

I Corinthians Lesson # 15
Regulations Within Marriage
Pentwater Bible Church
Daniel E. Woodhead
January 17, 2010

We have been in a section of Scripture that clarifies much for the successful God led Christian marriage. It all starts with tying ourselves together only with believers. That is committed regenerated believers in Jesus Christ. People who seek to please Him first and foremost in their lives. Real believers have been transformed and seek to rid themselves of the old man in them. They seek the guidance of God in all they do and grow spiritually all the days of their lives. This is why the Bible tells us not to unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

II Corinthians 6:14-16 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 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.

Remember a sexual union produces a chemical bonding that draws us together as God would have us becoming one flesh. If the other person is an unbeliever the bonding puts Satan in close proximity to Christ and Christ will withdraw leaving the believer bound to an unbeliever in a bond that is difficult to break.

I Corinthians 7: 10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

Up to this point Paul had been speaking to the people that either were presently unmarried or may have been at some time in their past but now were unmarried. A new discussion now begins with instruction to those that presently are married. Divorce is not part of God's plan. In fact He states quite clearly that He hates divorce (Mal 2:16).

Malachi 2:16 "For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.

The covering that is spoken of here is a symbol of marriage. (Ruth 3:9; Ezek. 16:8). Covering one's garment with violence describes violating the marriage relationship, which is exactly what divorce does. Whenever there is a repetition in the Bible it is for emphasis. In this case it is the Lord's will that we do not divorce.

This verse is the most explicit statement in the Old Testament on God's feelings about divorce. Divorce was allowed. The permission that appears in the Torah provides protection for the wife. (Deut. 24:1-4) Jesus taught that those concessions by Moses were

given because of the hardness of people's hearts, but He emphasized that God does not approve of divorce. He hates it.

So Paul is saying in I Corinthians 7:10 that a wife should not leave her husband. In other words there should not be a divorce or a separation. Typically the question is raised regarding abuse. If a wife is suffering abuse she should remove herself from the harm. This alone is insufficient to seek divorce. Unless there is fornication (adultery) or as we will see in the next few verses abandonment by an unbelieving spouse, there is no biblical permission for divorce (Matthew 5:32). Christ never said that an abused woman should stay in an abusive situation. In fact in the text of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 provides protection for a wife that is cast out by her husband by allowing her to seek another man.

I Corinthians 7: 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.

So in the event that she must leave and let's use the example of abuse, she must not remarry. The husband has no right to end the marriage through divorce. The only legitimate biblical reason to end this marriage is through death or if adultery enters the relationship. She must remain unmarried and so also should her husband. In this verse Paul is addressing married believers. When problems occur in a Christian marriage, the resolution is reconciliation not in divorce.

Ephesians 4:30-32 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

I Corinthians 7: 12-13 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. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

Now the discussion turns to those believers who are married to unbelievers (the rest). Remember we must avoid the pain and hardship associated with the unequal yoking in our marriages. Paul does not mean by saying "I speak, not the Lord" that he following words are *not Scriptural*. What he means is that Jesus did not specifically address this issue in the Scripture we have. Paul had the Christ given authority (Acts 9: 15) to bring Christ's Word to the Gentiles, Kings and the Jews. That being said it is possible for one of two married unbelievers to accept Christ and enter the family of God. After this occurs the believing spouse must not leave the other. Remember how Paul reminded the Corinthians that some of them had serious sins in their past but Christ washed them clean (I Corinthians 6:11). This can happen to the non-believing spouse. The believer should not leave the non-believer. The marriage will be difficult and may result in at the least a lack of tolerance and possibly worse. In a marriage like this the believing spouse might feel like they are single or all alone. Perhaps they are taking the children to church and receive no spiritual leadership or spiritual support in the family unit. We have all seen

these situations. We must reach out to them and encourage them to bring their children up in the knowledge of Christ and seek to support and educate them in the Bible. Through prayer and leading a Godly life the believing spouse may bring about the conversion of the non-believer.

I Corinthians 7:14 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.

The primary reason that the two must remain married is that the believing spouse brings holiness to the marriage. We have at least two Old Testament examples to illustrate this situation.

NEVER, NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF GOD

Genesis 30:27 And Laban said unto him, If now I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry: for I have divined that Jehovah hath blessed me for thy sake.

Laban who was deceitful knew that the Lord blessed him through Jacob. If Jacob had left earlier than he did Laban would not have received knowledge of God and he was aware of it.

Genesis 39:2-5 And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found favor in his sight, and he ministered unto him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field.

Again the Lord provided blessing to those around one of His believing children. Joseph was a child of the living God and the entire household of Potiphar the high-ranking officer in Pharaoh's select personal guard was blessed. Non-believers can sense this in the lives of believers and seek it, if not for themselves, at least for their children. Some people who are non-believers will send their children to vacation Bible school, Christian schools or Sunday school because they know there will be some blessing that will be imparted to the children. The entire family will be blessed by the one believing spouse and especially the children.

I Corinthians 7:15 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.

God has provided an additional exception to the rule of no divorce. In addition to adultery, the situation where an unbeliever insists on a divorce, he is not to be denied.

Should this occur, the Christian is not bound to maintain the marriage but is free to remarry. Paul did not say, as he did in verse 11, that the Christian in this case should “remain unmarried.” The believer has two choices in this instance. The believer can allow the marriage to dissolve or he/she can deny Christ and live with the unbeliever, as the unbelieving spouse would like to live; apart from God. No blessings will occur in this relationship. Only pain and hardship will ensue. Once a person truly accepts Christ the Holy Spirit enters them forever. If they try and deny Christ the Spirit will be grieved.

The second part of this verse in which Paul affirmed that God had called Christians to live in peace could be understood as a separate sentence. The same conjunction (but) which introduced the exception at the beginning of this verse was repeated by Paul, probably to indicate another shift in thought and a return to the main point in this section, namely, the importance for the Christian spouse of preserving the marriage union and living “in peace” with the non-Christian. Paul’s point was that a Christian should strive to preserve the union and to keep the peace, but with the understanding that marriage is a mutual not a unilateral relationship. This is a difficult situation for the believer, as they will comprise their Christianity and their desire to follow Christ as they seek to appease their spouse through a peaceful relationship. This is one more reason to never become unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

1 Corinthians 7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Finally the principle reason for the believing spouse staying with the unbeliever is to pray for their salvation. This is a crucial reason why a Christian should stay married to a non-Christian. God might use the Christian spouse as a vessel of blessing possibly leading to the point where the unbelieving spouse would believe the message of the Cross and experience salvation. The apostle Peter said the same thing to us.

1 Peter 3:1-2 In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear.

Wives who fear the Lord just may be used to bring salvation to an unbelieving husband.

Questions? Contact Daniel Woodhead at: 616-928-0974 or e-mail at:
Pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org