Bible teaches? Well, I tell you what we don't do: we don't automatically divide and go separate ways. As brothers in Christ, we are charged with “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:1). Division may ultimately occur; sometimes it is even necessary (1 Cor 11:19). But division must always be the final option, only after every other effort has been exhausted.

But also: we don't force our convictions on one another; in other words, we don't force a brother to do something that violates his conscience. If one brother genuinely believes that an activity is unauthorized, and another believes it is allowed, but not required, then this second brother must give up his “right” in respect for the other brother's conscience (study carefully – Rom 14:1-23).

What we must do, brethren, is try to see what the Bible says on that topic in the same way – we must try to agree! (1 Cor 1:10). And that will never happen if we refuse to study the issue together in an open and honest way. One who seeks to press his view on others while being unwilling to study the issue is carnal – and may be trying to control others. I know this approach is sometimes taken to keep from confusing innocent or less mature Christians, but it is not the Bible way. Careful and prayerful Bible study

together in a sincere search for the truth is the only way to reach the same mind on any given subject. If we have a vision for the future, we must learn to study together about our differences in an effort to resolve them.

by Rick Liggins

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## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

### **HEAR THE GOSPEL**

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

### **BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST**

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

### **REPENT OF PAST SINS**

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

### **CONFESS CHRIST**

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

### **BE BAPTIZED**

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

### **LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE**

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)