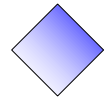


The Voice of Truth



September 23, 2012

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage By Jimmy Pettigrew

First, I want to say that marriage is an institution of God given to man. It was not given to Adam as an individual, or to him and Eve as a pair. It was given to man, and they were the first to enjoy its blessed provisions. *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).* That this applies to man generally is true because strictly it was not true of Adam; He did not leave his father and his mother to cleave unto Eve, but man generally does so have to do. Since marriage is for men generally and universally, we conclude that the law regulating the institution is for all man. It is a mistake to think the laws of marriage only apply to people in the church, and not people of the world. If the laws regulating marriage are binding only on the church members, it would follow that God does not join in matrimony those who are not Christians. Marriage is not a church ordinance. Marriage did not begin on the day of Pentecost; it began with Adam and Eve.

In **Matthew 19:3** the Pharisees came to Jesus, they came testing Him, tempting Him. These Pharisees asked Jesus *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”* The Lord's response: *“And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made (them) from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:4-6).* Jesus settled the question by the original design of marriage, as shown in **Gen. 2:24**. The Pharisees asked the Lord; in view of His answer that there is to be no break in a marriage, *“Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put (her) away?” (Matt. 19:7).* They are saying you have to be wrong because you are contradicting Moses in **Deuteronomy 24**. Jesus answered this question by saying; *“Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so” (Matt. 19:8).* Notice, first of all, that the Pharisees had interpreted **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**

as a command (**Matt. 19:7**), but Jesus corrects that in this verse by implying that Moses didn't command divorce; he rather permitted, allowed, and suffered it. God permitted this, says Jesus, because of your hardness of heart. This was not God's original intention; from the beginning it has not been this way. In other words, God's law about marriage had never been taken away. God had only granted through Moses a temporary exemption from its observance. This is extremely important to keep in mind as one evaluates the claims of certain people who maintain that **Matthew 19:9** is a covenant passage and therefore limited in application to those who are already members of the church. Since Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 19:9** is designed to reaffirm Jehovah's original marriage code; the verse cannot be so-called covenant passage, that it only applies to a Christian husband and wife. Christ's teaching on marriage was a restoration of heaven's original plan. But God's original plan surrounded mankind as a whole. Thus, Christ's teaching on marriage surrounded mankind as a whole. He will restore marriage to the level of the Father's original intention.

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his - wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery” (Matt. 19:9). “Whosoever”, meaning any one, that is, this teaching is not limited to just members of the church; it applies to whatever man divorces in the manner Jesus described, “fornication”. Fornication indicates the one reason for which a person might divorce a mate and remarry and still be innocent before God. Anyone who holds there is some other door than the one named by Jesus holds that Jesus did not tell truth! Whoso, that is, what ever person marries the woman put away by her husband, whether the reason was fornicating or because she burned the bread, doth commit adultery, because she is not marriageable in either case. The Lord had stressed that there is one scriptural ground upon which there can be divorced and remarriage

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acceptable to God. This, the cause of fornication! To the disciples this was a hard saying (**Matt. 19:10**).

It is alleged by some that since baptism washes away all sins (**Acts 22:16**), it sanctifies marriages which existed at the time of baptism - so - those involved in adulterous marriages (Those which violate **Matthew 19:9**) do not have to separate after baptism. They say baptism sanctifies a sinful relationship. Baptism does not destroy a sinful marriage and create a righteous one. Repentance is before baptism. Repentance demands a reformation of life. In the case of an unscriptural marriage (one which violates **Matt. 19:9**), repentance demands that one get out of that marriage. If a man has stolen a horse, if he truly repents, he will not keep the horse. Suppose a man is living in polygamy, and he decides to obey the gospel: May he continue to live with a dozen wives after his repentance and baptism? Does his obedience to these commandments of

the gospel change his polygamy from unholy relations to holy relations? Polygamy is one form of adultery; living with a person who has been divorced from another for any cause except fornication is another form of adultery. Repentance means that one ceases to live in sin. The thief quits stealing when he repents, and the one living in adultery with a divorcee must dissolve his adulterous union.

Divorce for any cause than fornication does not destroy the union in God's sight. "*What God joined, no man can put asunder*". Since God joins a man to his first lawful wife and since divorce for trivial cause does not destroy that union, if the man marries he is living with one woman while bound to another. That is what makes the second union unholy. Baptism does not change the nature of that union. Jesus taught that fornication was the only cause whereby one could dissolve the marriage bond and be eligible to remarry. ♦

"You Are Known By What You Do!"

By Jarrod Jacobs

In the long ago, when Naaman came to the king of Israel asking for healing from leprosy (**II Kings 5:5-6**), Elisha sent word to the king saying, "...let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (**II Kings 5:8**). How would Naaman "know that there is a prophet in Israel"? Put simply, it is because Elisha would heal him of his leprosy by the power of God. **Ezekiel 2:4-5** speaks in a similar way concerning Ezekiel and his actions and teaching among the Jews.

God has always emphasized men's actions over mere intentions. While there is no question our intent, mind, or heart, needs to be right with God (**Ps. 51:10, 78:37; II Cor. 8:12, 9:7**), it counts for nothing if all we have are nice dreams or nice wishes and never act upon what is written! You see, we are not known by plans, but we are known by what we do!

This truth is seen in the first century as well. Folks in Ephesus were able to distinguish between the true doctrine and true miracles performed by the apostle Paul and the false doctrine and false miracles performed by certain Jews (**Acts 19:11-20**). When the people learned of the failed exorcism by Sceva's sons, "*fear fell on them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified*" (**v. 17**). Then, "*many that believed came and confessed and shewed their deeds*" (**v. 18**). Yes friends, you are known by what you do! The apostle Paul was known by what he did in Ephesus during those years, and his actions motivated

many people to reject idolatry and accept the Lord. What I find interesting is the "twist" in this account that shows that in the exposing of Sceva's sons as frauds, the people continued turning to the Lord! When these men failed, their failure just made the truth shine that much brighter! In this case in **Acts 19:13-16**, they were known by what they failed to do!

Is it any wonder then that Christ said that those who are a part of His kingdom are those who let their "*light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (**Matt. 5:16**)? Is it any wonder that Christ would speak of the Judgment Day, and tell those listening, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (**Matt. 7:21**)? The New Testament is clear about the fact that we are to be judged by our works on that last day (**II Cor. 5:10**). In the meantime, we understand that our influence, our words and deeds, not only have an impact on those around us now, but also upon those we leave behind (See: **Rev. 14:13; I Tim. 5:24**)!

We may "claim" many things. We may have many good intentions. Yet, you are known by what you do! Knowing this is true, what do people know about you?

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

The Poison of Bitterness

By Al Diestelkamp

Bitterness is an evil that can develop and grow within a person almost unbeknownst to him. I am convinced that it is a tool which Satan uses to entrap even the very ones who have worked hard at ridding their lives of many other sins.

The apostle Peter spoke of bitterness as a poison when rebuking the former sorcerer. He said, "*I see that you are poisoned by bitterness*" (**Acts 8:23**).

Simon's condition was not exclusive to him. None of us are immune to its venom. Husbands are warned against being bitter towards their wives (**Col. 3:19**). Though the inspired writer did not specifically mention the possibility, I have no doubt that wives can develop bitterness toward their husbands. Certainly, if a father fails to heed the apostle's instructions to avoid discouraging his children by provoking them to wrath (**Col. 3:21**), they will likely develop bitterness toward him.

Preachers are prime candidates for this poisonous condition. Though most preachers are treated well by the brethren, occasionally they are not. Unreasonable expectations of the preacher and/or his family can cause resentment which, if he is not careful, will lead to bitterness. Or a preacher may expect brethren to live up to his expectations, and get discouraged when they don't. Many able men have lost their influence, some even losing their faith, after being overcome with bitterness toward the brethren.

The elderly (and those approaching old age) seem to be especially susceptible to bitterness. Perhaps the loss of energy, diminished capacities, health problems and the perception (real or imagined) that the younger generation doesn't appreciate us, opens the door to bitterness.

Bitterness is the state of being "sharp and disagreeable; harsh; severe; piercing" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary). It can be brought on by a number of circumstances, including: discouragement, hopelessness, envy and jealousy.

The New Testament has several things to say about this attitude:

It needs to be "*put away*" (**Eph. 4:25-32**). The apostle Paul lists it among many other sins, and among those which "grieve the Holy Spirit."

It is connected with "*cursing*" (**Rom. 3:9-18**). Christians who would never curse verbally may be guilty of "virtual cursing" by their display of bitterness. This may be only in thought, but if unchecked will eventually manifest itself in harshness.

It is a spiritual "*poison*" (**Acts 8:18-23**). As already noted, Simon, who in becoming a Christian had to repent of his sorcery, was told that his bitterness was his poison that had him "*bound by iniquity.*" Suddenly without the attention of the masses, perhaps he became jealous of the apostles' power to convey the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands.

It can "*spring up*" unannounced (**Heb. 12:12-17**). Read these verses and note how the Hebrew writer tells us that we ought to be "*looking carefully... lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble...*" (**v. 15**). If unchecked it can take hold of us so powerfully that, like Esau, we might not find place for repentance, even if we want to.

It's one thing to identify a problem, and another to provide a remedy. By applying the scriptures I believe we can beat this villain on two fronts.

First, we should help prevent it in others by avoiding what promotes it. For instance, a husband's bitterness can be lessened by the wife's attitude and behavior (**Eph. 5:25, 28, 33a**). A wife's bitterness may be avoided if the husband treats her as God instructs (**Eph. 5:22, 33b**). Parents' bitterness can be minimized if children will obey (**Eph. 6:1-3**), and children will be less likely to become bitter if fathers will listen to God (**Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21**).

All Christians should make a concerted effort not to be a discouragement to others. Younger Christians, in their enthusiasm and zeal, must not leave the older generation behind. They need to understand that "change" (even though it is within authority) is unsettling to the elderly. Bring them along gently.

Older Christians need to accept what they know in their hearts - that change is inevitable, and as long as it is scriptural, it may even be desirable. Don't "quench the spirit" of the youth lest they become bitter.

You can help a preacher avoid the pitfall of bitterness by being an encouragement to him in his efforts to teach

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the lost and edify the saints. Treat him as the brother he is, rather than an employee of the church who can be hired and fired at will.

Knowing that envy and jealousy promote bitterness, we should avoid flaunting power, possessions, or any other advantage we have over others.

Furthermore, we must fight bitterness in ourselves by actively resisting it. To borrow a phrase from Barney Fife, "Nip it in the bud!"

Satan as the source of bitter attitudes.

When the symptoms appear, study and meditate on the scriptures instead of having a "pity-party."

Be willing to rejoice with those who are blessed more than you—replace envy with joy. And most of all, pray for help.

Bitterness has the potential to consume a person and drain him of his spirituality, and oh, how Satan enjoys that!

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

Treat it like any other temptation. Start by recognizing

"WHICH CHURCH SHOULD I ATTEND?"

One Where His Name Is Glorified

Acts 4:12 - No other name whereby we might be saved.

Acts 11:26 - God gave the name Christian

1 Peter 4:16 - We can glorify God in this name.

One Where His Teachings On Salvation Are Followed

John 14:6 - Only He is the way to heaven.

Hebrews 5:9 - All must obey Him to be saved.

John 8:24 - He said we must believe on Him.

Luke 13:3 - He said we must repent.

Matthew 10:32-33 - He said we must confess Him.

Mark 16:16 - He said we must be baptized to be saved.

One Where His Will Is Followed In Worship

John 4:24 - Worship must be sincere and proper actions.

Acts 20:7 - Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

Colossians 3:16 - Singing praises to God.

Acts 2:42 - Prayer and teaching.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - Giving of our means on the first day of the week.

YOU SHOULD ATTEND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST *"The churches of Christ salute you."* (Romans 16:16)

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

Evangelist: Jimmy Pettigrew

How to Contact Us

Telephone: (920)499-5677
E-mail: hillcrestcofc@live.com



Our Address

1621 Hillcrest Drive
Green Bay, WI 54313



Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com