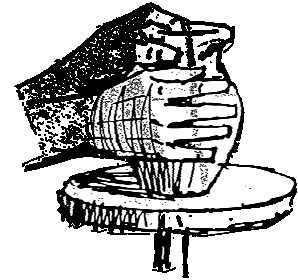


His Workmanship Westside

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ
Jesus for good works."*

—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

"What God Has Joined, Let Not Man Separate," Divorce and Remarriage, Part 3, by

Marriage is a human relationship ordained and instituted by God, Mal 2:14-16. His original design was one man and one woman united by covenant and sexual union for life, Gen 2:23-24. The relationship sets forth symbolically in physical form the relationship between God Himself and His people, Eph 5:21-33; Is 54:5; Hos 2:14-23; Ezek 16; Jer 3:20. Therefore God hates divorce for what it does to people and for what it does to the glory of His own covenant with the church.

Nevertheless, because of the deceit and power of sin and because of the remnants of corruption in our own hearts, divorce still happens in the lives of some Christians. A mature and spiritual Christian may be forsaken by a disobedient or unbelieving spouse. Two professing believers may drift so far from the Lord that they no longer acknowledge in their hearts the authority of the Lord Jesus or the binding nature of their marriage covenant. The church, as a spiritual body with radical commitment to its head, Christ, and earnest love and care for each other, should be ready to minister forgiveness, healing, reproof, discipline, correction, and restoration whenever appropriate to its members.

But sometimes care is confused with

compromise. People think that loving care is incompatible with confrontation—that the tenderness of Jesus and the toughness of His demands can't both be love. But surely this is not right. Jesus was extraordinarily caring. His teaching on divorce and remarriage was also firm: *"What God has joined together let not man put asunder,"* Mk 10:9. In fact, firm and loving confrontation with the demands of Christ IS a form of caring, because a sinful decision is more harmful to a person than the emotional pain.

The great challenge to the church in the face of divorce and remarriage is to love Biblically. *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments,"* 1 Jn 5:2. In other words, the test of true love to people is not only the feeling of compassion in the heart but also conformity to the commandments of God in behavior. The great challenge is to mingle the tears of compassion with the tough love of obedience. This alone will honor Christ and preserve the spiritual health and power of the church.

Why Is There a Special Concern with Divorce and Remarriage?

1. Divorce has reached epidemic proportions in our culture to the extent

that even secular leaders grope for a stance that may preserve the stability of the home.

2. In the local church people need clarification about where it stands—what the Bible teaches.

3. Divorce involves sin that is more destructive than many others. The hurtful impact of a broken marriage on the spouses and the children and the web of relationships surrounding the marriage is immense.

4. Divorce is thrown into the public limelight by the recognition in our society that it must be handled by the civil courts.

5. Marriage, divorce, and remarriage involve the mingling of solemn oaths and sacred physical union unlike any other relationship.

6. Marriage is unique among all relationships in that it is set apart by God to signify to the world the relationship between His Son and His bride the church, Eph 5:21-33. Therefore the breaking of this bond is extraordinary among all human bonds.

7. Divorce falls into that group of acts which when they are committed are very hard to undo. The words, "I'm sorry," can rectify many sins against another person. But divorce/remarriage

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**"Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."
—Matthew 19:29**

cannot be made right like that.

8. Divorce happens by plan and intention of one or both spouses. It is not like a habit against which one struggles with successes and failures.

Radical Teaching. Jesus put the matter bluntly and radically: "So He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery,' " Mk 10:11-12. Matthew recorded the disciples' reaction to this teaching: "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But He said to them, 'Not all can accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it,' " Mt 19:10-12. While the disciples pondered this astonishing teaching, little children were brought to Jesus for Him to bless them (put His hands on them and pray) and a rich young ruler came to ask what he could do to receive eternal life. The disciples rebuked the children, but Jesus said, "Let them come unto Me; for such is the kingdom of heaven," Mt 19:14. As for the rich young man, he went away sorrowful because of Christ's radical teaching that he must give up everything in order to have treasures in heaven. "When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we

have left all and followed You...' Jesus said to them, '...everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life,' " Mt 19:25-27, 29. It is no accident that Matthew recorded these events so closely together, because they are related to the Lord's teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Jesus promised to help us give up everything for His kingdom: 'With God all things are possible.'

Moreover, just before His teaching on marriage, He had taught this about offenses: "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones," Mt 18:8-10. Matthew was always careful about the order of the events he recorded. The teaching on forgiveness and on confrontation of sin/offenses in the church are right here in Mt 18:15-35. Thus the over-arching theme of these related teaching events is clear: a disciple of Jesus must be willing to give up everything for the kingdom of heaven—even marrying and even forsaking a particular marriage. The reality and hardness of Jesus's teaching (Jn 6:60, 66-69) is that we must exchange all for eternal life: "Become eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake," "everyone who has left wife..., for My name's sake, shall inherit eternal life." Yet Jesus did not leave us

with merely the hardness—He also promised to help us leave everything: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible," Mt 19:26.

Is Divorce or Remarriage the Unforgivable Sin? When divorce begins to be discussed in the uncompromising way Jesus spoke of it in Mt 19, it is common for someone to ask whether divorce is the unforgivable sin. The answer is found in the following texts:

- "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins," Heb 9:22.
- "[Jesus said] this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins," Mt 26:2.
- "Every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through His name," Ax 10:43.
- "All sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin," Mk 3:28f.
- "Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon," Is 55:7.
- "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness," 1 Jn 1:9.

From these wondrous promises we see that forgiveness for sins is available on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus. God grants forgiveness freely for all sins, without exception. Forgiveness is received through trusting Christ. And trusting Christ involves confessing sin as sin and turning away from it to embrace the ways of God with joy. The only unforgivable sin is the sin that we refuse to confess and forsake. We commit unforgivable sin when we cleave to a sin so long and so tenaciously that we can no longer confess it as sin and turn from it. The blasphemy against the Holy

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Let your faith be seen in 2014
 "I rejoice to see your good order
 and the steadfastness of your faith
 in Christ."
 —Colossians 2:5

Divorce & Remarriage, from p. 3 Spirit, Mt 12:31, is resisting His work of convicting our hearts of sin and refusing to repent—to the point where He withdraws, leaving sinners in helpless hardness of heart. Neither divorce nor remarriage is in itself the unforgivable sin any more than murder, stealing, lying, or coveting. "All sins will be forgiven the sons of men." God is faithful and just to forgive—He will honor the worth of His Son's sacrifice for all who confess their sins and rest their hope on the saving work of Christ.

Church discipline. However, forgiveness is NOT unconditional. It is conditional, but it cannot be earned. Forgiveness is granted to those who truly trust Christ and repent of their sins, "calling on the name of the Lord," Acts 22:16. Trust calls attention to the worth of God's grace, not the worth of our action. But trust is not mere intellectual assent to Biblical facts. It involves hearty affirmation of the will of Christ. Therefore trusting Christ involves confessing sin as sin, repenting, and taking up arms against it.

Thus the ultimate form of discipline in a church (withdrawing association) is never a simple response to past sin. It is always a response to sin that a person continues to affirm or practice. No past sin that is renounced, forsaken, and confessed is a ground for church discipline. So marital sin is in the same category as lying, killing, and stealing in regard to church discipline. If someone has lied, killed, stolen, or divorced with no lawful cause, the issue is not "can he be forgiven?" The issue is "does she admit that what she did was sin? Has she renounced it? Is she doing what she can to make it right?" If a person in the church were known to affirm lying, etc., as appropriate behavior for a Christian, he would be liable to the discipline of

Discipleship Here At Home

the church—not because he had lied, killed, etc., in the past or could not be forgiven, but because he continued to affirm falsely NOW that sin is not sin. Or if a person were openly planning to lie, kill, or steal with a view to obtaining (cheap!) forgiveness afterward, she, too, would be subject to church discipline. In all these ways illegitimate divorce and remarriage are NOT in a class by themselves. They are not the unforgivable sin. As to church discipline, they should be treated the same way as other public sins.

What makes divorce/remarriage seem to be special matters of concern in the church is that very seldom does one affirm the rightness of lying, killing, and stealing. But people often affirm the rightness of divorce or remarriage. In other words, what usually causes the conflict is not whether divorce and remarriage are unforgivable sins, but whether they are sins at all—to be confessed (from the past) and to be avoided (in the future). If a person has stolen things in his past and wants to join with a church, no one would say that the church was treating stealing as the unforgivable sin if it insisted that this person confess his sin and begin to make amends to those he defrauded. A sin must be confessed as sin, renounced as an option, and its effects made right (as far as possible)—then it is forgivable. So it is with illegitimate divorce/remarriage. It should not keep in or put out of the church any more than a past life of robbery. But there must be a heartfelt confession of the sin committed, and a renouncing of it, and an affirming of what is right, just as with all other sins of the past. When we enter Christ's covenant, we are not only affirming what we pledge to do. We are also affirming what we believe ought to be done. In other words, becoming a Christian is a commitment to hold in common convictions about what is right and wrong in behavior as well as in doctrine (our confession of faith in Christ and our entering His covenant). Without this shared conviction, the possibility of holding each other accountable is gone.

The Guidelines:

1. A believer and an unbeliever should not marry, 1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-15.
2. Since death breaks the marriage bond, Rm 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39, remarriage is permis-

continued on p. 4

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here and away

Letha Fink's husband **Ed**—finished radiation for prostate cancer; starts new treatment for brain tumors Thurs; weak but plans to be at worship
Judy Sartin's grandson **Tanner**—home after blockage in intestine; also her aunt **Vallie Ek**, age 87, who has battled cancer 2 years, has lung infection and renal failure; pray she returns to Lord in her last days; **Judy's** son **Dave** also has an aunt, **June**, 80, in a coma
Szymanski's granddaughter **Molly** and friends—witnessed teen friend **Vince Nett's** suicide attempt; all friends traumatized
David Hull, a friend of **Randy Reames**—leukemia relapse; infection; pray open to gospel
Caleb Howell's friend **Cage**—body rejected liver transplant; colon cancer
Valerie Greenwalt—neck surgery last week
Mark Campbell—cardio issues;
Evangelism through home Bible studies—pray God will bless our efforts

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Logan Corray; **Rocco Sangellino Jr**; **Addison Tope**; **Pat Wilkes**—asthma
Bill Dennis, **Nell Free**—heart issues
Autumn Hadders—epilepsy; celiac disease
Jonathan Hadders—RA
Danielle Huelsman—vertigo, CV syndrome
Kirk Johnson—worsening MS; needs help around his house
Menards—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes, weak;
Virginia, macular degeneration; high BP
Sandra Perry—neuropathy from diabetes; kidney failure, may need dialysis
Cheryl Reames—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia
Nell Free—pacemaker, heart; back pain
Judy Sartin—spinal stenosis; severe arthritis
Judy Sartin's grandson **Tristen**—autism
Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung

Traveling **Mina Gonzalez** is at a piano training in Mexico City; she also joins her father who is preaching there this week.

Job concerns **Linda Szymanski**
Expecting **Liz Kosik**, early April—blood platelets low; **Christina Adams's** daughter **Kayla**, May

Please Help **Sarah McMurray** needs help moving this Saturday, 2/22, 10 am

Directory Updates **Bill Dennis** has chosen to work and worship with this church: 333 East Eaton, #115

Divorce, Remarriage, Church Discipline, from p. 3

sible without sin for a believing widow or widower, so long as the marriage is with another believer.

3. Separation may be permitted when a spouse deserts the relationship, commits adultery, or is dangerously abusive, 1 Cor. 7:15; Matthew 19:9; 1 Cor 7:11. There are times when the Bible permits separation. This should not imply a decisive and permanent end to the relationship while the spouses are alive and not remarried. Even after long periods of separation and alienation, reconciliation can happen, as when the people of God return to the Lord after periods of waywardness, Hos 2:14-23. However, divorce in certain cases is permitted. The phrase "may be permitted" holds out the possibility that inquiry may reveal that the deserted (wronged) partner engaged in a wrong behavior that drove the other away, so that a change is called for at home rather than divorce. Forgiveness and reconciliation between sinning spouses is preferable to separation or divorce even where adultery has occurred. This is implied in Mt 18:21-22, "Then Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but 70 times seven.'" (See also Lk 17:3-4.)

4. The remarriage of the adulterous, divorced spouse may be viewed as severing the former marriage so that the spouse left unmarried whose behavior did not Biblically justify being divorced may be free to remarry a believer, Mt 19:9, if he/she has confessed all known sin in the divorce and has made significant progress in overcoming any destructive behaviors and attitudes. Everyone who contemplates remarriage must struggle in prayer and study with all the relevant Scriptures, with the sole aim of glorifying God through full obedience to His word. Consider fairly the arguments against remarriage and those for it. Also affirm the goodness and beauty of a life of singleness in God's service both before marriage and after marriage. Singleness is commended in 1 Cor 7:7,11, 32-35 and elevated by the examples of Jesus and Paul and hundreds of great single Christians.

5. After serious efforts have been made toward reconciliation, the partner aggrieved by adultery may, together with the leadership of the church, come to regard their marriages as irreparably broken. In such cases remarriage may be a legitimate step, if taken with serious reckoning that this cuts off all possibility of a reconciliation that God may yet be willing to produce. If the adulterous spouse has remarried, that decisively cuts off the possibility of reconciliation. But while the spouse is still unmarried and alive, reconciliation is still Biblically possible. It would be hard to condone a step that decisively cuts asunder what God meant to be permanent and which could yet be permanent, 1 Cor 7:10-11. Some believe that 1 Corinthians 7:15 ("If the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so, in such a case the brother or sister is not bound") gives freedom to a Christian to remarry if abandoned. Some also believe that denying remarriage puts an unwarranted strain on the chastity of the divorced person who may not believe he/she has the gift of celibacy, 1 Cor 7:7. But serious efforts should be made at reconciliation, including the intervention of the church if necessary, before any aggrieved spouse is resigned to singleness or is free to remarry.

6. The aggrieving partners referred to in #3 (who were guilty of abandonment, adultery, or abuse) should repent and be reconciled to God and to their spouses, 1 Cor 7:11; 1 Jn 1:9. If it is too late because their spouses have remarried, then they should remain single because they left their first marriage without Biblical authority, Mt 19:9; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:11.

7. If a second marriage ends in death or divorce, the widow or widower in this case is not permitted to return to the first spouse in marriage, Deut 24:1-4.

8. Men remarried after divorce may not be elders or deacons, 1 Tim 3:2, 12.

9. The amount of time that has passed and the change in standing from unbeliever to believer does not alter the application of the guidelines for divorce and remarriage (see Mt 19:4-6, which highlights the fact that enduring marriages are part of God's plan for all His human creation, not just His redeemed people).



meets at
13789 W. 8th Avenue
Golden, Colorado 80401
720-295-4530

info@thechurchingolden.com
www.thechurchingolden.com

Pastors

Larry Campbell (303) 246-8810
DeWayne Howell (303) 973-7283

Preacher

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning:

Adult Bible study, "Come out from among Them" Series, 2 Cor 6:17:

"Leadership in the Church,"

Larry Campbell

Sermon:

"We Must Not Lose Our Identity,"

Jim Reingrover

Sunday afternoon theme for

February—COMMITMENT

Sermon:

"Staying Committed," DeWayne Howell

Today's article on *Divorce and Remarriage* should be read with articles in the last four bulletins on the subject: January 26, February 2, 9, and 16.