

# LAWFUL MARRIAGE

By Glen Stoll © The Family Defense League, September 15, 2001

God demonstrates remarkable love through His laws of grace and mercy that apply to marriage, as summarized in nine points below. In Biblical terms, adultery and fornication are sicknesses of sin; abandonment is emotional and spiritual death. By abandoning a spouse, the departed loved one may have committed the unpardonable sin, which the Bible calls, “a sin unto death.” Divorce is a closure or burial of the dead, while remarriage, only in the Lord, is a resurrection. Prov. 2:18, 19; Rom. 7:2-6; Rom. 6:14-16; 1 John 5:12-18; 1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-17.

## 1. DEFINITION

Marriage is a covenant relationship made before God between one man and one woman. It is not lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14; Hos. 2:16-20; Jer. 50:5; Eze. 16:8; Gal. 3:15, 17.

## 2. DURATION

By God's appointment the marriage relationship is to continue as long as both parties are living. Marriage may not be contracted for any other period. After the death of one party the other party may lawfully marry another. Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 7:2-3; Gen. 2:24-25; 1 Cor. 7:39.

## 3. ADMINISTRATION

The validity of marriage depends on the mutual agreement of the parties, rather than upon official administration; yet for the glory of God and the protection of the parties, and so that the greatness of the privilege and the seriousness of the responsibility of the marriage may be properly impressed on the parties, marriage should be contracted in the presence of a qualified officer and competent witnesses. Matt. 19:6; 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 2:13.

## 4. COUNSEL

The marriage of Christians should ordinarily be solemnized by an ordained minister of the Gospel. Members of the household of faith should beware of seeking marriage counsel from unbelievers or from believers who have failed to integrate their faith with their professional work. 1 Cor. 14:33; 40, Matt. 18:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:14-17.

## 5. AUTHORITY

Although it is in the nature of man to study arguments to unduly put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage; yet nothing but such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage. A public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed and the parties not left to their own wills and discretion, but to submit to the authority of the Church. Matt. 19:8-9; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 19:6; Deut. 24:1-4.

## 6. DISSOLUTION

Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery resulting in abandonment after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to divorce; and, after the divorce, to marry another, if the offending party has sinned unto death.

Matt. 1:18-20, 5:31-32, 19:9; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 6:16, 7:2-6; Prov. 2:10-22; Mal. 2:12-16; 1 John 5:16.

## 7. REMARRIAGE

Although adultery alone is not a sufficient ground for remarriage, desertion alone may be sufficient when the departed remains an unbeliever to the extent that he or she is considered dead. 1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 18:17; Rom. 7:2-6.

## 8. RECONCILIATION

In any marriage threatened with dissolution, or even if divorce has occurred, both parties ought to strive for reconciliation on the basis of repentance for sin and willingness to forgive. Before seeking divorce, it is the responsibility of the innocent party to attempt reconciliation with the guilty party in the same manner as in any case of any sin, first by his or her own appeal, and then, if need be, by calling on the elders of the church. Mark 10:2-12;

Eph. 4:31-32; 5:25-33; 1 Cor. 7:10-14; Matt. 18:15-17.

## 9. CONSEQUENCES

Where the guilty party in a divorce shows evidence of repentance for the sin of breaking a marriage, the Church may receive or restore him or her to membership. If the guilty party in a divorce marries another, they commit adultery, unless the former spouse is dead. Gal. 6:1; Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18.

**Genesis 2:**

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;  
22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.  
23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.  
24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.  
25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

**Deuteronomy 24:**

1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.  
2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.  
3 And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;  
4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

**Proverbs 2:**

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;  
11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:  
12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;  
13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;  
14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;  
15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:  
16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;  
17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.  
18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.  
19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.  
20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.  
21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.  
22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

**Jeremiah 50:5** They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

**Ezekiel 16:8** Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

**Hosea 2:**

16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi [husband]; and shalt call me no more [lord] Baali.  
17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.  
18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.  
19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.  
20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

**Malachi 2:**

10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?  
11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.  
12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.  
13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.  
14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.  
15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.  
16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.  
17 Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

**Matthew 1:**

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

**Matthew 5:**

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

**Matthew 18:**

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

**Matthew 19:**

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

**Mark 10:**

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

**Luke 16:18** Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

**Romans 6:**

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

**Romans 7:**

2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

**1 Corinthians 7:**

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

**1 Corinthians 14:**

33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

**2 Corinthians 6:**

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

**Galatians 3:**

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

**Ephesians 4:**

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

**Ephesians 5:**

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

**1 Peter 2:**

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

**1 John 5:**

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.