



Affair Proof your Marriage

ECCLESIA KINGDOM COMMUNITY

Snippets of Marriage Seminar 2017

Contact details:

Info@ecclesia.org.za

www.ekc.org.za

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Affair proof your marriage:

Introduction.

This booklet has its origin in some of the marriage seminars that I have conducted in Cape Town. It reflects our desire to have greater and better marriages that can impact the Kingdom of God for good. It is in no way a theological or a philosophical treatise. It is however based on experience and therefore has an advising element to it. The questions at the end of this booklet is actually what this booklet is about. It reflects the honesty and the willingness of people to know better and to do better.

My thanks to EKC and its leadership

I hope you enjoy it.

How we should start life, in my opinion

There is something about how you start things. I have for years thought about how we start life and how we end life. People starting out fresh and end up frail, not always a joy to behold. For the sake of not being melancholic, I want to suggest to you in a mischievous way, perhaps the way we start and end life can be a little bit different.

In the 1980's, comedian Sean Morey on the "Tonight Show" performed the following limerick which I really liked. I hope you do too (Attitude, 2015 p 1).

*In my next life I want to live my life backwards.
You start out dead and get that out of the way.
Then you wake up in an old people's home
feeling better every day.
You get kicked out for being too healthy,
go collect your pension,
and then when you start work,
you get a gold watch and a party on your first day.
You work for 40 years
until you're young enough to enjoy your retirement.
You party, drink alcohol, and are generally promiscuous,
then you are ready for high school.
You then go to primary school,
you become a kid,
you play.
You have no responsibilities,
you become a baby until you are born.*

*And then you spend your last 9 months
floating in luxurious spa-like conditions
with central heating and room service on tap,
larger quarters every day and then Voila!
You finish off as an orgasm!*

Although I know that many of you would like the idea of living life backwards, we know that it is not possible. As believers however, we must start with having the end in mind and working towards that particular intended goal. Beginning with the end in mind is one of “*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*” in the famous Stephen Covey’s bestseller. The book speaks about having the image of what you want to achieve in your life, marriage, business etc at the end of your life, as your frame of reference to evaluate everything else in your life. I highly recommend it. It will help you frame your mind and the way you should think about certain things.

Our marriages are God’s idea

Our marriages are important and we need to have a Godly view of what it would take to make our marriages successful and affair proof. Marriage is God’s idea. It is from that *end in mind premise*, the beauty of a *God glorifying marriage*, that we work backwards to safeguard our marriages.

Godly marriages are the pillars of society, according to the bible. It is one of God’s first supreme institutions and a medium to bless the nations. God has designed your marriage to be a blessing to others. Our marriages have generational consequences and it is meant to bless our children and our children’s children. Marriages can either be a blessing or a curse! **You decide!**

The effects of divorce is death and devastation

The weight of this bears heavy on those who have felt the deadening agony of divorce, where trust was broken and life came literally to an end for some. The effects of divorce is death and devastation. I have often heard couples say that if their partners are unfaithful then they will leave that marriage. The truth of the matter and research has indicated that this is not always so. Believe it or not, most people decide to stay in their marriages after infidelity. There are children, bonds, and years of partnership that is considered and then couples stay. For better or for worse.

When you counsel them and you address the actual issue of unfaithfulness, you find out, that it could have been avoided if the signs were understood and secondly that the delinquent or unmet needs were satisfied. Addressing the issue then becomes the imperative to move the couple from disloyalty to loyalty. Yes, my experience has showed that even though one person has committed adultery, both as a couple were involved, in one way or the other. Both must own up. Divorce isn't the solution, particularly when the unfaithful spouse is remorseful and devoted to changing. My personal view that divorce should be a last resort. We need to investigate and activate deep, deep reflection regarding the wisdom of divorce before we decide to quit. When you do decide to do so, let the Bible be your guide. God hates divorce and it always involves unfaithfulness to His covenant first, before there is unfaithfulness to a partner.

New Testament grounds for divorce

As you know by now the New Testament's grounds for divorce are sexual sin and abandonment or desertion by an unbeliever. You can read more about this in Mathew 5: 32; 19:9. This sin that Jesus spoke about in the abovementioned chapter speaks about sexual sin for which the Greek word porneia is used. This word porneia, includes, sexual sin, such as adultery, homosexuality, bestiality and incest. When one partner violates the sanctity of intimacy, forsaking their covenantal obligation, the faithful partner, and believe it or not, the erring partner is placed in an extremely difficult position. There are casualties everywhere. In most cases the children are the worst off.

Attempt reconciliation first

Once copious attempts at reconciliation is demonstrated and the sinning partner repented and reconciliation takes place, the marriage can be rescued and restored. However the Bible permits release for the faithful partner through divorce (1Cor 7:15) should they choose to.

The second reason as indicated for permitting divorce is in the case where the unbelieving spouse does not desire to live with his or her believing partner. This is a marriage which demonstrates different value systems or as the Bible indicates as being unequally yoked. You can read about this in 1 Cor 7 vs. 12-15. Remember God has called us to live in peace and not strife.

Divorce according to the Bible is permitted in this situation. I have seen so many of these and the children that grows up in these relationships grows up with great handicaps, but for the grace of God.

This particular article will not illustrate Biblical grounds for Remarriage, church discipline for those that erred, help for the hurting and divorce prior to conversation. It will be too vast for the ambit of this discussion.

A good resource for the above topics would be the book *“Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong”* by John MacArthur and his leadership team.

Here is an article that I think you should also consider. This speaks to the law of the land and I hope that you will be able to draw some valuable lessons from it.

You have to respect both the God’s law and the law of the land. Especially when it comes to violence in a marriage. As a child of divorce parents , I know the danger violence poses to a child. It is my believe that you must protect your life and if your life and the lives of your children are in danger then run! Run to the police , run to the church. Don’t stay in a marriage where violence and physical harm is part of the fabric of the marriage. This is not God. I know of too many people who stayed in a violent marriage and paid with their lives for it.

Law of the land , grounds for divorce from a global perspective

Millie Johnson is a lawyer who specialises in divorce from a legal perspective. It speaks to the specificity of UK law , but can also be applied to global understanding. Because the law is different in every country it is important that you consult your country’s own legal compliance in this regard. Nevertheless here is the link , should you wish to find out more.

<https://www.rocketlawyer.co.uk/article/grounds-for-divorce.rl>

Johnson urges that before you divorce , that you should be aware not only of your intention to divorce , but also the legal process that is involved. She provides five possible grounds for divorce which are : adultery, unreasonable behaviour, desertion, living apart for more than two years (with agreement) and living apart for more than five years (without agreement). She advises that it is common in practise that couples who seeks to divorce will often decide to choose the reason of 'unreasonable behaviour' as an all-encompassing motivation. Here are her thoughts on the five legal reasons that are commonly used.

Adultery

The ground of adultery can be used where your husband or wife has had sexual intercourse with someone else of the opposite sex (so if your husband had sex with a man this does not count as adultery). It must be actual sexual intercourse - not just a kiss or 'heavy petting'. I know of people who left their partners because they made out with someone else. This is not grounds for divorce.

If you decide to file for divorce on grounds of adultery, you must do so within six months of discovering that your spouse cheated on you - although this time limit does not count if you have stopped living together.

You can only use the ground of adultery if you are the 'innocent' party (ie. your husband or wife slept with someone else - not if you committed adultery). However, if you both had sexual relationships with other people, either husband or wife can file for divorce.

Unreasonable behaviour

There are essentially two distinct situations where the ground of unreasonable behaviour is given in a divorce petition: firstly where unreasonable behaviour has actually occurred - and secondly where none

of the other grounds for divorce apply (e.g. where husband and wife have simply drifted apart and no longer wish to remain married).

Although unreasonable behaviour can constitute serious accusations including domestic violence or drunkenness, it also encompasses rather vague issues such as lack of support in maintaining a household. In reality, there is a very low standard when it comes to unreasonable behaviour, but **some factual** reason must be given and an incident of 'unreasonable behaviour' must have occurred less than six months prior to filing for divorce.

It should be noted that, if your husband or wife has become intimate with someone else but has not had sexual relations with them, although adultery cannot be given as a ground for divorce, unreasonable behaviour can be used. Similarly, if your spouse has a sexual relationship with a member of the same sex, this does not count as adultery but can count as unreasonable behaviour.

Living apart for more than 2 years , both parties are in agreement

If you and your spouse have lived apart for at least two years, and you both agree to get divorced, this ground can be used.

Living apart for more than 5 years , without agreement

If you have not been living with your husband or wife for at least five years, you can file for divorce on this ground, even if your spouse does not agree to divorce.

Desertion

If your husband or wife left you, without your agreement or a good reason and with the intention of ending the relationship, it may be possible to use the ground of desertion when filing for divorce. They must have deserted you for over two years within the last two and a half years and you can have lived together for up to six months during this period. In practice, this is a rarely used ground.

The Grounds for Divorce in South Africa

The following information was taken from the website [divorcelaw.co.za](https://www.divorcelaws.co.za) (<https://www.divorcelaws.co.za/divorce.html>)

It is different , but also very similar in the interpretation of the global compliance , however different wording and phrasing is used.

A marriage may be dissolved by a court on the following grounds:

- the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage; or
- the mental illness,
- or the continuous unconsciousness, of a party to the marriage.

Irretrievable breakdown

A court may grant a decree of divorce on the grounds of the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage if the court is satisfied that the marriage relationship between the parties to the marriage has reached such a state of disintegration that there is no reasonable prospect of the restoration of a normal marital relationship between them.

Divorce Act 70 of 1979 lays down the circumstances that a court may accept as evidence of the irretrievable breakdown of a marriage:

- The parties have not lived together as husband and wife for a continued period of at least one year immediately prior to the date issuing summons for divorce.
- The defendant has committed adultery and the plaintiff finds it irreconcilable with a continued marriage relationship.

- The defendant was declared a habitual criminal and is undergoing imprisonment.

The court still has discretion not to grant a divorce order, and may postpone the proceedings or dismiss the claim if it appears to the court that there is a reasonable possibility that the parties may reconcile through counselling. If reconciliation is unsuccessful after a few months, the parties may proceed with the same summons. The summons will usually contain the averment that further counselling and/or treatment will not lead to any reconciliation. A court must, therefore, be satisfied that the marriage is really broken down and that there is no possibility of the continuation of a normal marriage.

Where the parties reconcile and live together again after the summons was issued and served, it does not necessarily end the divorce proceedings. If, however, the reconciliation is unsuccessful after a few months, the parties may proceed with the same summons. It is extremely important to make sure that the summons is withdrawn formally if you do decide to reconcile. Withdrawal of the summons is formally affected when the plaintiff serves a document referred to as a notice of withdrawal of the summons on the defendant or his/her attorney. If this is not done, a divorce order may be obtained by default without the defendant being aware of it. If a divorce is obtained in this manner, the aggrieved party may approach the court to set aside the order.

Since the present law on divorce is no longer based on the principle of fault, defences like insanity or the plaintiff's own adultery are no longer valid defences. Therefore, if a divorce is instituted on account of an irretrievable breakdown, there is in fact no defence to prevent the divorce from proceeding. But if the court finds that there is a reasonable possibility of reconciliation, it may postpone the proceedings in order that the parties attempt reconciliation; this, however, is not a defence,

but merely amounts to a postponement.

Mental illness or continuous unconsciousness

Mental illness

A court may grant a decree of divorce on the grounds of the mental illness of the defendant if the court is satisfied that the defendant:

- has been admitted as a patient to an institution in terms of the reception order;
- is being detained as a state patient at an institution or other place specified by the Minister of Correctional Services; or
- is being detained as a mentally ill convicted prisoner at an institution.

A divorce order may also be granted if the defendant has, for a continuous period of at least two years immediately prior to the institution of the divorce action, not been discharged unconditionally as such a patient, state patient or mentally ill prisoner; and if the court has heard evidence from at least two psychiatrists, one of whom must have been appointed by the court, that the defendant is mentally ill and that there is no reasonable prospect that he/she will be cured of his/her mental illness.

Continuous unconsciousness

A court may grant a decree of divorce on the grounds that the defendant is, by reason of a physical disorder, in a state of continuous unconsciousness, if it is satisfied that:

- the defendant's unconsciousness has lasted for a continuous period of at least six months immediately prior to the institution of the divorce action; and
- after having heard evidence from at least two medical practitioners, one of whom must be a neurologist or a neurosurgeon appointed by the court, there is no reasonable prospect that the defendant will regain consciousness.

The divorce process in South Africa is relatively straightforward, yet the financial and emotional consequences can be profound, especially since most divorces are normally lodged in the High Court, where the costs to litigate are extremely high. The other harsh reality is that the High Courts in South Africa have overly burdened court rolls, and parties normally have to wait a long time for their divorce matter to go to trial when their divorce is contested. The backlog in cases was somewhat lessened when the Regional Courts Amendment Act came into effect in 2010 to amend the Magistrates' Courts Act, 1944, so as to allow regional divisions of the magistrates' courts to also deal with divorce cases.

In South Africa, the marital regime of the parties determines how the assets will be divided upon dissolution of the marriage, the assets being those at the time of the divorce. In South Africa, we have a '**no fault**' system of divorce, meaning that a divorce will be granted if one of the parties believes that there has been an 'irretrievable breakdown of the marriage relationship' and that there are no reasonable prospects of restoring it. Therefore, a marriage can be dissolved even if one of the parties does not wish to get divorced.

Civil marriages, civil unions and those religious marriages conducted by registered marriage officers can only be dissolved by order of the court. The spouse wishing to end the marriage must issue a summons against the other spouse, stating that the relationship has broken down, that there is no reasonable prospect of restoring the relationship and which

matrimonial property regime governs the marriage. The summons must make provision for the division of the estate, either stating that the parties have entered into a prior agreement or asking the court to divide the joint estate or enforce the provisions of the Antenuptial Contract. Parties must also set out what the arrangements are with regards to any children born or adopted during the marriage.

God loves you even if you are divorced.

There is hope after divorce. We are given so many promises to show us that there is always hope! Romans 8:28 tells us that all things work together for the good of those who love God. Zechariah 9:12 tells us that God will repay two blessings for each of our troubles. So take courage, once you confess and repent of your sins God not only forgives but God restores.

God hates divorce. Let me tell you a truth. So does the divorcee. There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, not even divorce. Let's look at the Word in Romans 8 vs 31-39

*¹ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?³² He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?³³ **Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.³⁴ Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.***

*³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** shall tribulation, or distress EXTREME ANGUISH, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness WITHOUT COVERING, or peril, or sword?³⁶ (JUDICIAL PUNISHMENT) As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor*

angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. The bible says nothing. Divorce is included in that.

My personal view is exactly that , a personal view. And so is everyone else's view. It is exactly that. It is their view on the interpretation of scripture and their particular life situation. So at the end of the day with great humility, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before the Lord.

To remarry is between you and God and the one you want to marry.

Only the scripture itself is a divinely inspired Word of God. We have to be very careful about taking a human interpretation and forcing it on others, lest we become judgemental like the Pharisees. Ultimately, your decision to remarry is between you and God. It is a decision that should be made in prayer and consultation with your pastors and the leadership of your church.

Remember that in the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ there were prostitutes, murderers and adulterers. Just go read the genealogy in Mathew the first chapter.

- Rahab, a prostitute who eventually married Salmon, an adulterous couple
- David, who married Bathsheba after he had her husband murdered,
- Ruth a widow ,who married her kinsman-redeemer, Boaz.

I find it very comforting that there are three women who were remarried in the direct lineage of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. But for the great grace of God.

An article about Divorce and Remarriage

Over the years I have had many serious discussions with couples , pastors , theologians about divorce and remarriage. The subject remains tender stricken with different opinions and interpretations. I am going to attach an article that I have been studying for a while that I hope will help you interpret divorce and remarriage in a very balanced way. I have copied the entire article as is and only changed the spelling and grammar to suit our UK English.

’M DIVORCED AND REMARRIED. AM I LIVING IN ADULTERY?’

By David Servant

Imagine this:

John is an unregenerate drug-user who, during a weekend fling in Las Vegas, falls for a flirtatious bartender named Lisa and marries her at the *Little Neon Chapel*. Their marriage lasts one week.

Fast forward to 20 years later. John is a completely different man. He’s been born again and drug-free for 16 years, and he has been married for 15 of them to a devoted Christian woman named Karen. They have 4 beautiful children, ages 5 through 14, whom Karen home-schools, primarily because they want to make sure that their children are raised in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

At work, John is befriended by a Christian man who invites him to a daily lunch hour Bible study, and John, hungry for God’s Word and fellowship with other believers, begins to attend. He is very impressed with the depth of biblical knowledge possessed by those who attend. Their influence over him grows.

Fast forward six months. One evening, after their children are all in bed, John sits at the kitchen table across from Karen and tearfully tells her that he has filed for a divorce. He explains that he doesn’t want to divorce her—because he loves her and their children dearly—but he has learned that theirs is an “adulterous marriage,” all due to the fact that he was once married to a Las Vegas bartender for a week. John explains that, in God’s eyes, he is still married to Lisa, and until Lisa dies, his marriage with her (Karen) is adulterous.

John quotes Luke 16:18, where Jesus said, “Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery. “That is us,” John says. He also quotes 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, which declares that no adulterers will inherit God’s kingdom. Karen tearfully argues with him for hours into the night, but to no avail.

The next morning, while Karen is asleep on the couch, John breaks the news to their 4 children, although they don’t understand why their daddy is leaving them. He promises that he will still be visiting them regularly,

and with tears running down his cheeks, drives off with some boxes of clothing to the apartment of one of the men from his Bible study, who has also divorced his Christian wife and left his family. At that day's lunch hour Bible study, everyone encourages John, reminding him that Jesus promised suffering for all those who follow Him.

Sound far-fetched? Tragically it is not. I recently encountered some folks who believe and practice what I have just described. After a little research, I found that there are entire churches that hold to such doctrine. Just today I received an email from a lady who became a Christian three years ago and who is *divorcing her husband of 35 years*, all due to the fact that she was previously married and divorced. She wrote, "I ain't going to hell for anybody, even for a husband of 35 years."

This kind of doctrine not only can potentially destroy devoted Christian families like John and Karen's, but it opens the door dangerously wide—for certain Christian couples who are struggling in their marriages—with a convenient justification to divorce. It can turn a treacherous sin—divorce between two Christians—into a holy obligation. It makes divorce, something that God hates (Mal. 2:16) into something that, in some cases, pleases Him. It forces those who do not have the gift of celibacy to pretend that they do. And it creates a lower, "unclean" class among those who have been cleansed of their sins by Jesus' sacrifice, a class consisting of those who have previously been married and divorced.

The Premise

The foundational premise upon which this Divine Divorce Doctrine is based is that, according to Jesus, divorce and remarriage constitutes adultery. Thus, married couples that include at least one person who has been previously married and divorced should repent of their “adulterous marriage” by divorcing again (or at least separating so that there is functional divorce). This is not a sin, they say, but rather a repentance from sin. After their divorce/separation, the person now twice-divorced should remain single, at least until his or her original spouse dies, at which time they will no longer be married to their original spouse “in God’s eyes.”

Those who hold to this doctrine differ on whether it is lawful for the spouse who was dumped, who is now once-divorced—but never actually “married in God’s eyes”—to remarry. They also disagree on whether or not there is ever a legitimate reason to divorce, that is, a reason that would allow a person who initiated a divorce to remarry.

Divine Divorce Proponents point to four passages in the synoptic Gospels to support their foundational premise. For sake of clarity and brevity in this article, I will most often refer to them as the “Four D&R [divorce and remarriage] Passages.” Quoted apart from their context, they read:

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matt. 5:32).

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery (Matt. 19:9).

And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery" (Mark 10:11-12).

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery (Luke 16:18).

All four passages are similar, but there is variation between them. By combining them all, we learn that the man who divorces and remarries commits adultery. He also makes his wife whom he divorces commit adultery together with her new spouse if she remarries. Similarly, a woman who divorces her husband and remarries also commits adultery. The exception to these rules is found in the two passages in Matthew. If a man's wife commits *pornea*, a Greek word translated "unchastity" and "immorality" (in the NASB) or "fornication" (in the KJV), divorce is lawful. *Porneia*, as it is used in ancient Greek texts, refers to any illicit

sexual activity including, but not limited to, fornication, adultery and incest.

Obviously, in all cases in which one is either personally guilty of adultery or one makes someone else commit adultery, remarriage must occur. It could not be logically said that one commits adultery by simply divorcing or being divorced. And therefore, if these four passages were the only verses in the Bible, we could conclude that Jesus was OK with divorce as long as there was no remarriage, which of course is not true. The one who divorces his or her spouse, Christian or not, breaks an oath. For that reason and many others, God “hates divorce” and considers it “treachery” (Mal. 2:14-16). I say that simply to point out the importance of considering *everything* the Bible has to say on the subject. False doctrine is generally extracted from Scripture by isolating Bible verses from their context. So in the case of the above-quoted Four D&R Passages, we should consider their immediate and wider context in the Bible.

An Important Question

Before, however, we do begin to consider biblical context, it would be good to use our God-given brains and ask ourselves a simple question: *By making these four sayings related to divorce, remarriage and adultery, was Jesus trying to exterminate the kind of “evil” being perpetrated by John and Karen? That is, was Jesus hoping to break up godly, long-term, Christian marriages and families if one spouse, years prior to his or her salvation, had been married for a week?*

If you answered *yes* to those two questions, you very much need to read what follows.

If you answered “no” to those questions, as the large majority of Christians would, the next logical question to ask is: *Exactly what evil was Jesus trying to eradicate by what He said in the Four D&R Passages?*

The Context: Matthew 19:3-9

So let’s take a close look at all Four D&R Passages, considering their historical and biblical context, starting with the passage found in Matthew 19:

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?” He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for

immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matt. 19:3-9).

So now we have some *very* important context. Jesus wasn’t talking to married Christians who happened to have been married and divorced years before their salvation. Rather, *He was talking to Pharisees who believed it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for “any reason at all,”* a belief so lax that it is rarely found even among unbelievers. Not surprisingly, Jesus corrected the Pharisees, and His correction ended with one of His statements that equated illegitimate divorce and remarriage with adultery.

Could believing that it is OK to divorce for “any reason” possibly be the evil that Jesus was trying to eradicate? Obviously, the answer is yes.

Some Historical Context

We know from ancient Jewish writings that there were two primary schools of thought among the rabbis regarding divorce, and specifically on what constituted the “indecency” mentioned in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 by which a man might divorce his wife. About twenty years before Jesus’ time, an influential rabbi named Hillel taught that an indecency was an irreconcilable difference. By the time Jesus had His debate with the Pharisees, the “Hillel” interpretation had become even more liberal, allowing [divorce for just about any cause](#), as the Pharisees’ question to Jesus indicates. One could divorce his wife if she burned his dinner, put too much salt on his food, accidentally exposed her knees in public, took

her hair down, spoke to another man, said something unkind about her mother-in-law, or was infertile. A man could even divorce his wife if he saw someone who was more attractive, thus making his wife “indecent.”

Another famous rabbi, Shammai, who lived prior to Hillel, taught that an “indecent” was only something very immoral, such as adultery.

As is obvious from the Pharisees’ question, Hillel’s liberal interpretation was much more popular than Shammai’s. The Pharisees lived and taught that divorce was lawful for any cause, and consequently, divorce (and remarriage) were endemic. *Yet, incredibly, the Pharisees also taught strongly against adultery.* Their divorce-for-any-cause teaching, however, was nothing less than a loophole for adultery. Marriage vows are meaningless when one can divorce for any reason.

Is all that hypocritical? Yes. Was it evil? Yes. Was Jesus against it? Yes. And so He pointed out, first of all, that the Pharisees’ inane question was answered long before the Mosaic Law was given, in the second chapter of Genesis. God originally created one male and one female (not one male and multiple females, or one female and multiple males), and designed that those two would become one flesh. That set a precedent, and concerning the creation of the world’s first married couple, Moses, the author of Genesis, wrote, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). So there is lots of support in Genesis 2 for the idea that in marriage God puts two people of the opposite sex together to share in an

exclusive sexual union. Jesus underscored that point by saying, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

The Pharisees couldn’t argue against His point from Genesis 2, but they were able to drag up an objection to His anti-divorce stance, which was that the Law of Moses made some provision for divorce. Jesus, the giver of the Law of Moses, was ready for their objection. He said, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives.” That is, even though God never desired or intended that anyone would ever divorce, because He knew that divorces would occur due to the hardness (sinfulness) of men’s hearts, He included some regulation concerning divorce in the Mosaic Law—an attempt to at least curb some of the evil. And He mercifully but reluctantly permitted Israelite men to divorce their wives—but only of course for immorality and not “for any reason.”

Again, this provision was due to the hardness of men’s hearts. A man with a soft heart who discovers his wife’s immorality doesn’t rush to divorce her, but rather confronts her and, if she repents, forgives her (just as Jesus taught). He might also examine how he has been treating his wife to see if he has any guilt associated with her behaviour.

Then Jesus *again* reminded them of God’s original intent in marriage as revealed in Genesis 2, saying, “but from the beginning it has not been this way.” That is, the concession for divorce in the Mosaic Law does not represent God’s original intent for marriage, because God’s original

intent is that there would be *no* divorce, and “no divorce” is a far cry from “divorce for any reason!”

A Clear Answer

At that point, Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees’ question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” was crystal clear: “Absolutely not!” And Jesus—the One who was sent from God the Father, was God Himself, was the One who gave the Mosaic Law to Israel, and was the Messiah who would never contradict the Mosaic Law—perfectly summed up His endorsement of the Mosaic Law’s actual teaching on divorce and remarriage with the provocative statement: “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” That is, illegitimate divorce + remarriage = adultery, a sin under the Mosaic Law that was punishable by death.

Notice that Jesus endorsed the Mosaic concession, “except for immorality.” Thus, immorality is a legitimate reason to divorce, and understandably so.^[1] A marriage covenant is consummated by sexual union.^[2] The adulterer, by his sexual union with another, breaks his marriage covenant. In that respect, adultery effectuates a divorce. The person who divorces his adulterous spouse only formalizes the divorce that has already occurred by the adultery. (Again, however, Scripture teaches clearly elsewhere that confrontation and mercy predicated upon repentance is the best route.)

Also regarding the Matthew 19 D&R Passage, keep in mind that everyone in Jesus' audience knew the Mosaic Law condemned adultery. The Pharisees, of course, *preached* against adultery. Remember, it was the Pharisees who once brought before Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery, condemning her for her sin (John 8:3-11). So Jesus masterfully exposed the hypocrisy of their "divorce-for-any-reason" stance, declaring that it was promoting what amounts to adultery, which they themselves preached against. So the anti-adultery, divorce-for-any-reason Pharisees, who considered themselves to be a holy group of lawfully-divorced-and-remarried men, now had a chance to see themselves as God saw them, as a self-deceived bunch of adulterous wife-swappers who deserved to be stoned to death. They were caught with their pants down, almost literally.

Also, take note that Jesus was not "raising the standard" regarding divorce and remarriage. He wasn't "altering the Mosaic Law" as some claim. Divorce "for any reason" and remarriage didn't suddenly become wrong, or suddenly become equivalent to adultery, when Jesus said so as recorded in Matthew 19. Illegitimate divorce and remarriage was wrong and akin to adultery from the time that Moses' Law was given, and even from before Moses' Law was given, "from the beginning." Jesus was pointing out what has always been true: The man who breaks his marriage vow by illegitimately divorcing his wife, and who then marries another woman, is fundamentally no different than the man who breaks his marriage vow through adultery. [\[3\]](#)

Jesus' own disciples, who had all their lives sat under the teaching and example of the scribes and Pharisees, were probably not hearing His teaching regarding divorce and remarriage for the first time (see Matt. 5:32). But prior to their interaction with Jesus, they likely thought that God was OK with divorce for any reason. The idea of one-wife-for-life was radical to their ears, precipitating their reaction: "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry" (Matt. 19:10). That is, "If God expects us to stick with one woman all our lives, and if illegitimate divorce and remarriage is adultery, it might be better to remain single." Jesus responded by explaining that celibacy is an alternative for some, but not all (Matt. 19:11-12). Paul later referred to celibacy as a gift (1 Cor. 7:7).

What does God expect of people who are guilty of the sin of adultery? Of course, if two people are married and one commits adultery, God expects the adulterous one to repent by (1) ending the adulterous relationship, (2) confessing and asking forgiveness of his/her spouse, and (3) being faithful from then on. But what about those who are already divorced and remarried? What does God expect of them? Obviously, there are other factors, and other people, to consider in those situations. Theirs is not *exactly* the same situation as the married person who has just had an affair. So the question deserves some thought and a careful study of God's Word, which we are about to do.

In regard to the Matthew 19 passage we've been considering, we note that Jesus did not tell His audience that those who were illegitimately

divorced and remarried needed to remedy their sin by divorcing their current wives. If that is what He expected, it would have been a perfect time for Him to have said so. But He did not. The same is true in the other three D&R Passages. Jesus never told His guilty hearers to divorce one more time. You can be sure that, among the crowd of Pharisees that day who all believed that divorce was lawful for any reason, there were quite a few who were divorced and remarried. And they all knew that the Mosaic Law legislated stoning for adultery.

Two More D&R Passages in Context

Now that we have considered, in context, Jesus' words in Matthew 19, we are better equipped to consider the other three similar passages, as all were spoken by Jesus within the same three-year time period to people who were under the Law of Moses, and who had all been influenced by the "divorce-for-any-cause" teaching and example of their spiritual leaders, the scribes and Pharisees.

One of those remaining three passages, Mark 10:1-12, describes the same incident we've just considered in Matthew 19. Mark doesn't add much to Matthew's rendition of Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees regarding divorce-for-any-cause. He omits the "exception clause" and, interestingly, is the only Gospel author who mentions Jesus saying that what is true of men who divorce and remarry is also true of women who divorce and remarry. Both "commit adultery."

Regarding the remaining two of the Four D&R passages, they are also interestingly framed within Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees. Here is Luke's account:

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him. He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery (Luke 16:14-18).

We know that the Pharisees were not only lovers of money but, as we have learned from Matthew 19, also believed that a man could divorce his wife for any cause, even while they hypocritically preached against adultery. Such would be a good example of their "justifying themselves in the sight of men while God knew their hearts," and perhaps that is why Jesus inserted His words about divorce and remarriage into a chapter focused primarily on the subject of financial stewardship. Before their followers, the Pharisees portrayed themselves as sexually moral men who would never commit adultery, yet their multiple divorces and remarriages testified of their adulterous hearts.

A Fourth and Final D&R Passage in Context

The only passage that remains of the Four D&R Passages is the one found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where the teaching of the Pharisees pops up again. It is in a sermon that includes a substantial amount of correction of their false teaching and unrighteous practices. Near the beginning of His sermon, Jesus warned, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). And at the end of the sermon, Matthew comments, "The crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes (Matt. 7:28-29).

It should not surprise us then that, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus once more addressed the "divorce for any reason" and remarriage issue. In this case, however, we find that Jesus began by labelling as adultery something other than divorce and remarriage:

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery"; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it

from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell (Matt. 5:27-30).

At a minimum, Jesus was warning His followers to purge themselves of lust, as lust always precedes adultery, and unrepentant adulterers will one day find themselves in hell. Some commentators go further, concluding Jesus was warning that lust is just as damnable as adultery.^[4] In any case, the lustful man, Jesus said, “commits adultery” with the object of his lust “in his heart,” and whatever might cause one to stumble into lust should be treated as an enemy of one’s soul.

Directly following, and perhaps for a significant reason, is yet another warning by Jesus against divorce and remarriage:

It was said, “Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce”; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matt. 5:31-32).

We know, of course, that nowhere does the Law of Moses say, “Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce.” And of course, Jesus did not say, “Moses taught...”, but rather, “It was said.” No doubt what Jesus quoted was being said by the divorce-for-any-cause Pharisees, emphasizing in their perverse teaching the importance of giving a divorce certificate whenever an “any reason” divorce occurs.

The important thing to see is that, in this short passage, Jesus labels two things as adultery: (1) lust and (2) divorce and remarriage. We can't help but wonder, in the divorce-for-any-cause culture that Jesus was addressing, how many divorces and remarriages had lust as their root. As I've already mentioned, the list of lawful reasons to divorce one's wife, as derived from the teaching of Rabbi Hillel, even included seeing a woman who is more attractive than your wife. And how many other tolerable, trivial items on Rabbi Hillel's list suddenly became intolerable at the sighting of an attractive woman?

I think any reader can see that, in the cases of divorce and remarriage that are motivated by lust for another woman, the label of "adultery" is *very* appropriate. I'm not saying that Jesus was only referring to those kinds of divorces and remarriages in the Four D&R Passages, but I am suggesting that, in light of the context of Matthew 5:31-32, such divorces and remarriages were a significant percentage of the overall total in Jesus' time, and they certainly help us understand part of the evil that Jesus was hoping to eradicate.

So What Does God Expect Now?

Having established God's original intent in marriage as well as His views of illegitimate divorce, divorce-for-any-cause, remarriage and lust, the question remains, *What should Christian married couples—which include at least one person who was previously married and divorced—do once they are enlightened to these truths?*

A tiny percentage of Christians today would say to such couples, “Divorce and remain single until the original spouse dies, because you are living in adultery, and the only way to demonstrate your repentance from adultery is to end your adulterous relationship.”

That advice may sound somewhat logical, but is it biblically sound?

We have already noted that, even in the Four D&R Passages, Jesus never told His guilty hearers to divorce again. Moreover, there is no record in any of the four Gospels of Jesus *ever* telling anyone to divorce or leave their current spouse. We have already studied *everything* Jesus said on the subjects of divorce and remarriage. And there is no example of anyone “repenting of an adulterous remarriage” under the ministry of Christ.

Is this an “argument from silence”? Perhaps it could be called that. Yet arguments from silence are entirely valid when there is an extraordinary reason for there to be no silence.

Much more so, this is an argument from “lack of evidence.” Lack of evidence is the proof of an invalid claim. If there is no smoking gun, no fingerprints, no dead body, and the murder victim is eating pizza, there is a good chance there has been no murder.

I ask: *Where is this Divine Divorce Doctrine found outside of the Four D&R Passages?* Surely if Jesus expected every divorced and remarried person

to divorce again as a requirement for salvation—*no small thing*—He would have said so, and especially during those times He was talking about the very subject of divorce and remarriage to crowds that were full of divorced and remarried people.

Furthermore, there is no evidence any of Jesus' apostles ever interpreted His words about divorce and remarriage to be a requirement for divorced and remarried couples to legally or functionally divorce. Their initial reaction to His statement to the Pharisees in Matthew 19 revealed they only thought that, in light of Jesus' endorsement of one-wife-for-life, it might be best if people never married. They did not come to the conclusion that divorced and remarried people needed to divorce again. In fact, it is much more likely that they were wondering if Jesus was advocating the stoning of all divorced and remarried people, since that is what the Mosaic Law prescribed for adulterers.

And if Peter or John, who were likely present when Jesus had His Matthew 19 conversation with the Pharisees, later realized that Jesus actually required all divorced and remarried people to divorce again if they were to be saved—*no small thing*—they never mentioned it in their letters to the churches.

The Silence (Lack of Evidence) Grows

The other authors of the New Testament letters, James, Jude and Paul, who were not from among the Twelve, never wrote a word about God's

alleged requirement for those who are divorced and remarried to divorce again.

Nothing can be found in the New Testament epistles that supports the idea that those who are divorced and remarried are “still married to their original spouse in God’s eyes” or that they are “continually living in an adulterous relationship of which they must repent by divorce.”

And the silence grows even louder when we consider the fact that, in their letters, (1) Paul, James and Peter all wrote against adultery, (2) both Peter and Paul addressed the subject of husband-wife relationships, and (3) Paul devoted almost an entire chapter (1 Corinthians 7) to the subject of sex, self-control, immorality, celibacy, marriage, separation, divorce, widowhood and more, and he never said a single word about God’s alleged requirement for divorced and remarried Christians to divorce again.

In fact, Paul emphatically wrote in that Corinthian passage that husbands and wives should *not* deprive each other of conjugal rights, and he listed no exceptions (1 Cor. 7:4-5).^[6] He didn’t mention that some husbands and wives might be “committing adultery.” And he emphatically stated that “the wife should not leave her husband” and “the husband should not divorce his wife” (1 Cor. 7:10-11), listing no exceptions. This is even true for believers who are married to unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:12-13). Believers should not divorce unbelieving spouses, no exceptions. Surely

in the church in Corinth, a city that was a bastion for immorality, there were cases of married believers who were previously married and divorced, or unbelievers who were previously married and divorced who were married to believers. Why didn't Paul say, "Those of you who are married to unbelievers who have been previously married and divorced, you are committing adultery if you remain married, so divorce them"?

The claim is made by some that all those in the Corinthian church who had "adulterous remarriages" repented of them at their conversions, divorcing their spouses prior to baptism, an unsupportable claim of which we read nothing in the book of Acts or in Paul's letters to the Corinthians.

Moreover, in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul clearly allowed for divorced persons to remarry:

Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned (1 Cor. 7:25-28).

Paul advises those who have never been married, "virgins," to remain single, but his advice is based purely on "the current distress," that is, a

wave of persecution against the church. Then, in a statement that summarizes much of his earlier advice for Christians to “remain in the state in which they were called” (see 1 Cor. 7:18-24), he advises the man who is married, “bound to a wife,” not to seek a divorce. Similarly, the man who is already divorced, “released from a wife,” should not seek a wife (“in view of the present distress”). However, Paul says, the already-divorced man, the one “released from a wife,” *does not sin if he marries*. And it is indisputable that he is speaking specifically to already-divorced men, because Paul continues in the same sentence saying, “and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.”[\[5\]](#)

Clearly, from reading 1 Corinthians 7, Paul did not believe that the marriage covenant was indissoluble. Just as marriage is annulled by death and (often) adultery, it is also annulled by divorce. Paul did not believe Jesus’ words in the Four D&R Passages should be interpreted, “Whoever divorces and remarries lives in a continuous state of adultery that can only be remedied by yet another divorce.”

Along these lines, Steve Gregg astutely writes:

The only valid reason for forbidding remarriage to a divorced person would be the assumption that their first marriage is still valid. If a person is not bound to an existing marriage, he or she is unmarried and eligible to get married again. Remarriage is thus permissible or not only insofar

as the first marriage has or has not been validly terminated in the sight of God.

Those who forbid all divorce and remarriage must demonstrate that marriage is permanently and unconditionally binding before God. This cannot be established from Scripture. The usual argument is that a married couple are declared to be “one flesh” (Gen.2:24), and are therefore bound to one another unconditionally for life. However, this certainly burdens the phrase “one flesh” with more baggage than it will bear, since a tryst with a prostitute constitutes a “one flesh” relationship, according to Paul (1 Cor. 6:16), yet not necessarily a permanently binding one.

The fact that Jesus saw fit to forbid the “putting asunder” of what God has joined, demonstrates that such a dissolution is apparently possible, though inappropriate (Matt. 19:6). What would be the point of Christ forbidding an act that is humanly impossible to perform? The question upon which a divorced person’s legitimate freedom to remarry must be determined is: “In the sight of God, has ‘what God has joined together’ effectively been ‘put asunder’ by man, and if so, by whom?” If there has been adultery, then it is the adulterer who has effectively put asunder what God has joined. If there has been no adultery, then the person seeking the divorce has put the marriage asunder. Both adultery and

divorce (for grounds other than fornication) are forbidden by Christ. The only way a second marriage could be regarded as “adultery” would be when it, like ordinary adultery, is the violation of an existing marriage covenant. If the first marriage covenant has ceased to exist in God’s sight, however, there remains no such covenant to be violated in contracting a second marriage.[\[10\]](#)

The Silence of the Early Church

The “silence” (lack of evidence) we’ve been considering grows to a roar when we read the book of Acts, where there is not a single record of a divorce or of anyone repenting of an “adulterous marriage.”

And the silence becomes deafening when we examine the writings of the early church fathers. I am no expert on their voluminous writings, but my friend Paul Pavao, who is quite knowledgeable of early church writings and regularly publishes articles about them on his popular website, [Christian History for Everyman](#), writes:

There are no references in the Bible or in the writings of the churches afterward to any marriage being broken up because it was a remarriage after divorce and thus regarded by the church as adultery. There are also no instructions to do so.... The theory of the anti-remarriage crowd is that the church should separate couples who were divorced and remarried in

the world. Yet we can find no discussion of the topic in the Bible, nor in any Christian writings for the next two centuries.

The Next Question

We could justifiably stop at this point, because it has been shown that neither Jesus, the apostles, nor the early church believed and practiced what Divine Divorce Proponents advocate. Their doctrine cannot be found outside *their interpretation* of four proof texts.

At this point, pure-hearted Divine Divorce Proponents are rejoicing with relief, as they were no doubt extremely troubled with the thought of redeemed, devoted, long-term, Christian married couples and their families being torn apart, as well as the idea that such a thing could ever be pleasing to God. Stalwart Divine Divorce Proponents are trying to think of ways to overcome the complete absence of their doctrine in Scripture outside *their interpretation* of four proof texts. Tragically, preserving their doctrine is more important than preserving Christian marriages and families. (Some are also desperate to justify their divorces from those whom they wanted to divorce and, once they discovered a strange doctrine that sanctified their sin, did divorce.)

Perhaps the next question that logically comes to the pure-hearted is, “*Why didn’t the apostles and early church interpret Jesus’ Four D&R Passages in such a way that requires divorced and remarried people to divorce again?*”

There are many possible answers. Most fundamentally, however, is the obvious fact that the apostles did not take Jesus' Four D&R Passages in their most literal sense. But if they had, they would not have come to the conclusion that divorced and remarried people needed to divorce again, but rather, that divorced and remarried people ought to be stoned as the Law of Moses stipulated for adulterers.

Jesus' true disciples take His words very seriously, of course, and they are not looking for excuses to disobey His commandments. That being said, students of Jesus also know that, when they endeavour to interpret His words, they should not only consider context, but the fact that Jesus indisputably did not intend that all of His words should always be taken in their most literal sense.

For example, everyone agrees that Jesus does not really intend that we pluck out our eyes or cut off our hands if they "cause us to stumble," or even that our physical eyes or hands *can* actually "cause" us to stumble." Yet that is what Jesus said in Matthew 5:29-30, just moments before one of the Four D&R Passages.

No one claims that the man who looks on a woman with lust, which Jesus called "adultery," should be taken so literally that a woman may legitimately divorce her husband if she catches him viewing pornography. No one claims that God expects the repentance of a man who lusts to be identical to the man who commits adultery. Yet Jesus did refer to lust as

adultery in Matthew 5:28, again, just moments before one of the Four D&R Passages.

No one claims that Jesus expects some men to literally castrate themselves for the sake of God's kingdom, but within a few seconds of one of the Four D&R Passages, Jesus said "there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12).

No one believes Jesus' words, "Give to everyone who asks of you" (Luke 6:30) should be taken in their most literal sense, because they don't believe they should give their children everything they request, or that they should give to those who would use their gift for evil.

No one believes Jesus' words to the rich young ruler, "sell all you possess," should be taken in its most literal sense, because no one believes Jesus wanted the man to sell even his clothes and walk around naked.

None of us think Jesus actually wants us literally to "hate father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters" (Luke 14:26) if we hope to be one of His disciples.

The list of such sayings of Jesus, if compiled, would be quite long. Jesus was a communicator who provoked people to think. So, again, those who are serious about interpreting His words correctly do think. They think

about context, and they ask the all-important question: *Did the apostles interpret Jesus' words as I am thinking they should be interpreted?* A fundamental doctrine, if true, will be consistently endorsed throughout Scripture. The fact is, you can make Bible verses say just about anything by ignoring context.

Divorce and Marriage is Similar, But Not Identical, to Adultery

Divine Divorce Proponents claim, “Jesus said that divorce and remarriage is adultery. So divorced and remarried people should repent of their adultery just as classic adulterers should, namely, by ending the adulterous relationship.” But Jesus certainly did *not* mean that divorce and remarriage is *identical* to adultery, any more than He meant that lust is identical to adultery when He said that the lustful man commits adultery in his heart. (In fact, the phrase “adultery in his heart” differentiates it from physical adultery.)

Everyone knows this. Illegitimate divorce and remarriage shares *some* similarity to adultery, but it is not identical. In the case of divorce and remarriage, the “adulterer” believes he is not married to his former spouse. He has not been living with her. He has not been having sexual relations with her. He is not hiding the fact that he “has another woman.” He has publicly made vows and entered into a covenant with that other woman. No classic adulterer fits that description.

Moreover, it is indisputable that Jesus did not view divorced and remarried people to be *exactly* like adulterers, otherwise He—as the

giver of the Mosaic Law, and whose entire ministry was conducted while the Mosaic Law was still in effect and whose credibility as Messiah depended on Him fully endorsing and not contradicting it in the least— would have advocated that people who are divorced and remarried be stoned as adulterers, just as the Mosaic Law stipulated.^[7]

Thus, to assume that the required remedy for the “adultery” of divorce and remarriage is the identical remedy required for classic adulterers is both illogical and unscriptural.

A similar illogical conclusion could be drawn from the Apostle John’s words, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15), an idea he likely learned listening to Jesus (see Matt. 5:21-24). Did John mean that the one “who hates his brother” is *identical* to a murderer? Of course not. The brother-hater is in many ways similar to the murderer, but not identical. Both are haters, but the brother-hater’s victim is still alive. The brother-hater can repent by an apology and mend his relationship, something the murderer cannot do. The murderer has grossly sinned against the spouse, children and parents of the one he murdered, something of which the brother-hater cannot be near as guilty. The murderer simply can’t undo what he has done, and if he repents, it will by necessity look much different than the repentance of the brother-hater.

So the same is true of the one who commits “adultery” through illegitimate divorce and remarriage. And quite obviously, every

illegitimate divorce and remarriage varies in the degree that it resembles adultery. The man who divorces his wife because he is lusting after another woman—whom he marries one day after his divorce—is about as close to classic adultery as you can get. The man who divorces his wife “for any cause” also seems very close to the classic adulterer. But the example of John and Karen, whose imaginary story I told at the beginning of this article, appears to be significantly distant from classic adultery, and for many reasons.

Other Good Reasons to Reject Strict Literality

All of this is to say that when we begin to interpret a passage of scripture in such a way that it contradicts other clear biblical principles or themes, clashes with major moral truths, or impugns the consistent character or actions of God, we can be sure our interpretation is a misinterpretation. There could be many reasons why the apostles and the early church did not adopt the most literal interpretation of the Four D&R Passages, but any and all of their reasons would fall somewhere within those three general categories. Here are a few possibilities:

1.) Perhaps because they noticed that Jesus was endorsing what the Law of Moses prescribed concerning divorce and remarriage (this is particularly clear in the Matthew 19 passage), then it stood to reason that the One who gave the Mosaic Law and who declared that He “did not come to abolish the Law” (Matt. 5:17) would not

contradict *anything* found in the Law of Moses regarding divorce and remarriage.

And the fact is, under the Law of Moses, God permitted divorced women to remarry and He permitted men to marry divorced women. The only prohibition concerned priests. They, alone, were not permitted to marry divorced women. So clearly, the Mosaic Law reveals that God did not view everyone who was divorced and remarried to still be married to their original spouse, or that divorced and remarried people were “living in a state of continual adultery”; nor did He believe that the marriage covenant was indissoluble.

This is also borne out in the Mosaic Law’s classic divorce and remarriage passage in Deuteronomy 24:

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the

Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance (Deut. 24:1-4).

It is from this passage that the Pharisees derived their teaching that a man could divorce his wife for any cause, all built upon their very liberal interpretation of the word “indecency.” Notice that the only thing that God condemns in this passage is the twice-divorced (or once-divorced and once-widowed) woman returning to her first husband. Obviously and without dispute, God did not view the once-divorced, twice-married woman as still being married to her first husband. On the contrary, such a woman was *forbidden* from ever returning to her first husband.

If you had asked Jesus, directly after He spoke any of the Four D&R Passages, if He endorsed Deuteronomy 24:1-4, He would have said, “Absolutely yes. I gave the Law of Moses. I did not come to abolish it.” And He might have added, “As I already told you, it was never My intention that anyone divorce, but because I knew how hard-hearted people would be, I knew there would be divorce, and so I gave a few regulations concerning divorce in order to mitigate some of the evil. In an attempt to get hard-hearted husbands to think a little bit before they divorced their wives—in hopes of preventing some divorces—I created a law that forbade their wives from ever returning to them. Once their wives were remarried, the door was permanently shut for reconciliation. I hoped that would motivate husbands who were contemplating divorcing their wives to pause and think.”

And this passage in Deuteronomy is yet another deathblow to the Divine Divorce Doctrine, because divorce-for-any-cause and remarriage was just as much like adultery in Moses' day as it was in Jesus' day. Yet God said it would be an abomination for a twice-divorced woman to return to her husband, the very thing that is the highest goal in Divine Divorce Doctrine. What God said would be an abomination in His sight, Divine Divorce Proponents say would be a happy, holy ending.[\[8\]](#)

To elaborate, if the interpretation by Divine Divorce Proponents of the Four D&R Passages is correct, then those who are "still married to their original spouses in God's eyes" should do everything within their power, once they've escaped their "adulterous marriages," to return to their original spouse including—if their former spouse is remarried—attempt to break up that second marriage too. Imagine them testifying in church: "Praise the Lord, I got saved! So I divorced my husband of 20 years and tracked down my ex-husband, to whom I'm still married in God's eyes since marriage is only terminated by death. Miracle of miracles, he has also become a believer since we broke up! So I convinced him to divorce his Christian wife since theirs was also an "adulterous marriage," and now we are happily reunited in the Lord with a God-pleasing marriage! Hallelujah! It feels so good to be holy!"

And while all the Divine Divorce Proponents would be shouting "Praise the Lord!" the angels in heaven would be weeping, not to mention little children, perhaps, produced from the second, "adulterous" marriages.

Finally, along these same lines, perhaps the apostles and early church also considered how Jesus viewed the woman at the well of Samaria, and they noticed that He did not say to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had one husband and four adulterous marriages, and the man you have now is not your husband.” No, Jesus said she had had five *wives*, and He differentiated all of them from the man she was currently living with, one to whom she was not married. Moreover, He didn’t tell her to try to reconcile with her first husband to whom she “was still married in God’s eyes.” Incidentally, had Jesus said that, it would have proven He was not the Messiah since He would have been contradicting the Mosaic Law, specifically Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

2.) Perhaps the apostles and early church concluded from reading the entire Bible that God is gracious and forgiving, and that He quite often gives people who sin second chances. Perhaps they remembered that God didn’t require David to divorce Bathsheba, even though he had not only committed adultery with her, but also got her pregnant, arranged to have her husband killed in battle, and then took her as his own wife.

Some Divine Divorce Proponents may object with the claim, “David’s marriage with Bathsheba was lawful because her original husband was dead.” That line of reasoning makes divorce a greater sin than murder, because the adulterer/murderer receives more grace than the adulterer. Here is an amazing thing (and another flaw in the Divine Divorce Doctrine): A man could murder his wife, be forgiven of murder through repentance,

and lawfully remarry. But the man who divorces his wife is not permitted to remarry until his ex-wife dies.

3.) Perhaps the apostles and early church reasoned that through His Four D&R Passages, Jesus was hoping to *prevent potential* divorces and illegitimate marriages rather than unscramble the scrambled eggs of those who had already divorced and remarried. Perhaps they reasoned that sin is not remedied by more sin, and that expecting a thief to repent by stealing more money in order to repay those he had previously stolen from is a very odd repentance. Perhaps they reasoned that breaking one oath doesn't fix the breaking of another oath. Perhaps they wondered what would be the point of requiring divorced and remarried people to divorce again, and what good would be the good accomplished by it. Not being able to think of any point or any good, they concluded that surely a wise and good God would not require it.

4.) Perhaps they reasoned that the highest moral law—to love one's neighbour as oneself—should always be the guiding principle. Perhaps they concluded that the most loving thing to do in such situations—like John and Karen's for example—is not to divorce one's current spouse or break up one's current family, but to apologize, if possible, to one's former spouse and common children for one's guilt regarding the divorce (if one bears responsibility for the divorce), and to renew one's resolve to never allow such a thing to happen again so far as one's current spouse and common children are concerned.

5.) Perhaps they thought about the inherent absurdity and injustice of demanding those who were previously divorced and remarried to divorce again while requiring nothing of those who had sexual relationships with multiple partners prior to their current marriage but who were never previously married and divorced. The folks who tried to do what was right by entering into a marriage covenant, but who failed, are penalized and not permitted to remarry lest they commit “adultery,” while the one who never married, but who may have committed adultery with scores of married women while he was single, does not commit adultery if he marries!

Think about my example at the start of this article. If John had not married the Las Vegas bartender for a week, but had only slept with her for a week, Divine Divorce Proponents would not require him to divorce Karen. If he had slept with hundreds of Las Vegas bartenders prior to his salvation, his marriage to Karen would be OK. Doesn't that seem odd and grossly unfair?

6.) Perhaps the apostles and early church considered the logical ends of taking the Four D&R Passages in their most literal sense and realized that, in some cases, the result would be the breakup of long-term, love-filled, devoted Christian marriages and families. Thus such an interpretation would contradict clear biblical principles and themes, clash with major moral truths, and impugn the character of God. We don't see God trying to break up godly, Christian marriages in the Bible, including any that involve remarriage.

In Summary

There could be other reasons the apostles and early church did not adopt the most literal interpretation of the Four D&R Passages. Regardless, the primary point is that they did not.

The fundamental flaw of Divine Divorce Proponents is that they've assigned pre-eminence to the Four D&R Passages above all the rest of Scripture, and once they've settled on an extremely literal interpretation of those Four D&R Passages, anything else in Scripture that doesn't fit or contradicts their doctrine must be adjusted or explained away. Anabaptists, in particular, are prone to make such an error because of their belief that Jesus introduced new moral standards, effectively abolishing the moral standards of the Mosaic Law (something Jesus said He would not do in Matthew 5:17). They often wrongly think, for example, that Jesus' "You have heard...but I say" statements in the Sermon on the Mount are examples of Him abolishing the Law's moral standards and replacing them with higher standards.^[9] Thus the moral standards of the Mosaic Law regarding divorce and remarriage can be brushed off as entirely irrelevant. After that, they only need to ignore the deafening silence of the entire New Testament regarding their doctrine and contend with 1 Corinthians 7.

The tragic irony of the Divine Divorce Doctrine is that its adherents often identify themselves as promoters of "marriage permanence," yet they are helping to destroy Christian marriages, and if they had their way,

millions of married Christian couples would divorce as they repented of their “adulterous marriages.” It seems bizarre to identify yourself as being an advocate for “marriage permanence” when you hope to convince millions of married Christians to break their vows and divorce.

For that and other reasons, I have no hesitation labelling the Divine Divorce Doctrine a “doctrine of demons,” the kind of which Paul warned would arise in the last days (1 Tim. 4:1). It is interesting that Paul specifically mentioned that those last-days demonic doctrines would be marked by “men who forbid (or *hinder*, as the Greek verb *koluo* is often translated) marriage” (1 Tim. 4:3). Again, Divine Divorce Proponents want millions of married Christian couples to break their vows and divorce. My advice is that you run for your life from anyone who is promoting this dangerous and destructive twisting of the Word of God.

Although Jesus did perceptively liken illegitimate divorce and remarriage to adultery, the Bible does not teach that the remedy for such a sin is another divorce coupled with a return to the original spouse if possible, and celibacy otherwise. God does not view those who have been married and divorced as still married; nor does He view those who are divorced and remarried as living in a continuous state of adultery. By likening divorce-for-any-reason and remarriage with adultery—what everyone acknowledged was sin—Jesus was attempting to help the Pharisees and their unfortunate students, the people of Israel, see that their interpretation of the Mosaic Law was entirely off base. His hope was to

curb future divorces—legitimate and illegitimate—rather than break up existing devoted Christian marriages.

And what was motivating Jesus in all this? The same thing that has been motivating God from the beginning. Love. Because He loves people, He hates divorce. So He tries to prevent it. And when He can't prevent it (because of people's hard hearts), He tries to mitigate the evil of it, patch it up as best as possible, and prevent it from happening again. All because He loves people.

Marriage was made for man; not man for marriage. But you would never know that from listening to legalists. They see their relationship with God as that of a slave and his taskmaster rather than that of a child and his father, and they read the Bible like a prison rule book rather than an endearing love letter. And as they compete with each other to prove who is the most devoted slave, they dissect and twist God's Word to find more ways to condemn the less holy and spread their self-inflicted misery to others. I feel so sorry for them. And still, God loves them. — David

[\[1\]](#) Some Divine Divorce Proponents who hold that marriage is dissoluble only through death and not because of adultery, argue that the exception of which Jesus spoke was the discovery, during the engagement phase, of pre-engagement immorality. That is, one could lawfully break off his engagement if he discovered that his fiancée was guilty of fornication (as exemplified by the case of Joseph and Mary), but after one formally

married, there was no allowance made for divorce for any reason, including even adultery. Steve Gregg correctly observes, “This introduces the strange suggestion that premarital sex is a greater violation of, and more destructive to, the marriage than is an extramarital affair after marriage. Such a valuation is exactly the reverse of the respective estimation of these two offenses in the Scriptures (cf. Ex.22:16-17/Deut.22:22).” (http://thenarrowpath.com/ta_divorce.php)

[2] So much so that, under the Law of Moses, a man who seduced or raped a non-betrothed virgin was required to marry her and never divorce her (see Ex. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29).

[3] If Jesus was “altering the Law of Moses” with new standards for divorce and remarriage (as some Divine Divorce Proponents claim) suddenly making what was not previously a sin to now be a sin, then there were divorced and remarried people in His audiences during His Four D&R Passages who suddenly became adulterers in God’s eyes, something they were not seconds earlier. When Jesus spoke and “changed the standard,” any of those people who were heaven-bound instantly lost their salvation!

[4] Personally, I am not persuaded that thinking about committing adultery with someone is as evil in God’s appraisal as actually committing adultery with that person.

[5] Abstinence from sex, rather than divorce, is advocated by some as a remedy to an “adulterous marriage.”

[6] As you might suspect, Divine Divorce Advocates are troubled by this clear passage, as it contradicts their doctrine. Thus some interpret Paul to say: “Are you a virgin man who is betrothed to a woman? Do not seek to get out of your betrothal. Are you a virgin man who has somehow been able to break your oath of betrothal to a former fiancée? Do not seek to be betrothed again and married. But if you marry, that is, specifically you virgin men who were once betrothed but who were somehow released from your betrothal, you have not sinned; and if a female virgin marries, she has not sinned. What I am saying has no application to those who were once previously married...only those who were previously betrothed.” This shows the lengths to which Divine Divorce Proponents will go to protect their doctrine.

[7] [See http://thenarrowpath.com/ta_divorce.php](http://thenarrowpath.com/ta_divorce.php)

[8] “Then why didn’t Jesus endorse stoning the woman who was caught in the act of adultery?” some may wonder. Jesus did not say that the adulteress didn’t deserve to be stoned. But there were other factors, related to the Law of Moses, that were relevant in her case. For example, those who cast stones should be without sin themselves, lest they be hypocrites. Jesus could not endorse hypocrisy. And, stoning an adulteress while ignoring the sin of the adulterer is an act of injustice. Jesus could not endorse that. Beyond those things, Jesus extended mercy to the adulteress, mercy being one of the “weightier provisions of the Law” according to Jesus (Matt. 23:23). By the way, mercy is why Joseph, upon discovery of Mary’s pregnancy, didn’t gather a crowd to stone her or

broadcast her alleged sin, but rather “planned to send her away secretly.” Scripture says he intended to do this because he was “a righteous man” (Matt. 1:19). Some food for thought.

[9] And of course, if God felt during the time of the Law of Moses that illegitimate divorce and remarriage was *identical* to adultery, He would have legislated identical punishment for both, and thus God would have called for the stoning of those who divorced and remarried.

[10] If this were true, however, we would expect that Jesus would have correctly cited any old covenant law that He was changing (which He often did not), and that the “new” standard He was introducing would in fact be new, and not already be a standard found in the Mosaic Law (which was never the case).

The views expressed in this e-teaching are those of David Servant and not necessarily those of the EKC Family, its employees, volunteers, trustees or financial supporters. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should shun division over nonessentials.

Betrayal is different for everyone

I have discovered a shocking reality. Betrayal is different for everyone. To some, it is about having intercourse and other sexual contact with another person. This can be full blown sexual unfaithfulness or even emotional sexual bonding, like sexting. To others, betrayal can be when your partner is emotionally more connected to someone else. This includes illicit conversations of a private nature with a co-worker, or an on-going, intimate friendship with the opposite sex. Betrayal is so different for so many people.

Betrayal in the ambit of secrecy must also be mentioned. This may involve secret email accounts, cell phones, bank accounts, Internet behaviour, or an unwillingness to share information about whereabouts, spending habits, or even life plans. This can be considered betrayal because the “cheated” spouse knows nothing about what you are hiding. So many relationships have ended in divorce because the spouse felt cheated because of information that was not shared and later proof to be a deal breaker.

Help, we are incompatible

If you have been around a bit, you would have noticed that sometimes, married couples break up and their relationships end up in divorce. This sad state of affair, excuse the pun, is not only prevalent in the world, but has also now entered the church. When you listen to their reasons for divorce, this phrase more than anything else comes up:” *We are incompatible, or we are no longer compatible.* What does that actually mean? When they got married, were they compatible? I suppose they would be, because if they were not, why would they get married to each other in the first place?

People learn to become compatible, and people learn to become incompatible. When we get married, we all discover, a very obvious truth and that is that we are more different than what we expected to be. Likes and dislikes, different intellectual abilities, different backgrounds, different emotional strengths, makes us all different from each other. Not incompatible, just different. Once we embrace these differences, we will find that those differences more often than not, has been designed to be of assistance to you.

All of these differences, when it is not brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, through a spiritual walk with Him, will only be BATTLED out in the mental, emotional and physical arena of life. Once we understand that we are first spiritual beings, living in a physical body, our personal

development and growth in life will be significantly impacted. We are more than Emotions, We are more than Intellectual Ascent, We are more than Physical. We are Spiritual, first.

When we become born again, we are qualitatively raised to a new level of excellence. The spirit part of our being then kicks in to help us with our other three modalities. It is the spirit part of us that can help with our differences. This is the missing link, when it comes to people who cite irreconcilable differences. In most cases that I have personally encountered, they operated out of their flesh and not their spirits.

Things you must know about affairs

According to an article in Huffington post (Davis, 2015) , the writer highlights 10 points that we should know about infidelity and cheating. Davis indicates that divorce in most cases is not the solution and that the following should be considered. I have taken the liberty to mention two that I think is appropriate for this booklet.

1. Infidelity is not a marital deal breaker

Many people think that affairs signal the end of a marriage. This is simply not true. Although healing from infidelity is a challenging endeavour, most marriages not only survive, but they can actually grow from the experience. This is not to say that affairs are good for marriages, they aren't.

Affairs are very, very destructive because the bond of trust has been broken. It is possible however to get marriages back on track and rediscover trust, caring, friendship and passion.

2. Most affairs end

Davis further postulates that while affairs can be incredibly sexy, compelling, addictive and renewing, most of them end. That's because

after the thrill wears off, most people recognize that everyone, even the affair partner, is a package deal. This means that we all have good points and bad points. When two people are in the throes of infatuation, they are only focusing on what's good. This is short-lived, generally speaking. That's because reality sets in and infatuation fades. If the betrayed spouse doesn't run to a divorce attorney prematurely, it's entirely possible that an affair will die a natural death.

You can read more of this article by going to the URL:

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/michele-weinerdavis/10-things-you-must-know-a b 7247708.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/michele-weinerdavis/10-things-you-must-know-a-b-7247708.html) I encourage you to read it.

You have a role to play in affair proving your marriage

In a recent marriage enrichment seminar that we held in Cape Town, we discussed the fact that both partners have invisible strings that keep them together in covenant. We tied each other with red strings to make this more visible to each other. These four strings were indicated as the following imperatives:

1. You have a role to play in protecting your covenant
2. Your covenant is three-fold strong
3. Your covenant goes wherever you go
4. Every marriage goes through seasons

We will briefly discuss these four imperatives before we go to the Question and Answer section of the evening.

1 You have a role to play in protecting your covenant (Abram and the vultures Gen 15 vs 6-21)

The following select verses will help in bringing my point across.

Verse 6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. Verse 8 And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I

shall inherit it? Verse 9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. Verse V11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

Notice from the above that there is always a reward for your faith in God. You need to know what you will inherit from God, because God loves to spoil His children with good gifts. This includes marriage.

Lastly Abram had to chase the birds away himself. It is mandatory upon us to protect our marriages by chasing the birds away from our offering to the Lord. Marriage is an offering of covenant to the Lord Sometimes the enemy will send in birds to mess around with your covenant.

- These birds can come in high heels or tight dresses, for the men we call that **Petti Coats (Pants for women)**
- Sometimes these birds can come in the form of money, we call that **Pennies**
- Sometimes these birds can come in the form of puffed egos, we call that **Pride.**
- However, these birds look like that want to mess with your covenant, you have to chase them away!

There is always something or someone who will try to stop you from staying in a covenant relationship with God and your spouse. You must be gangsta about it and chase them away. Don't try to be cute, don't try to be religious. Just be effective. God protects His Covenant that you make with Him and you should do the same. 1 Corinthians 10:12 *So let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

God affirms His promises as He moves through the sacrificed animals. You can always trust God to fulfil the promises He makes to you in His Word!

Your serious and deepest consideration, should always be to value your spouse. Sacrifice is always part of a marriage. If you have not discovered it yet, don't worry, you soon will.

Whatever you place value on, virtue will come out of it.

If something is important or precious to you, then you will protect it, just like Abram chased away the vultures, so you too must chase away anything that comes against your covenant. Identify what are the vultures that are trying to stop you from practicing your covenant. Without a covenant there can be no relationship with God, without a sacrifice there can be no covenant. You must sacrifice, it is part of marriage, like a horse and a carriage. Marriage and sacrifice go together, always.

2 Your covenant is 3-fold strong

Eccl 4 vs 9-12 "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie together lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him, a cord of 3 strands is not quickly torn apart.

You have two dimensions to a covenant, a horizontal and a vertical. Horizontal relates to man, husband and wife and vertical relates to two of them to God. The horizontal line will always have its foundation in the vertical line. The vertical line represents your base or your foundation, which is God. Both man and women must always stay in humility and be cognizant of their foundation called Christ.

Solomon gives 4 examples that illustrate this principle

- When two work together they have a good return for their labour
- If one falls, the other can pick them up

- If two lies together both get warm
- If they are attacked, both can respond and drive the attacker off

The 5th example is one of a 3cord strand that is not easily broken. In this case the strength is supplied not just by two but by three. You can try to break a one-fold string, you may, you can try to break a two-fold string, you will have great difficulty. It is almost impossible to break a threefold string with human hands because the combined affect and strength makes it powerful!

We must understand that the bible spoke about three-fold cord in a figurative way. When this graphic is applied to marriage, it includes the husband and wife, the first two strands, who are knotted with the central strand, God. Being united with God gives the covenant couple the spiritual strength to cope with problems, and it is the key to achieving the utmost contentment in marriage.

Solomon's first 3 examples are that on the horizontal plane or human plane. But a Cord of three strands depict a relationship, between a man, a woman and God. The relationship with the man and the woman is still on the human plane, but the when God is added to the relationship, it introduces another dimension. HE BECOMES PART OF YOUR MARRIAGE.

The power of the three-fold cord further explained

Did you know that the largest number of strands that can all touch each other at the same time is 3? If you take one rope away, you obviously weaken the rope. If you add an extra strand and make it four, you do not add to the strength of the rope because all the strands no longer touching each other.

FOR SOMETHING TO BE STRONG THEY MUCH TOUCH EACH OTHER. You must touch your wife /husband, you must touch God! God designed men and women as sexual beings. He created sex and said that it is "very good." (Gen 1:31.)

3. Your covenant goes wherever you go, take your ring with you.

It is important to note that you are married everywhere. God is the silent witness wherever you go. In a research done by law firm Slater & Gordon, they found that both men and women are more likely to wear a wedding ring today than in previous generations. Those under 40 are also more likely to remove it. This is when they want to be unfaithful.

Even if you take your ring off, God still sees you. Guess what, your partner might not have seen your infidelity, but they can feel it. Why, because you are one before the Father. The study further shows that a fifth of women under 40 said they thought a man who did not wear a ring did not take his marriage as seriously and a quarter said it would make them suspicious.

A third of couples said they would be more confident that their partner would not cheat on them if they wore a ring as it would be a reminder of their commitment. Your covenant is your protection, it is the unseen inheritance for your children and their children. Take your ring with on your travels.

You have to enter the marriage through the right door

People get married for different reasons. It is almost never for love but for some other instinctive need. Love is a decision, love grows and grows, until it overpowers all your initial instinctive needs. When you critically investigate this, you will find it to be true. People get married basically for mainly the following motives:

1. Motives of Comfort
2. Motives of Commercial
3. Motives of Commitment
4. Motives of Covenant

As the years progress, they begin to abandon the selfish notion of being “in love” to “deciding to love” This is truly transformational and expresses the Agape type of love that God requires of us.

Four different types of loves (Eros, storge, agape and philia)

- a. Friendship (Philia)
- b. Brotherly (Storge)
- c. Sexual (Eros)
- d. Godly love (Agape)

You have to enter through the door of covenant, because it contains all the other doors, if you enter through any other door, you will give up because you don't have the third person of the 3-fold string to keep things together.

DIFFERENCES IN PRIMARY NEEDS

The primary needs of males and females according to Miles Munro, Willard F Harley and Gary Chapman fundamentally comes to the following essentials or as I would like to deem them , obligations;

Primary needs of Men are:

1. respect,
2. recreational companionship, and
3. Sex. (I would have put this first 😊)

The primary needs of females are

1. love,
2. conversation, and
3. affection

Collectively and individually these great authors, they all sing from the same hymn sheet and postulate that if you don't fulfil your partner's

primary needs, then it will not go so well for you and your marriage. This I believe is a ground-breaking discovery and although simple in its understanding, it becomes very difficult to fulfil, when our own needs are not met. Once we can look past our own needs to the fulfilling the needs of our partners then we are more than halfway there to a great marriage.

The different needs of both men and women can change and are different from person to person, but this gives us something to work with.

4 Every marriage goes through seasons

My cordial appreciation for the work of Gary Chapman's book: **The four Seasons of Marriage**, *Secrets to a lasting marriage*. I highly recommend it. I have gleaned most of this section from that book.

Four Seasons of a Tree

Don't judge a life by one difficult season.

There was a man who had four sons. He wanted his sons to learn to **not judge things too quickly**. So, he sent them each on a quest, in turn, to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away. The first son went in the winter, the second in the spring, the third in summer, and the youngest son in the fall.

When they had all gone and come back, he called them together to describe what they had seen.

1. The first son said that the tree was ugly, bent, and twisted. (Winter)
2. The second son said no--it was covered with green buds and full of promise. (Spring)
3. The third son disagreed, he said it was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and looked so beautiful, it was the most graceful thing he had ever seen. (summer)

4. The last son disagreed with all of them; he said it was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfilment. (Fall)

The man then explained to his sons that they were all right, because they had each seen but one season in the tree's life. He told them that you cannot judge a tree, or a person, by only one season, and that the essence of who they are--and the pleasure, joy, and love that come from that life--can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are up (Chapman, 2005).

If you give up when it's winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer, fulfilment of your fall. Don't let the pain of one season destroy the joy of all the rest.

1. Winter

Why begin with winter?

Most couples that I counsel come for counselling when they are in their winter season, not a lot of couples go for counselling when they are in the summer season. It is the coldness of winter that drives couples for help. Winter speaks of difficulty. Of survival.

Winter

Emotions	Hurt, Anger, disappointment, loneliness, feeling rejected
Attitudes	Negativity, discouragement, frustrations, hopelessness.
Actions	Destructive, speaking harshly, not speaking , violent
Climate	Detached, cold, harsh, bitter. In the winter season of marriage, couples are unwilling to negotiate differences. Conversations turn to arguments, or couples just don't talk to each other anymore. There is no sense of togetherness; The marriage is like two people living in separate igloos.

- In winter, there is a big desire to seek help. Couples become desperate to get healing.
- Once a couple goes through their winter season, they can see the positive side of winter and have gained the ability to help others through their winter season.

AUTUMN

Emotions	Fear, sadness, dejection, apprehension, discouragement, resentment, feelings of being unappreciated.
Attitude	Concern, uncertainty , lots of blaming
Actions	Neglect, failure to face issues
Climate	Drifting apart, disengaging, Couples sense that something is happening, but they are not sure what it is. There is a sense of detachment. They realize there are issues but are unwilling to face it. There is a lot of blaming going on. Their close friends and their family are recognizing the changes.

- Couples are normally in the early stages of autumn before they realize it.

- They have been busy with the activities of summer, enjoying life but ignoring each other.
- Externally the marriage looks good, but the leaves are beginning to fall off.

Spring

Emotions	Excitement, joy, hope
Attitude	Anticipation, optimism, gratitude, love, trust
Actions	Nurturing, planning, communicating, seeking help when needed
Climate	Vital , tender, open, caring, Spring is a time of new beginnings, the flowers are blooming, streams of communication are flowing. Seeds of happiness are planted.

Downside of spring

- What to watch out for is unannounced irritations that pop up.
- It can ruin a beautiful vacation or turn a fine dinner into an emotional fiasco.
- These irritations do not change the seasons, but they make spring less enjoyable

Summer

Emotions	Happiness, satisfaction, accomplishments, connection
Attitude	Trust, commitment to growth, relaxed
Actions	Constructive communication, accepting differences, attending marriage seminars together, reading of books, looking after body, soul, and spirit.
Climate	Comfortable, attached, supportive, understanding. In the summer season what you have planted in spring comes to harvest. Conflicts get resolved in a positive manner. There is a lot of genuine, I am sorry. Differences are accepted and there is a real commitment to make the marriage work. Don't have a lot of clothes on for protection; you wear your emotions on your sleeve.

How do you stay in your summer season?

1. Deal with Past Failures

You have to deal with the past before you can put it behind you.

Dealing with the past failures involves 4 steps.

- Identifying past failures: Most difficult part is to identify it.
- The reality is that we can identify our spouse's failures easier than identifying our own failures.
- The way you deal with identifying failures is to allow your partner to identify yours first.
- Make sure you have put it on paper for the other one to read and assess.

2. Confession and repentance: You have to agree and repent, walk in the other direction
3. Forgiveness: Means that you won't bring up past failures anymore. It means that you recognize that the person has done the steps above and you are letting that person go.
4. Moving on: Means you must move on and never look back.

Lastly, you must commit to your partner. Remember the three C'S of a great marriage"

- ✓ **Commitment** to God and your partner
- ✓ **Choice**, make a choice to have a great marriage
- ✓ **Covenant** is the key, keep on remembering and honouring your covenant

Questions and Answers

There are always more questions than answers are the old adage. When we have the marriage seminars, there are always questions about, the HOW, the IF and the WHAT of marriage relationships. In one of our recent marriage seminars the following questions came to the vanguard of what was on the minds of the people that I serve. Some are very painful, some are very sexual. They are all important to answer. These questions were written down and passed to me on paper to answer. My team and I answered it the following way.

Why is it sometimes so hard for your partner to accept when you made a mistake?

Pride and hurt. But especially a sense of betrayal.

How do you keep calm during an argument?

Keep your mouth shut for as long as you can, and when you speak, be quick to listen, slow to speak and even slower to get angry.

What is the worst advice you received about marriage

That one partner is perfect and the other one is not.

We have to know that we are both imperfect. We are broken and on our way to complete wholeness. There are keys to make a marriage. The first and most important issue is one of obedience to God and His Word. This is a principle that should be practiced before the marriage begins. God says, *“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?” (Amos 3:3)*. Agreement precedes establishment.

How can I romance my wife and how often must you go on dates with my partner?

There was a great prophet of romance (James Ingram) who sang this song. Do it and you will be all right.

Compliment what she does

Send her roses just because

If it's violins she loves

Let them play

Dedicate her favourite song

And hold her closer all night long

Love her today

Find one hundred ways ...

For us as a couple that is married so long, what is there still for us to learn about marriage?

I have been fortunate to know couples who have been married to each other for more than 50 years. The lessons they have on love is priceless and what they can teach us is invaluable. If you have a great marriage, make it greater and pass on that knowledge to others. God is a generational God. The chances are that your children and your children's children will be impacted by your shared love for each other. This is both a legacy and an inheritance. One you leave for them; the other one you leave in them. In short pass on what you have learned. Share the love.

How do you grow spiritually?

Read your bible, pray every day and you will grow, grow, and grow.

What do you do if your wife is not submissive?

The essence of marriage is that you no longer live for yourself. I always maintain that a wife will submit to a man that is loving, respectful and who has a mission for his family. Submission means to submit to a mission. Every wife wants to submit to a man who is submitted to Jesus. If he is on his place, honour him.

When a man is not on his place, his wife will be displaced, his children will be misplaced and he might be replaced.

Too often, husbands look at Ephesians 5 and hold on to verse 22: “*Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.*” Husbands sometimes take it upon themselves to make sure their wives submit to their authority. However, verse 22 was not written to husbands. It is specifically addressing wives. Husbands are never *told to enforce their wives’ submission*. Rather, husbands are told to love their wives (verse 25). Verses 25 through 32 are for husbands, and that is what they should focus on.

You see no one likes the idea of having to yield power or authority over themselves to someone else. Having said that, wives and husbands are to first submit to God, this is what scripture teaches. Submission is not a dirty word it is actually one of the main ways that the scriptures teaches us to show our love to God and to each other. What is a husband’s responsibility? To love his wife. Without selfishness, without reservation, and without condition. If he does that, then an engagement in constructive conversation should be exercised to ensure that both parties operate in love and respect for each other as unto the Lord.

If the husband is on his place and he loves his wife, and she is contrary to the biblical mandate, it would be best to seek counselling and find out why she would not want to submit.

What do you do if you know you are right but your partner don't want to accept they are wrong?

Pray for them, forgive them and trust that Jesus who is at the centre of the covenant will soften your partner's heart to accept when they are wrong. This works vice versa.

How do you stay connected to a church and involved when you had a baby?

There is a balance that exist between church, career and family. It's not only a constant struggle, but a common one as well. Whether we're single or married, whether one spouse or both work outside the home, the competing demands on our time and energy can be draining. There are enormous pressures everywhere, especially if you just had your first child and you are still a career person and and and.

I like to think of it in terms of the power of AND. You need to be a mother and you need to be a wife. You need to work AND you need to be in church. It is sign of your vitality. Finding the balance is what you must decide on. My suggestion is always to have the conversation beforehand so that everyone is clear on what is expected and what can be delivered on.

How can I stay sexed up in old age?

I know who asked this question☺! When we can't row our boat, so to speak and we can't create waves that provide motion for the ocean, then it is time to see a doctor. I know some couples who are sexually active and they are in their late seventies. In the early years of a man's sexual drive I am told, that his sexual drive is 75% physical and 25% mental. As

the man matures the ratio changes and when they are over 50 years old, it becomes 75% mental and 25% physical.

A man places a lot of his confidence in his ability to satisfy his wife sexually. When he can't do that anymore, he might go into depression. So, we have to identify what the real problem is. Is it hormonal, is it medical or is it mental.

So, what is the secret of keeping it sexed up? Keep on having sex. If you want to, but can't anymore see a doctor who will be able to help you.

It is however possible to have a relationship of love without sexual intimacy. This is experienced by millions of people all over the world when they become older. So, then it is not about the frequency of coitus anymore but more about pleasing your partner, with or without coitus.

After all the Spirit filled life will cause you to love regardless of whether you can get it up or not. Your partner will love you still.

My partner seems to be frigid, what can I do?

I draw upon the work of Tim and Beverley Lahaye. They postulate in their book: *The Act of Marriage*, that frigidity is emotionally caused and physically induced. They go on to say that no psychiatrist has ever seen a woman that was raised in a house with loving parents, secure family environment that was frigid. It was found that most women that suffered serious orgasmic impairment suffered serious emotional deprivation during childhood and after.

The question is always, why would a frigid woman get married in the first place? Lahaye further suggests that frigidity can be cured when the husband provides tender loving care and both decide to tackle the emotional baggage of the wife. In this instance the husband has to show incredible resolve, when he understands that his wife's rejection of him is a carry-over of emotional scarring that needs to be dealt with. When

you treat her with dignity and respect, she will come around eventually (LaHaye, 2003) . You cannot rob your wife without robbing yourself and vice versa. For further reading please visit the website of **Net-Burst –Net**, which will give you insight how to handle the matter with sensitivity and love. There are very sincere, loving men, however, who end up with frigid wives and choose to live that way.

Is it a sin to enjoy oral sex from your spouse?

Oral sex, also known as “cunnilingus” when performed on females and “fellatio” when performed on males, is not mentioned in the Bible. While the Bible does not specifically address the question, there are definitely biblical principles that we can apply.

Many, perhaps most, Christian married couples have had this question. It would appear that mostly men desire this experience more than wives. There seems to be an increase however on the part of the wives as well. What makes it difficult is the fact that the Bible nowhere says what is allowed or disallowed sexually between a husband and wife, other than, of course, any sexual activity that involves another person (swapping, threesomes, animals etc.) or that involves lusting after another person (pornography).

Outside of these two restrictions, the principle of “mutual consent” would seem to apply (1 Corinthians 7:5). While this text specifically deals with abstaining from sex/frequency of sex, “mutual consent” is a good concept to apply universally in regards to sex within marriage. Husbands and wives should not watch pornography together or alone for that matter. If that is the source for this activity, then it becomes more than lustful, it become demonic.

Whatever is done, it should be fully agreed on between the husband and his wife. Neither spouse should be forced or pressured into doing something he/she is not completely comfortable with. If oral sex is done

within the confines of marriage and in the spirit of mutual consent, there is not a biblical case for declaring it to be a sin. On this matter, I believe decency and order must be practiced and might be different for every couple.

I have however one concern that must be mentioned, and that is the health aspect of oral sex. It is possible that herpetic diseases can be transferred through oral sex. It is therefore something that should be considered with great reflection before you decide to engage in it.

What does it mean for husbands to love their wives?

Ephesians 5:25–33 contains dynamic instructions for husbands in their relationship with their wives. Verse 25 gives the basic command: “*Husbands, love your wives.*” In case anybody wonders, the Greek word for “love” here is a form of **agape**. This is the God kind of love. Husbands are to love their wives with God’s kind of love—selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional.

For a husband to love his wife, he must truly desire what is best for her, and he must work for that best, regardless of the cost to himself. Husband who have not **left** their father and their mother will struggle to **cleave** to their wives. This indeed is a work in process and is the love of God that works through the husband to love their wives. Some wives are not easy to love! Like a friend of mine says: *I give her the best and therefore I get the best*” Husbands if you don’t like what you are getting, change what you are giving!

How long is long suffering really?

Very long!

I had an abortion and feel terrible about it, the guilt is eating me up, and what can I do?

Abortion has become a crucial and much divided issue in our society lately. In previous generations, this topic was not even on public agenda forums. Now it is everywhere. Abortion on demand has reached epic proportions and it seemed to be very popular amongst students and young executives.

From my experience, whatever the reason for the abortion was, when they come to me for counselling, the most devastating issue that the ladies struggle with is the issue of guilt. The guilt is such an enormous burden that some even contemplated to commit suicide, but for the Grace! Thankfully there is forgiveness for sin and the Bible guarantees that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us of all sin. Even the sin of abortion, (1 John 7-9).

I normally take the people through a breakdown moment, where we start with confession, repentance and restoration through the forgiveness that Jesus offers. Secondly and most importantly we walk with the individual until she is through the valley of the shadow of death. Although the guilt eventually fades away, the memory never does.

I am a widow, is it wrong for a Christian to masturbate?

This is one of the great debates of our day in Christian circles. To masturbate or not to masturbate. The Bible is very silent about this matter and so I will not be flippant about it. As a married woman you were used to be satisfied and now you can't anymore. So, this is a serious issue. Twenty years ago, I would have said emphatically no. Now I can say that I have changed my mind about it for the following reasons.

I have two answers to this one.

It is wrong when:

1. It is wrong when you are fantasizing and lustful thinking is involved whilst doing it (Math 5 vs. 28)
2. Is it wrong when you decide that you want to satisfy yourself only and you are not open for re-marriage because masturbation can frustrate the designed dependence of a couple that is married.
3. If you are guilty every time you do it, then you should stop doing it because it can interfere with your spiritual walk with God.
4. Lastly in 1 Cor 7:9 it says that it is better to get married than to burn. This ties in with my second point.

It is right when:

1. *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:31). When you can glorify God for it, then **do** it.
2. *“Everything that does not come from faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23). If you are convinced that this activity is by faith, then **do** it.
3. *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body”* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). If you feel that your body is under subjection of the Holy Spirit and that you are guilt free then **do** it.

If done with absolutely no lust, immoral thoughts, or pornography, with full assurance that it is good and right, then do it and give God thanks for it. Whatever you do, I urge you be private about it. If you have sexual desires then pray that God will bring you a husband that can fulfil your needs again. Then obviously you must stop masturbating.

My husband don't bring me to orgasm, is it wrong to do it for myself while he is sleeping?

I think you should make your needs known to your husband, because the two of you are one. A husband who can't control his ejaculation must be told so and the two of you must work it out until both of you can be satisfied. There is much to be said on this subject that pertains to Kegel exercises, clitoral stimulation and other activities that can be appropriated. I am not an expert on the matter, so I suggest that you do some reading and have long honest conversations with your partner to resolve this important imperative.

In short, I think it is wrong to satisfy yourself when you have a husband that you can train to do it effectively. The truth of the matter is that most men don't know how to satisfy their wives and this can cause damage to

a relationship. If your discussion with your husband does not bear fruit, then I suggest you see a professional sex therapist to help both of you.

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