

5 19 26 V2n3 Christian Marriage — DESIGNED to DISPLAY the Sacred “MYSTERY” of Christ and His Church!

We ended last week's study with this: "Sadly, many who are in 'good' second marriages ... are limping with guilt and/or bitterness as to the past." SO, in this article we will share Biblical truth as to marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. WHATEVER your marriage status— you can be or become FREE and USEFUL in God's kingdom ... as you EMBRACE the 'SACRED MYSTERY!'

“On a day, the Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” (Matthew 19:3) Jesus ignored the opinions of the “religious” authorities; and Jesus went back to Genesis when answering marriage/divorce questions. This is no surprise, for as John 1:1-3 reminds us— JESUS is the Creator God who is revealed in Genesis! So, of course, Jesus would go back to His original intention! **God's first word (The first word of Jesus!) on marriage is found in Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25!** Thus, Jesus returned to Genesis when stating His position of the permanence of marriage. **God has never changed his mind!** Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25 remain in effect in our sin polluted world! MOREOVER, Jesus told the Pharisees that the bottom-line reason for the various divorce statements by Moses was because of **“hardness of heart ... but from the beginning [Genesis] it was not so.”** In fact, Jesus gave an addition to the Genesis teaching: **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder!” (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9)**

When Jesus proclaimed the permanency of marriage between ONE MAN TO ONE WOMAN— His disciples were absolutely stunned! (Matthew 19:3-10) Realizing that the duly married, (male and female), couple has **no righteous exit** from marriage other than death, (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39), the Disciples were so stunned that they proclaimed, ***“If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is good not to marry!”*** (Matthew 19:10)

REALITY: When someone starts talking about a loophole for divorce — **Jesus STILL says, “From the beginning, it was not so ... what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Matt. 19:8, 19:6)

[BY THE WAY, we learn in Ephesians 5:21-32, that there is a unique SACREDNESS TO CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE— for it is designed to reveal the GREAT MYSTERY OF CHRIST and the church! ... this is the deep reason JESUS NEVER supports divorce!]

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS: **1. Allowing even the faintest possibility** for divorce will sabotage your efforts in trying to work through a difficult marriage problem. MOST will not pay the high price of walking the Calvary Road if they are holding on to divorce as an option!

2. If there has already been a divorce and remarriage, then please hear this: There are no Scriptures that even hint that sins relating to divorce and/or remarriage are unforgivable. God hates divorce, (Malachi 2:16). GOD no doubt hates all sin. ** HOWEVER, God also delights in and blesses those who have

repentant, broken, and contrite hearts! (Psalm 51:16-17; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 57:15)

**** THUS, here are important words to those who are already divorced and remarried— even more than once:**

1. There is no New Testament Scripture that would call upon you to break up your present marriage; and/or that teaches that in order to show evidence of repentance, you would have to break your present marriage. (If there were, then 1 Corinthians 7 would have to read very different!) **2.** Those of you with previous marriages and divorce in your background— many of you did what you did with some preacher's blessing! **Yet, you still have guilt!**

The wonderful solution , in these kinds of cases is to,

(1) Take God's point of view! You missed the mark of God's standard. Call sin what it is! It's sin! Make no excuse. With a broken heart for missing God's good way, ask for, receive, and rejoice in God's wonderful forgiveness. **(2)** Maybe you are the "so-called" innocent party! Even so, it is highly unlikely that you are totally without sin! (1 John 1:7-10) **THEREFORE, follow Daniel's example.** He was a godly man who experienced much hardship due to the sins of others in Israel. Yet, when he prayed, he did so, saying, "WE SINNED...!" Read Daniel 9! **(3)** Experience God's blessing and favor by committing to spend the rest of your life showing forth an incredible pattern of God's love and mercy **in your present marriage!** **(4) Openly testify:** "My previous spouse and I failed to

experience God's all-powerful love in our marriage. In our ignorance and/or rebellion, we both contributed to the failure of that marriage.” (5) I AM CALLED to confess MY SINS; I AM NOT CALLED TO CONFESS THE SINS OF OTHERS, (INCLUDING A FORMER SPOUSE!) BEHIND THEIR BACKS! ... “My present marriage? Well, my present spouse and I have repented of our past sins against God and our former mates. Our present marriage, **(while not an example of God’s clearly commanded pattern)**, is an example of His amazing mercy! And we are committed to glorifying God in this present marriage, “till death do us part!”

**** ”PLEASE, please, those of you struggling in your marriage** — it would break our hearts if you used our 'good second marriage' as any part of your excuse for wanting to divorce and find someone else. Our present marriage is successful only because we are now doing what we failed to do the first time— namely, submitting to God and submitting to one another in the fear of God!”

[SPECIAL NOTE: We rejoice that among the believers at Southside we have sweet fellowship with and labor with precious ones who have divorce in their background. Many are wonderful servants of the LORD. At Southside — some with divorce and/or remarriage in their background teach classes; lead Bible Studies; minister in Outreach activities; some such men have preached from the pulpit; various such men and women have gone on mission trips; sing in the Choir; sing special music, etc.

NONE of these dear saints are in any sense ‘second-class saints!’]

**** AT THE SAME TIME,** at Southside we are ALSO committed to honor a Biblical ministry limitation— Namely, that divorced men

do not serve as pastors/elders or as deacons— 1 Tim. 3:1-15; Titus 1:5-9.

RELATED: In counseling MANY couples through the years, I have noticed that those folk who are defensive, bitter, and/or have unresolved conflicts from their past often feel guilty and/or complain of being branded as second-class Christians. However, those who have received forgiveness for their part in past failures and those who have forgiven their offenders— such ones are free in Christ regardless of what others may think! These are often tremendously effective servants of the LORD.

Moreover, they don't want anyone to have to go through what they went through in their past— thus, they are all in favor of godly efforts to set forth high standards for the sacredness of marriage. They are easily at peace among differing brethren.

BUT I HAVE A HARD CASE— how shall I respond? Let's assume that you are in a most difficulty place. Your mate has committed adultery. Maybe even like Hosea, you have a mate who has become a prostitute and is a deeply bound slave to sin. Surely, you have “grounds” for divorce and “freedom” to remarry, all clearly based on Scripture— right? After all, you are the “innocent party”— right?

IT IS VERY INSTRUCTIVE HOW GOD commanded THE TRULY INNOCENT HOSEA! THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL STILL LEAD US TO EMBRACE A GODLY VISION! A VISION TO, 1. Rejoice that you are being persecuted for righteousness sake! You remember that sometimes our enemies are they of our own household. **2.**

Moreover, you keenly remember that you were dead in sin and under the wrath of God as others; and yet God had mercy upon you, a sinner. **Thus, you are ready** to own your privilege to walk in the steps of Jesus, down the Calvary Road— **to be redemptive**, to invest love and kindness and forgiveness toward your offender. **3.** You are committed to overcoming evil with good. You live on the edge of your seat in hope, because the offender may yet be won! Thus, you continue to love, to bless, to do good, and pray. (Romans 12:14-21; Ephesians 4:32) ... AND BECAUSE THE RULING PASSION OF YOUR LIFE is not your temporal happiness; but rather that the MYSTERY OF CHRIST be revealed to a watching world, Ephesians 5:21-32. **4.** Thus, when or if the door opens, you will be ready, (as Hosea of olden time with wretched Gomer), to “buy her back and to love her!” (Hosea 3:1-5)

BEWARE: THE ABOVE ‘REDEMPTIVE’ PATHS ARE all too often discouraged by Pastors who TEACH that EVEN GOD HIMSELF IS A DIVORCEE! However, if this WERE true— then God who says He 'hates divorce' is like the Pharisees: He says but does not do! He preaches but does not practice what He preaches! He preaches redemption, love, and forgiveness; but finds loopholes to escape practicing what He preaches!

I tremble when I read of those who claim that God is a divorcee— FOR GOD plainly declares that He loves with an 'everlasting love!' Read all the Old Testament statements of God's dealing with Israel. Yes, sin caused a separation. Yes, sin brought chastening! But God in His everlasting, un failing love, (even as was pictured with Hosea and Gomer), brought and will bring His remnant home

to Himself! The same is true in the Jeremiah passages. Don't just read Jeremiah 3:8 and claim a 'proof text' in an attempt to justify a divorce. Also read Jeremiah 3:14! Moreover, because of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:7-21; 17:7) the relationship between God and Israel can never be severed. God has unconditionally and unilaterally bound Himself! Romans 11 cries out, **"Hath God cast away his people? GOD FORBID...!"**

APPLICATION: Therefore, out of love and worship to Jesus— keep your present marriage vow! Do not close the door. If the door is to be closed, your offending spouse will have to do so by not only divorcing you but also by marrying someone else!

SADLY, THE REALITY IS THAT MOST who are claiming to be the "innocent party" are as guilty as sin! True, their mate may be the one who went out and committed adultery. But they both contributed to the failure of the marriage. The "innocent party" may have been consumed with career, or sports, or hobbies, or 'Christian' ministry; or maybe he/she contributed destruction to the marriage by anger, resentments, bitterness, etc.!

A man who spends YEARS destroying his spouse with neglect, lovelessness, anger, and/or harshness— and then presents himself as innocent is grossly deceived and/OR a deceiver.

It is a rare but wonderful day when such "innocent" parties are broken-hearted over their own sin: "O LORD God, had I only been the spouse You called me to be— I probably would not be facing this present trial. O God forgive me. O spouse, please forgive me.

O God, change me! Help me to win back the heart of my spouse!"

Reality: Sin always complicates things! You may feel that you have a very unique situation. There are certainly times when a spouse is 'basically' the innocent party; and they did not want nor seek divorce— but were divorced against their desires. **So now what?**

In this article we are not able to give a specific answer to every situation. However, the Scriptures in this article will serve all of us well— **1.** Scriptures which show that God is still pro-marriage and anti-divorce. **2.** Scriptures that call upon us to love and to forgive **IN THE SAME MANNER** as we have been loved and forgiven! **3.** Scriptures that remind us all that each of us will have to stand before God and give an account— it is not enough to have the blessing of all the pastors in the world!

TRAGIC REALITY: More and more divorced pastors are quick to bless divorce and remarriage for others. Nevertheless, God still calls Christians to demonstrate the HIGH ROAD miracles of redemption, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation— THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH! Scriptures which remind us that

God's grace reached down to us when we were the unlovable, the undeserving, and the unresponsive. **THEREFORE**, let us be channels of His kind of love!

QUESTION: Who needs to experience the love of God more than a wayward spouse— most especially when we are the ones who GREATLY WOUNDED THEM? Christians often speak of praying for and laboring sacrificially on behalf of a lost soul for many years.

To our spouse we vowed before God, 'For better, for worse... until DEATH do us part!' Shall we not labor for them and for the sacred marriage covenant? Moreover, one sin never justifies another!

IF your spouse violated his/her marriage vow— that is horrific! But that does not justify you nor require you to violate the vow you made! *** Scriptures call us to DENY OURSELVES, to take up our cross, and to follow Jesus!

FRIEND: Remain in your present marriage and/or do not close the door to a troubled marriage or even one that is presently in a state of divorce where your spouse has not married anyone else—**WHY?**

1. BECAUSE you refuse to set a limit on what God's love and forgiveness may want to accomplish IN YOU and through you. **BECAUSE** as a Christian, the love of God has flooded your heart!

2. BECAUSE even IF the "exception clause" of Matthew 19:9, does grant you permission to divorce— it most definitely does not command you to divorce! However, you/we are commanded to walk in the steps of Jesus.

3. BECAUSE You/we are commanded to forgive and love even as God for Christ's sake forgives and loves us! This is our LORD'S command— to love as He loves! (Eph. 5:25; 4:32) ...

Glory to God, the reality is that HIS LOVE never stops! He never 'divorces' any who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!

THUS, LET US GO FORTH, loving as He loves!

BUT SOME HAVE SAID TO ME: "I just don't have any love for my spouse." "God has not given me love for my spouse!" "God has given me love for this POTENTIAL spouse!"

RESPONSE: All SUCH statements are TOTALLY irrelevant! **1.** You PROMISED to love your spouse until death! **2.** To every real Christian, GOD HAS GIVEN His Holy Spirit and He THEREFORE COMMANDS you/I/us to love our spouse! For me to CLAIM that God has not GIVEN me love for my spouse is a giant SLANDER AGAINST GOD! You/I/we should be on our face before God, repenting of GRIEVING AND QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT! OR CONFESS OUR LOSTNESS!

You and I will stand before God and each have to give an account. The only thing that matters is this— Am I in line with God's Holy Word? Will my position stand in the Day of Judgment?

LET'S REMEMBER: GOD was not up in heaven having an emotional falling in love fit over us! NO! We were His enemies. We deserved hell. YET: He so loved He did something! HE SENT HIS SON! BECAUSE GOD FIRST LOVED YOU/US! ***And if I refuse to love my brother/sister/spouse whom I see, how can I say I love God whom I have not seen? (1 John 4:7-21)***

GO HOME AND LOVE YOUR SPOUSE! KEEP YOUR VOWS! You/I/we are most definitely called to be redemptive toward offenders, to invest in them even as God invested in you/me/us when we were still lost sinners.

Remain in your present marriage and/or as much as possible seek reconciliation and be a channel for God's unconditional,

sacrificial, forgiving love— which He delights to pour out on the unlovable, the undeserving, and the unresponsive. Besides, your marriage vow before God was “...till death do us part!”

IMPORTANT NOTE: Yes, in our sin-filled world, there are times when for sheer safety of life and limb of the wife and children— there may need to be a time of protective separation. **Even so, all the more is the need for the REDEMPTIVE VISION of Jesus for the sin enslaved!**

FINALLY, DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THIS: Many ‘wars’ in families will fade from or never get to red zones of physical danger when EVEN JUST ONE (HUSBAND or WIFE) ... as an act of worship to JESUS, HEED the following Scriptures: 1 Peter 2:19- 21; 3:1-6; Rom 12:14-21.

Great Grace to All! James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

SUNDAY SERVICES for MAY 24, 31

[1] Sunday School at 9:30am: Nursery, Children’s classes, Youth, and Adult classes.

[2] WORSHIP SERVICE at 10:45am!

[3] MAY 24, SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP

EVERY SATURDAY * 8:00 AM,** — **Men’s Bible Study!** (*Doors open by 7:30am... coffee, juice, donuts, and Hardee’s Biscuits are available!*) **MAY 16 and May 23 – An excellent, important**

two-week study: GOD'S WONDERFUL WORLD OF OBEDIENCE! ... led by Bob Boettchar.

Ladies Bible Study! THE NEXT LADIES BIBLE STUDY IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, JUNE 23 @ 11:00 AM

****TUESDAYS: LADIES PRAYER MEETING @ 10:00am**

Young Adults ... Tuesdays at 7:15pm at Jaden and Rhi's home!

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS @ 6:30pm, *MEN'S Prayer Service // YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE*

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