

It Is Written

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Some Questions About Divorce & Remarriage

By Rusty Miller

Must the innocent party divorce the spouse guilty of fornication? Certainly not. Fornication does not dissolve marriage, but instead gives the innocent party the right to dissolve the marriage. They are not obligated to do so. In fact, it could be a great lesson in forgiveness if they choose not to divorce.

Must a Christian take back a mate guilty of fornication in order to forgive? The question arises from a misunderstanding of the difference between sin and the consequences of sin. For instance, it is true that a murderer may be forgiven of his dreadful act, even by the family of the murder victim. It is also true that the murderer may still have to spend time in prison or even face death by capital punishment, and that sentence may be due to testimony given by those who have forgiven him. Forgiveness of sin does not absolve a person of the consequences of that sin. Likewise, the innocent party may forgive a mate of fornication, but because of the mental anguish caused by such a betrayal, may not be able to receive them back as a mate. Divorce is still the right of the innocent party and may be the consequences the fornicator pays for sin.

If the marriage bond is broken by God in a scriptural divorce, can the guilty party remarry, since they are no longer bound? Again, this is a misunderstanding. God allows the innocent party to dissolve the marriage, and frees them (the innocent) from their bond. The bond remains for the guilty. The guilty party who remarries is then guilty of adultery (Matt. 19:9).

Does Matthew 19 really give anyone the right to remarry, or does it just give the innocent the right to divorce? Matthew 19 discusses remarriage as much as divorce. Where there is no remarriage, there is no resulting adultery for the guilty. Therefore, when Jesus says, "Whoever divorces ... except for fornication, and marries another ... commits adultery," it is implicit in the statement that one who divorces for fornication and marries another does not commit adultery.

Since all the passages dealing with this problem are addressed to men divorcing women, can a woman divorce her mate if he is guilty of fornication? Clearly, this is just a question of semantics. Mark 10:10-12 addresses the woman who divorces and remarries without proper cause (fornication) and puts her actions in the dissolving of a marriage equal with that of the man. Granted, Mark 10 does not mention the exception, but Jesus' teaching on this matter must be gathered from all sources (thus Matthew as well). In addition, there are other passages in the New Testament addressed to "men" which are really addressed to all (see Gal. 6:1, Matt. 5:27-28). Therefore, we must conclude a woman whose husband commits fornication has scriptural right to divorce him and marry another.

What about the one who is innocent, but a sinful mate "puts them away?" Jesus gives the right to remarry only to those who "put away" their mate for fornication. If one is "put away" and then remarries, they commit adultery. Therefore, if an innocent party is "put away" for incompatibility, they commit adultery if they remarry.

Why is this issue so much debated recently? It is clear that we have let worldly ideas about marriage and divorce influence our lives as Christians. Many people seek for "ways out" for loved ones and friends who find themselves divorced without proper cause. As Christians, it is important to stand for what is right and true even when "the truth hurts." We do not wish for anyone to have to suffer the lonely life of a "eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," but we recognize that this is far better than being lost. Our desire to stand on the scripture compels us to continue to debate this vital issue with those who would distort His word.

The Truth Sometimes Hurts

By Jonathan Perz

How much do you appreciate the truth? The truth is easy to hear when it is flattering, encouraging and

uplifting. However, the truth can sometimes hurt. Do you always desire the truth from those around you, regardless of whether it is favorable or not? Do you always demand the truth from those who preach and teach the gospel of Christ?

The truth pleased the rich young ruler until Jesus told him the one thing he lacked (Mark 10:17-22). Some would call such a declaration of truth unloving, but the Spirit called it love (note verse 21). How do we feel when someone courageously and honestly points out our shortcomings (Prov. 27:6)?

Some of the Jews who heard Peter on Pentecost appreciated the truth, though it indicted them. They chose repentance and baptism (Acts 2:36-40). Whereas, those Jews who heard Stephen speak that same truth hated what was spoken. They responded by stoning Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-60). How do we respond to the truth?

The Galatians loved the apostle Paul—so much that at one point they were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul. However, in the very next verse, Paul was compelled to ask if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (Gal. 4:14-16). Do we despise those who tell us what we need to hear?

Simply stated, unless we have a love of the truth, we will never appreciate the truths that hurt (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Unless we are willing to accept painful truths, we cannot know the sanctifying power of truth (John 17:17). Unless we obey the truth, we will be condemned (Rom. 2:8).

How much do you appreciate truth? The answer is painfully obvious when we are confronted with agonizing truths that require change in our lives. Change hurts, but the truth saves. How will you respond the next time you are confronted with the truth?

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

By Jeff Smith

Has this question ever puzzled you? Have you ever thought about why Jesus came to John to be immersed? As religious folk, if we denied the necessity of water baptism for salvation (like most of the religious world), this question would be moot and a waste of time. However, since we are Bible believers, and since the Bible clearly teaches the necessity of water baptism for one's salvation (cp. 1 Pet. 3:21; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38), this question is an important one to consider.

What Was The Purpose For John's Baptism? Succinctly stated, John's baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4). Since he came as the forerunner for the Messiah, he was to blaze the trail for Christ whose gospel would later preach baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Did Jesus Need To Have Sins Remitted? Obviously not if we properly understand passages like Isa. 53:9, 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15, and 1 Pet. 2:22. Jesus lived the sinless life on earth and was never in need of having sins remitted in the act of baptism.

Why, Then, Was Jesus Baptized? The only Biblical reason we have is found in Jesus' own words to John when He was baptized. In Mt. 3:15, Jesus had to convince John to baptize Him "in order to fulfill all righteousness." We must remember that later on, Jesus placed a high credibility on John's baptism in refuting the chief priests and Jewish elders (Mt. 21:25). Because these Jews had rejected it, they had, in effect, rejected God's will. How could Jesus refuse to accept what He would later expect all others to do? Even though He didn't need the outcome of John's baptism (remission), He did need to comply with His Father's "righteous" plan. A failure to be baptized would have made His later condemnation of the Jews very hollow and hypocritical.

Being the pure Son of God, what else would a faithful son do but obey the Father? Therefore, He sets the perfect example of submitting to the Father's plan for the salvation of all mankind.

Have you been baptized? Jesus was to "fulfill all righteousness." Won't you do the same?