

**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 45, No. 17, April 24, 2018 / Southside Baptist Church / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter **is a WEEKLY Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Savior JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

BIBLICAL TRUTH FOR CHRISTIAN FAMILIES!
[Part 1]

REMAIN IN YOUR PRESENT MARRIAGE!

"The Pharisees also came unto Him [JESUS], tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matthew 19:3) When Jesus was upon earth, there were several **different schools of thought among the Jews** as to acceptable reasons for divorce. Two thousand years later, there are still many opinions on this subject. **BUT, how did JESUS deal with the Pharisees on this subject?** (1) **JESUS ignored** the common opinions of the "religious" authorities. (2) **JESUS simply went back to Genesis** when answering marriage/divorce questions.

This is no surprise, for as John 1:1-3, 14 reminds us— JESUS is the Creator God who is revealed in Genesis! So, of course, Jesus would go back to His own original intention for marriage which **is found in Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25! Indeed,** Jesus returned to Genesis when stating His position of the permanence of marriage; and He has ever changed his mind! **Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25 remain in effect in our sin polluted world!**

Furthermore, 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 [As stated in Genesis] it was not so."**

Jesus did give an addition to the Genesis teaching: ***“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”*** (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9)

NOW, WHEN Jesus proclaimed the permanency of marriage between ONE MAN TO ONE WOMAN— **His disciples were absolutely stunned!** (Matthew 19:3-10) **THINK ABOUT IT:** IF Jesus had simply agreed with any of the religious opinions of that day, it would have been no big deal. **Why were the disciples stunned? They knew that Jesus had just closed down all the divorce loopholes!**

Realizing that a duly married, (male and female), couple had 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)

Further note: EVEN IF one grants that the ‘exception clause’ (Matthew 19:9) permits divorce — there is certainly NO COMMAND, no requirement to divorce; and in Matthew 19 Jesus makes NO provision of marriage to someone else. **Jesus STILL says, “From the beginning, it was not so... what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Matthew 19:8, 19:6)

IN REALITY the ‘exception clause’ of Matthew 19:9 says **NOTHING** about divorce on the grounds of adultery. If Jesus had granted a divorce option on the grounds of adultery— not only would the word for adultery been used in Matthew 19:9; but also... EVERY MARRIAGE would have grounds for divorce: Matthew 5:27-28. In Matthew 19:9... JESUS DID NOT speak of adultery; instead, JESUS spoke of fornication. **EXAMPLE:** Jesus grew up under the FALSE stigma of being born of ‘fornication’... (John 8:41)... for Mary

was pregnant before her marriage to Joseph. Joseph and Mary were in a one year period where they were considered, looked upon as MARRIED... but they did not yet live together... they had not consummated their marriage. They were promised to each other... in a much stronger way than what we refer to as 'being engaged'.... **IN THAT CONTEXT**, IF Mary had indeed FORNICATED.... had sex prior to marriage with another man— Joseph could have divorced her. This sort of scenario is the essence of the exception clause of Matthew 19:9.

NOW, it is no surprise that the Apostle Paul, in First Corinthians 7, AGREES with JESUS, as the Holy Spirit also moved Paul's pen to set forth the permanence of marriage— 1 Cor. 7:10-14; 27; 39! These verses are very clear: **(1) VERSE 11**— If separated, be reconciled or remain unmarried. **(2) VS 14**— Don't divorce; you may win the unbeliever to Christ. **(3) VERSE 27 and 39**— married couples (male & female) are bound in marriage until there is a DEATH— then there is liberty to marry again, but only to a believer.

MULTITUDES, (LED BY PASTORS, commentaries, and the NOTES in Study Bibles), flock to this same chapter, skip and reject these clear verses, AND focus on 1 Corinthians 7:15 and interpret verse 15 so as to excuse their divorce plans! What verse 15 means is much debated. But if you interpret verse 15 in a way that cancels out the very clear emphasis of 1 Corinthians 7:10-14; 27; 39— you have wrongly interpreted verse 15; for repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 7, the Holy Spirit had Paul to set forth the permanence of marriage... in perfect agreement with Jesus in both the Old and the New Testaments!

Apply the Scriptures to your PRESENT marriage:

**** FACE REALITY:** Allowing even the faintest possibility or option for divorce will sabotage your efforts in trying to work through a

difficult marriage problem.

Your 'flesh' simply will not pay the high price of walking the Calvary Road if you are holding on to divorce as an option!

**** 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). He no doubt hates all sin. But some sins, God especially names as things He hates. **HOWEVER, God delights in and blesses** those with repentant, broken, and contrite hearts! (Psalm 51:16-17; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 57:15)

***** HERE ARE IMPORANT words to those of you who are already divorced and remarried... maybe even more than once!**

There are NO New Testament Scriptures that call upon you to break up your present marriage. THERE ARE **NO New Testament Scriptures** that teach that in order to show evidence of repentance, you will have to break your present marriage. (If there were, then 1 Corinthians 7 would have to read very different!)

REALITY: Those of you with previous marriages and divorce in your background— many of you still have guilt... **The wonderful solution, in all kinds of cases is to,**

(1) Take God's point of view! In spite of good intentions and strong efforts, 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, rejoice in, and REST IN God's wonderful forgiveness.

(2) Maybe you were the "innocent" party! Even so, it is highly unlikely that you are totally without sin! (1 John 1:7-10) **SO, follow Daniel's example.** He was a very 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) EMBRACE and give a godly testimony, such as... “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.” **“My present marriage?** Well, my present spouse and I have repented of our past sins against God and our former mates. **My 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!”

(5) Openly testify, “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 because we are now doing what we failed to do the first time— namely, submit to God and submit to one another in the fear of God! PLEASE, go home and keep your marriage vows... love and forgive... EVEN AS JESUS HAS DONE FOR YOU!

IMPORTANT NOTE: We rejoice that among the believers at Southside, we have sweet fellowship with and labor with precious ones who have divorce/divorces in their background. **At Southside— those with divorce and/or remarriage in their background** teach classes, lead Bible Studies, minister in Outreach activities, testify at our LORD'S SUPPER services; and

men, (with divorce and remarriage in their past), 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 friends in Christ are in any sense 'second-class saints!'**

**** AT THE SAME TIME, at Southside we do see a clear, 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 REALITY: 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— they are free in Christ regardless of what others may think! Such ones 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 marriage and to explain the sacredness of marriage.** They are easily at peace among differing brethren.

RESPONDING TO A HARD CASE: 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 whore and is a deeply bound slave to sin.** Surely, you have “grounds” for divorce and “freedom” to remarry— right? ACTUALLY, what you have is an opportunity to walk in the steps of Jesus... to be REDEMPTIVE toward a sin rebel. **YOU HAVE AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY,**

1. TO REJOICE THAT you are being persecuted for righteousness

sake! Moreover, you keenly remember being 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.

2. 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)

3. Thus, when or if the door opens, **you will be ready**, (as Hosea with wretched Gomer), **to “buy her back and to love her!”** (Hosea 3:1-5)

HOWEVER, THESE ‘REDEPTIVE’ THOUGHTS ARE, at times, discouraged BECAUSE several pastors, books, and notes in Study Bibles teach — that EVEN GOD HIMSELF IS A DIVORCEE, that God divorced Israel!

IS THAT TRUE? Read all the Old Testament statements of God's dealing with Israel. **Yes**, sin caused a separation. **Yes**, sin brought chastening! **HOWEVER**, God in His everlasting, unending 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 for a proof text, attempting 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...!"**

4. APPLICATION: Therefore, out of love and worship to Jesus— keep your 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 MANY who claim to be the “innocent party” are as guilty as sin! They and their spouse contributed tons to the failure of the marriage. **Often, the “innocent party” was consumed with** career, or sports, or hobbies, or ‘Christian’ ministry; or maybe he/she contributed much destruction to the marriage by anger, resentments, bitterness, etc.! **He/she may be many things;** but “innocent” is not one of them!

A spouse who spends YEARS destroying his/her spouse with neglect, lovelessness, anger, and/or harshness; and then presents himself OR herself as innocent is grossly deceived.

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— most likely I 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—

***** Scriptures which show that God is still calls for the PERMANENCE of marriage; *** Scriptures which give some clear instruction to those already divorced and remarried. *** Scriptures that call upon us to love and to forgive IN THE SAME MANNER as we have been loved and forgiven!**

NOTE: SADLY, 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 WORD OF GOD reminds us that God's grace reached down to us when **we were the unlovable, the undeserving, and the unresponsive. Now, let us be** channels of His kind of love! Who needs to experience the love of God more than a wayward spouse?

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: So, your spouse violated his/her marriage vow. That is horrific! **But that does not justify you or require you to violate the vow you made!** INSTEAD, HEED THE **scriptures which call us to DENY OURSELVES,** to take up our cross and to follow Jesus! Function as **a believer priest,** make sure things are settled before God, in accordance with the Word of God... and then, go forward in peace.

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.** You/we are commanded to forgive and love even as God for Christ's sake forgives and loves us! **That is our 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! GO FORTH, loving as He loves!

I sometimes here confessions like these: "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 of those statements are TOTALLY irrelevant! WHY? BECAUSE,**

1. You PROMISED GOD 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!

3. One's DIVORCE plans and/or remarriage plans may have the blessing of men; but do they find support in the Holy Word of God? You and I will stand before God and each have to

give an account. The only thing that really matters here is this—
Am I in line with God's Holy Word? Will my position stand in the Day of Judgment?

4. LET'S REMEMBER: We were God's enemies. We deserved hell. YET: He so loved He did something! HE SENT HIS SON! **Love is something sacrificial you do for the best interest of the other person. 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!"*

FINAL 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!

MOREOVER, some 'wars' in families will fade from or never get to red zones of physical danger if the following Scriptures are heeded: 1 Peter 2:19-21; 3:1-6; Romans 12:14-21.

Grace to all in Christ! / James Bell /
www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

MONDAYS: Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Call the church office at 615-452-5951

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care Nursing Home. Meet at the front door at **5:15PM.**

WEDNESDAYS: → 6:30pm— Children Ministry/activities;

→ 6:30pm— Youth Activities and Bible Study— (Enter via double doors by gym)

→ 6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE... (Enter via IRON STEPS; or double doors by gym)

***** LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 1 @ 11:00am; Continuing in LUKE.** ENTER at the back of the church building, through double doors, under the Drive Thru Awning. *[Doors **open** at 10:30am... The doors are **re-locked** at 11:10am]*

***** MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am:** Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! **(STUDY: THE EPISTLE OF JAMES!)** ENTER AT THE back of Church building... under the drive-thru awning. **FELLOWSHIP, Juice, coffee, Hardee's biscuits, & Donuts WAITING, starting at 7:30am!**

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SUNDAY SERVICES: APRIL 29: *Sunday School at 9:30am*

and *Worship at 10:45am*

6:00pm... Fifth Sunday Evening Praise & WORSHIP!

***THEME FOR THE EVENING: GLORYING IN THE CROSS!
THEREFORE, COME PREPARED TO SHARE SCRIPTURES
WHICH WILL HELP US TO 'GLORY IN THE CROSS OF
CHRIST!'... WE WILL SING HYMNS that GLORY IN THE
CROSS!***

[IN ADVANCE... give us the Scripture you would like to read or have read; and the hymns you would like for the congregation to sing unto the LORD... which fit with this theme!