

# Let No Man Separate

## *Gary Fisher*

**Text:** Matthew 19:1-12; 5:31-32

### **Introduction:**

- I. The importance of seeking the Lord's will and exact obedience
  - A. Numbers 9:1-14
    1. Observing the Passover "according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances" (9:3)
      - a. They could not celebrate it however they felt led ... lox and bagels rather than lamb and matzos, on the 13<sup>th</sup> and not the 14<sup>th</sup> because the 14<sup>th</sup> was card night
      - b. It was not enough to do what God asked in some vague way; precise, detailed obedience was needed
    2. Special rule for those unclean or traveling at Passover
      - a. It is good that they wanted to observe it
      - b. Extenuating circumstances beyond their control
      - c. Moses could have thought it through and decided
        - 1) That the Passover was so important those who are unclean could eat it
        - 2) That they could go through some instantaneous purification ceremony
        - 3) That they were simply exempt from observing the Passover that year
        - 4) Maybe he could have thought of other solutions
      - d. Instead, Moses waited for a word from the Lord
        - 1) See Numbers 15, 27, 36 and Lev 24:12 for similar situations
        - 2) Don't try to reason through to what we think the Lord would want
        - 3) The Lord provided a make-up Passover one month later
        - 4) Not to be abused as a convenience or optional date
  - B. Numbers 9:15-23
    1. Really impressive passage, especially read aloud
    2. Redundant emphasis on following God's exact direction expressed by the cloud
    3. Cloud demanded constant attention
    4. "May the fiery, cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through" (from *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*)
    5. We should always watch the cloud!
  - C. Numbers 7:1-11
    1. How the Lord allocated the 6 carts and 12 oxen among the Levitical families
      - a. Gershon got 2 and 4
      - b. Merari got 4 and 8

- c. Kohath received none “because theirs was the service of the holy objects, which they carried on the shoulder” (7:9)
  2. God burst out against David and Uzza because they “did not seek Him according to the ordinance” (1 Chronicles 15:13)
- II. We need a sincere, humble, seeking heart
  - A. What the Scriptures teach about divorce and remarriage is not that difficult for the most part
    1. There are difficult specific questions
    2. But people can see this. I have had non-Christians ask me about divorce and remarriage after reading these passages because they saw the point
  - B. We do too much deducing, philosophizing, speculating, relying on human wisdom
    1. It disturbs me that we reason from painful cases instead of from the Word
    2. It disturbs me that we focus too much on cultural questions and trying to figure out what statements are culturally conditioned
      - a. People have been doing that for a long time on the teaching about gender roles. More liberal scholars have argued that the reason for this teaching is so that the church didn't enter into conflict with cultural norms
      - b. Ironically, the role of men in the NT (loving their wives just as Jesus loved His people) was not culturally appropriate either
      - c. How much do we know for sure about the first century culture?
      - d. Must people just trust what we say about the culture; what is the check on our reasoning?
    3. I worry greatly that we seek worldly wisdom, acceptance, sophistication

**Body:**

- I. **Matthew 19:1-12**
  - A. When Jesus had finished these words: see same formula after each of Jesus' 5 sermons in Matthew
  - B. Pharisees test Jesus with question about lawful reasons for divorce
    1. Maybe they saw subject of divorce as a minefield where Jesus would offend many people no matter what He said
    2. Maybe they wanted to get Him in trouble with Herod
    3. Either way Jesus sidesteps rabbinic controversies altogether, and cited the original statement of God
  - C. God created them from the beginning male and female
    1. If He wanted the man to dismiss one and marry another, He would have made more than one female at the beginning
    2. If God intended solitary life, He would have created humans one by one; if He intended polygamous life, God would have created one man and several women; if homosexual life, He would have made two men or two women
  - D. Leave father and mother
    1. This is giving the marriage pattern for the future (Adam and Eve had no human parents)

2. Striking statement. Must form new family unit not under control of parents
  3. Cut the apron strings. This new relationship takes precedence
- E. One flesh
1. Refers to sexual union [this is not necessarily everything implied in the phrase] (1 Corinthians 6:16)
  2. Divorce thus becomes something like mutilation, amputation, dismemberment
- F. What God has joined together, let no man separate
1. Divorce is undoing the work of God, a serious matter
  2. Implies that man can separate, but should not
- G. Why did Moses command a certificate of divorce?
1. Moses gave them rules on divorce because they were divorcing
  2. That was not God's original intention. He is responding to human failure
  3. More like trouble-shooting legislation. Moses commanded that they take divorce seriously since after she remarried, she could never go back to original spouse
- H. Whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery
1. Divorcing and remarrying is committing adultery because God still holds them to the commitment He bound them to
  2. Divorcing because the partner had unlawful sexual intercourse and remarrying is an exception to the rule; that is, it is not adultery
- I. The reaction of the disciples
1. It would be better not to marry!
    - a. If one is compelled to put up with her faults for a whole lifetime, that would be an intolerable burden. To them, it would be better to remain unmarried
    - b. They are virtually making the attractiveness of marriage contingent upon the possibility of easy divorce!
  2. Jesus replied that some would be better off not marrying: some are eunuchs by birth, some by human interference, some don't marry by choice. Some must not marry because they would be committing adultery

## II. **Matthew 5:31-32**

- A. Jesus is contrasting His teaching with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (see Mt. 5:17-20)
- B. Their concern was to divorce the right way, follow proper procedures
- C. Jesus shockingly says that divorce is wrong
1. To divorce a mate is to tempt them to commit adultery by remarrying
  2. The remarriage of the victimized party is adultery
  3. When she remarries and thus commits adultery, it is partially his fault
  4. Doesn't excuse her if she does not want the divorce; her husband wronged her and bears part of the responsibility for her subsequent adultery

- D. When he divorces her for fornication, he does not make her an adulteress, because she already is by her own behavior

### III. **Luke 16:18**

- A. The Pharisees are being condemned by Jesus for various things
- B. Succinct summary of primary teaching of Jesus on divorce
- C. Whoever divorces and remarries is committing adultery
- D. Whoever marries one who has had their mate divorce them is committing adultery
- E. Parenthetically, adultery always takes two, so the partners they are marrying commit adultery also

### IV. **Romans 7:2-3**

- A. Very helpful passage
- B. One is bound by law to their mate as long as their mate lives
- C. Thus, this one would be committing adultery if they married another
- D. Adultery is committed because they are married to a different person than they are bound to
- E. But if their mate were dead, then they would not be committing adultery by remarrying
- F. This passage is declaring the general rule, not the exception, but is very helpful to clarify the concepts involved

### V. **1 Corinthians 7**

- A. Paul is dealing with points from their letter
- B. The idea that one should live a celibate life in marriage: 7:1-7
  - 1. Each married person should “have” his own wife
    - a. It is not appropriate for married people to live celibate lives
    - b. Leads to a backlash of indulgence, increases temptation
    - c. Paul painstakingly repeats to balance men and women in this chapter
  - 2. Must give oneself to one’s mate
    - a. Intimacy is a debt owed, not a favor conferred
    - b. Must not withhold what is due to the other
    - c. Emphasis on giving pleasure, not on receiving
  - 3. Stop depriving one another except under very limited conditions
- C. Applications to specific situations
  - 1. Widows and widowers 8-9
  - 2. Married people 10-11
    - a. Lord had already instructed on this matter
    - b. Divorce is wrong
    - c. The phrase, “but if,” does not permit the exception (1 John 2:1). It is merely showing what should be done if the command is violated
  - 3. Mixed marriages 12-16

- a. Stay in the marriage if the unbeliever is willing to stay
- b. If the unbeliever departs, the believer is not enslaved to a non-Christian spouse who does not wish to stay
- c. But believer should not initiate divorce because God called us to peace and because we might save our non-Christian mate and then it would not be a mixed marriage
- d. No implication of permission to remarry

D. General principle involved 17-24

1. Gospel can be fully lived wherever one is, in whatever circumstances
2. Do God's will where you are and don't feel like you have to change
3. You don't have to change ethnicity or social status
4. Don't misapply to continuing in sinful conditions
  - a. Tertullian said that manufacturers of idols claimed this as justifying their continuing to earn a living this way
  - b. Repentance calls for every sinful form of conduct to be stopped
5. So, in general, stay in your present marital situation. But obviously not if you are in a homosexual marriage, an adulterous marriage, etc.

E. Question about engaged couples 25-40

1. Under the current circumstances [persecution?], Paul argued that it was better not to get engaged, but wasn't sinful 25-28
2. Christians look at this life differently because we know the time is short 29-31
3. Being single has the advantage of allowing one to focus only on God 32-35
4. Advantages to not marrying if engaged, but it is not sinful to marry 36-38
5. Question about widows 39-40

**VI. Overall teaching on divorce and remarriage**

A. May I divorce my mate? No

1. God said not to put asunder what He joined together (Matthew 19:6)
2. I will make my mate commit adultery; think about being a stumbling block (Matthew 5:32; 18:6-7)
3. I promised to stay with them no matter what (Revelation 21:8; Romans 1:31 covenant breaker)

B. May I remarry if I am divorced? No

1. Must remain unmarried or be reconciled (1 Corinthians 7:10-11)
2. Remarriage is adultery (Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18) for both parties and those they marry
3. The adultery continues as long as the original spouse lives (Romans 7:2-3)

C. If I am remarried

1. I am committing adultery (Romans 7:2-3)
2. I must repent (see Acts 17:30; Romans 6:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

## D. Exception

1. “Except” defines a case where the general rule doesn’t follow
2. The Scriptures consider all divorces to involve: one who divorces and one who is divorced. They consider the divorces to be for fornication or for some other cause. That leaves four possible situations:
  - a. One divorced their mate for fornication
  - b. One was divorced by their mate for fornication
  - c. One divorced their mate for other reasons
  - d. One was divorced by their mate for other reasons
3. The exception is given to the one who does the divorcing for fornication (example of letter a above)

## VII. The no remarriage position

## A. Marriage is indissoluble

1. That is just something men say, God never said that
2. Men should not put asunder; text does not say that they cannot put asunder

## B. The exception clause is not found in Mark, Luke, or Paul’s writings

1. The exception is not the rule; one does not major in the exception. Good advice for us: we should primarily teach the rule
2. Baptism is not mentioned in every case of conversion, every passage that teaches how to be saved
3. Exception for the make-up Passover is only found in Numbers 9
4. Why would Jesus have stated the exception in Matthew 19 if He considered it invalid?

## C. A person may divorce for fornication, but not remarry

1. The rule in the passage is divorcing and remarrying is committing adultery
2. The except clause defines a situation that does not fit the rule; that is, where divorce and remarriage does not mean adultery is committed
3. It is not true that divorcing a wife is committing adultery; it is only divorce and remarriage that is adultery

## VIII. Does fornication mean premarital sexual encounters, and does it include lust?

## A. Dictionaries on the definition

1. Arndt-Gingrich: “prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.” They go on to say: “*moicheia* appears as *porneia*” and that it includes the “sexual unfaithfulness of a married woman.”
2. Thayer: “prop. Of illicit sexual intercourse in general” and even points out passages where it is “used of adultery” including Matthew 5:32 and 19:9
3. Balz and Schnieder, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*: “When used of sexual infidelity on the part of a married woman it means the same as ‘adultery,’ which is normally referred to with *moicheuo*, *moicheia*”

- B. NT passages using *porneia* include Acts 15:20,29; 21:25; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:13,18; 7:2; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Revelation 2:21; 9:21; 14:8; 17:2,4; 18:3; 19:2

1. Consider Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25: is the letter only excluding premarital promiscuity?
  2. 1 Thess 4:3: abstain from *porneia*. Verse 6 says not to transgress and defraud your brother in the matter, that is, not to steal his wife. This would be adultery, yet Paul in vs 3 calls it *porneia*
  3. Revelation 18:3: refers to Babylon as a harlot, which is a common definition of this word, certainly not limiting it to premarital misbehavior
- C. Jesus said looking to lust is visual/mental adultery (Matthew 5:28)
1. He is speaking figuratively
  2. Hatred is mental murder but should not be grounds for capital punishment

#### IX. Divorce for the kingdom position

- A. The idea is that sometimes one must leave their spouse for the sake of the gospel
1. They use passages like Matthew 10:21, 34-38; Luke 14:25-26; 18:28-30; 21:16; Micah 7:5-6; Mark 10:28-30
  2. They say that one sometimes must leave a spouse for the sake of one's life
  3. They say that one must leave their spouse to avoid being unfaithful to God; therefore, for the sake of the kingdom (see Barnett-Watts Debate on Divorce)
- B. Jesus was not speaking of literally divorcing one's spouse, or abandoning one's parents or children; He was talking about priorities
1. It is true that there will be divisions in families because of the Lord
  2. It is true we must put the Lord over family loyalties
  3. But the New Testament says that one must not divorce and that if one remarries, they are committing adultery
    - a. How can one be doing something for the kingdom if God prohibits it?
    - b. No Bible passage commands us to live, just to remain faithful
    - c. Perhaps one can seek legal protection as Paul occasionally did appealing to his Roman citizenship
- C. 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 says that the Christian should continue in a marriage with a non-Christian as long as the non-Christian is willing to stay in the marriage
- D. Are all men expected to leave their wives?! All men are supposed to put the Lord over everything else in their lives

#### X. Aliens not amenable to the law of marriage

- A. We know that the gospel is for all: Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8
- B. We know that one becomes a sinner by violating law: 1 John 3:4. If the alien were not under the law, he could not sin
- C. We know that God commands everyone everywhere to repent: Acts 17:30-31
- D. If non-Christians are not under God's marriage law ...
1. Are they even married?
  2. How does it work if they are married to a Christian? Consider 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 where God treats their intermarriage with a Christian as legitimate

#### XI. What about forgiveness, all things becoming new (see 2 Corinthians 5:17)

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- A. Forgiveness requires repentance: Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30; 2:38
  - B. Forgiveness does not change your bonds and obligations incurred before becoming a Christian
    - 1. You still must pay your mortgage
    - 2. You still must care for children born out of wedlock
    - 3. Sins are washed away, not marriages
  - C. Some respond that there is no Bible example of someone leaving their spouse because of Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage
    - 1. Is there any example of someone leaving a relationship where they are shackled up or are in a homosexual marriage?
    - 2. Maybe there is: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
      - a. He says such **were** some of you; that implies they quit their sin
      - b. If:
        - 1) Drinking excessively is drunkenness before baptism, it is after baptism
        - 2) Bowing down before an image is idolatry before baptism, it is after baptism
        - 3) Being in a same gender marriage is homosexuality before baptism, it is after baptism
        - 4) Being divorced and remarried is adultery before baptism, it is after baptism
      - c. If they **were** ... they must have separated
        - 1) If they **were** drunkards, they must have separated from the bottle
        - 2) If they **were** idolaters, they must have separated from their images
        - 3) If they **were** homosexuals, they must have separated from their same gender spouse
        - 4) If they **were** adulterers, they must have separated from their second spouse
      - d. So, while we don't have names, we have examples of those who left their adultery
    - 3. All things become new because we repent
      - a. The case against separation from the second mate for the one being converted is saying not everything must become new
      - b. In order for everything to become new, the person must change

## XII. Adultery

- A. We need to let God define His terms
- B. Adultery is an act: John 8:4
  - 1. This passage is probably not textual, but it is still a first-century use of the term
  - 2. They did not understand this as mere covenant breaking
- C. Adultery is a sexual act: Leviticus 20:10; Jeremiah 5:7-8; Hebrews 13:4
  - 1. It is not just breaking a covenant; that is wrong, but is not by itself adultery
  - 2. See Matthew 5:27-28; violating a mortgage agreement is not adultery



- D. A repeatable act: Revelation 2:21-22; Romans 7:2-3
- E. A treacherous act: Jeremiah 9:2; James 4:4
- F. The view that Matthew 5:32 means to stigmatize as an adulteress
  - 1. Sometimes people argue this because of the passive verb in Matthew 5:32
  - 2. But Arndt-Gingrich, Thayer, Kittel and NIDNTT all suggest that the passive voice is used to mean to cause her to commit adultery (by contracting a subsequent marriage)
  - 3. Some of them suggest it means to be seduced into adultery
  - 4. But the reputable sources of information on Greek words do not support the stigmatized view
- G. There is no justification for the view that adultery means covenant breaking

### XIII. Guilty party

- A. God binds married people together
  - 1. They become one: Genesis 2:18-24
  - 2. There is a covenant God puts in place: Proverbs 2:17; Malachi 2:14
  - 3. God joins together: Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:2-9
  - 4. They are bound by law to their mate: Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39
- B. People marry, but God binds: Romans 7:2-3; Mark 6:17-18; Luke 16:18. A divorce ends the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), but they are still bound
- C. God alone can loose: Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-4
- D. Who does God loose
  - 1. One who has never been bound is loosed
  - 2. One whose mate dies: Romans 7:2-4; 1 Corinthians 7:39
  - 3. One who divorces for fornication: Matthew 19:9
- E. God specifically shows that the one who is put away is not loosed: Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18

### XIV. Innocent put away party

- A. Maybe the hardest area of the divorce and remarriage controversies to accept is what the Word says about the person whose mate unjustly divorces them
- B. Characteristics of putting away
  - 1. It is an action: 1 Corinthians 7:10-11
  - 2. It is a unilateral action ... something that one does to another: Matthew 5:32
    - a. Relationships require the agreement of two parties to establish
    - b. Relationships require the action of only one to terminate
    - c. It is not true that there is no putting away without mutual consent
  - 3. There is only one putting away in any relationship
    - a. No Bible passage in any way alludes to the possibility of two puttings away
    - b. When one ends the relationship, the relationship is ended!
    - c. Jesus' use of active and passive: one does it and the other has it done to them

4. Sinful putting away is real: all the passages
  - a. Man can put away his wife, but shouldn't
  - b. Don't speak of putting away in God's sight, and in man's (in the eyes of God or in the eyes of man). God sees what is there
  - c. When one unlawfully puts away they are unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:10-11)
  - d. There are many actions that are wrong; but they really occur, and God knows they do. Divorce may be sinful, but God sees it as divorce and condemns it
5. The one put away commits adultery
  - a. Luke 16:18: in the text, at least we see the remarriage of the divorcer before the adultery of the divorced is mentioned
  - b. Matthew 5:32: perfect parallel; the victimized party

#### C. Some objections

1. Efforts to try to prove that marriage still exists and can still be put away
  - a. Note the distinction between the marriage (which men put away) and the bond (which God looses)
  - b. Adultery is being bound to one person while having a sexual relationship with another
  - c. Man cannot put away the bond
  - d. "Husband" and "wife" are used even after divorce: Mark 6:17; 1 Corinthians 7:10 (just the words man and woman, actually)
  - e. "Against her" in Mark 10:11 does not prove that they are still married
2. "Man cannot annul a God-given right"
  - a. It isn't a right
  - b. God didn't give everyone the right to end a marriage for fornication
  - c. Not if the relationship ended before the fornication occurred
  - d. Remember that fornication on the part of one's partner does not give the right to remarry. It gives the right to put away one's mate. It is only divorce for fornication that gives one the right to remarry
3. "Not fair"
  - a. Wicked people do victimize the righteous
  - b. Is it fair if the divorcer never remarries?
  - c. This is the exact case of Matthew 5:32

#### XV. Critique of *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible, The Social and Literary Context*, by David Instone-Brewer

- A. This is a book that is being promoted, at least by some among us
  1. The book is long and deals a lot with marriage customs in various places and with views on divorce and remarriage throughout history
  2. The book takes many positions that are seriously wrong. I would like to critique five of them. My numbering is based on the location numbers in the kindle edition of the book

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## B. View of culture

### 1. Argument of Instone-Brewer

- a. “Later readers must acquaint themselves with the language and culture of the time in which the text was written in order to attempt an understanding of the author’s intent.” (3485)
- b. “The Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit who used mortals with limited intellect and limited experience to convey a message in limited human language ... Each book of Scripture displays the style, viewpoint, and culture of its author, and each book needs to be read, as much as possible through the eyes of that author.” (3497)
- c. “Our understanding of the text is greatly enhanced by an understanding of the background culture. In some cases we will completely misunderstand the text if we do not know the background.” (3508)

### 2. Response:

- a. God was able to use human language and human authors to communicate transcultural truth (consider passages like 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 14:37). Just as Jesus, the Word incarnate, was both human and divine, so the written word is both human and divine
- b. We are not dependent on Instone-Brewer’s understanding of the culture to understand the text
- c. If we had to know the culture to understand the Scripture and know what we need to do in pleasing God, how would we do that? Whose understanding of the culture would we trust?
- d. Instone-Brewer’s view is illustrated in this quote relating to teaching about a wife submitting to her husband: “there is no longer any need to teach submission because this is not considered part of normal morality, and it is no longer linked to sexual morality. In NT days it would cause a scandal if the submission of wives were omitted from moral instruction, but now it is likely to cause an equal scandal if it is included.” (2730)
  - 1) The argument he is making is that the reason for the instructions for a wife to submit is to conform to cultural norms, and that now the culture is different, and we do not need to follow those teachings
  - 2) The reasons God gives for the teachings are transcultural (consider 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Ephesians 5:22-33)
  - 3) Where would this argument stop? Is the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality because of the culture?
  - 4) There is no indication that God teaches things that fit with the culture. The emphasis in the Bible is that we are other worldly, and the world hates us because we are not of the world (John 15:18-25; 1 Peter 4:1-5, etc.)
  - 5) Men loving their wives sacrificially like Jesus loved the church was not a culturally normal position
- e. In this approach, Brewer’s historical findings are allowed to have authority over the written words of the New Testament

C. Exodus 21:10-11 referring to a slave married to her master: “If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing or her conjugal rights. If he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without payment or money.”

1. Argument of Instone-Brewer
  - a. “If a slave wife has these rights, then surely a free wife would also have equivalent rights. And: if a wife has these rights, then surely a husband would also have equivalent rights. As a result of this argument, the rights of the slave wife were found to be the rights of both partners in a marriage contract. The rights named in this law are threefold: the right to food, to clothing, and to marital love.” (1081)
  - b. “There was no group in first-century Judaism that rejected the grounds for divorce in Exodus 21:10-11. It would be strange if Jesus spent time on these various doctrines that were not unique in Judaism and neglected to mention a doctrine that was totally unique. If Jesus had wanted to teach a rejection of the grounds for divorce in Exodus 21:10-11, he would have had to say so very clearly, and if he said nothing about them, it would have been assumed that, like all other Jews, he accepted them.” (2091)
  - c. So his argument is that either physical or emotional (conjugal) neglect are valid grounds for divorce. In other words, if you neglect your marriage vows, your spouse may lawfully divorce you
  - d. This is a point Instone-Brewer comes back to over and over in his writing. It is a lynchpin of his overall view
2. Response:
  - a. I do not know if Instone-Brewer is right that all groups in first-century Judaism accepted this argument
  - b. I am not sure the argument is valid in the era of the old covenant. If this permission is granted for a slave married to a master, I am not convinced it automatically applies to all wives and all husbands
  - c. Why would we think that Jesus would have to specifically revoke every stipulation of the law and of first-century tradition about the law?
  - d. There are all manner of laws and even more of traditional interpretations of the law that Jesus did not specifically rescind
  - e. And Jesus specifically contrasted His teaching with the law as far as divorce and remarriage is concerned. It appears that Instone-Brewer is demanding that Jesus specifically mention this passage and say that it is no longer valid
  - f. Jesus gave only one exception. He did clearly say that there are no other grounds

#### D. God always permits remarriage after divorce

1. His argument:
  - a. “The New Testament teaching on remarriage after a valid divorce is, admittedly, ambiguous and unclear. However, remarriage after divorce was a fundamental right in the first-century world, and it was often regarded as an obligation. Thus, the New Testament writers knew that they would have to enunciate their teaching extremely clearly and unambiguously if they wanted to reach the opposite of this universally held view.” (3557)
  - b. “The right to remarry after divorce was the fundamental right that was communicated by the Jewish divorce certificate. It was also seen as an undeniable right in Greco-Roman marriage and divorce law. ... It would therefore have been very difficult for Paul to convince his readers that they no longer had the right to remarriage after a valid divorce, and it is inconceivable

that he could have expected his readers to conclude, simply by his silence when discussing the issue of widowhood or illustrating the end of the believer's marriage to the Law, that remarriage of a divorcee was unacceptable" (2424)

- c. Referring to 1 Corinthians 7:27-28: "Paul's general principle is therefore that a man or woman who has been divorced against his or her will should be free to remarry ... Although verse 27 occurs in the context of a passage speaking mainly about betrothal, it is quite possible that Paul should also direct his advice to those who had divorced, and there is nothing in the context to rule this out." (2322)
- d. Referring to Matthew 5:31-32: "Technically the marriage was adulterous, but if this was applied literally, then there would be huge confusion and disruption to people's lives and families. This is presumably why the divorce saying found its way into the Sermon on the Mount. Just as someone who hates his brother is not to be prosecuted for murder, so one who has remarried is not to be accused in court of committing adultery." (2067)

2. Response:

- a. Instone-Brewer has a hard time with the idea that the Bible could be counter-cultural. He expects biblical teaching to conform to its society. That is a fundamental mistake
- b. Jesus and Paul clearly taught that people who remarry after divorce are committing adultery. He says this is ambiguous and unclear! Consider passages like Luke 16:18 and Romans 7:2-3 and tell how they could have taught more clearly that remarriage after divorce is adultery if they had intended that.
- c. 1 Corinthians 7:27-28 is talking about people who are engaged (betrothed) or who have broken off the engagement. It is an invalid assumption on Instone-Brewer's part that this is talking about divorce
- d. Matthew 5:31-32 is stated categorically. This is not a reference to some heart sin

E. 1 Corinthians 7:15 permits remarriage after desertion

1. His view is that not under bondage means that they are free to remarry and that this applies to anyone who is deserted, whether by an unbeliever or believer
2. In response, 1 Corinthians 7:15 does not speak of the marriage bond and is only talking about an unbeliever choosing not to stay married to a believer

F. The guilty party can remarry because God is willing to forgive

1. "Forbidding divorce to the guilty party goes against one of the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith: that God is willing to forgive ... it is wrong to deny remarriage to a 'guilty' party because a guilty person can always ask for God's forgiveness." (3380)
2. Response: forgiveness does not end the consequences of a sin. Moses still could not enter the promised land after he sinned at the rock, for example (Deuteronomy 3:23-29)

G. Consider this statement by Instone-Brewer: "The role of the minister is to point out the right way, as he sees it, and then to support the individual, even if that person makes a morally wrong choice. If we threw all sinners out of the church, the pews would be empty, and so would the pulpit." (3734) I don't believe that conclusion needs a response

**Conclusion:**

- I. These matters challenge our trust in God and His Word
  - A. We must respect the authority of the Lord and His right to define adultery

B. Everything that we know about the Lord's will is in His Word

C. Something the Word says may not seem right to us just like baptism for salvation doesn't seem right to the Calvinist

II. Tragic cases grieve us

A. We must believe that God knows what is best

B. We cannot base our convictions on our feelings

III. We don't have to have the answer to all questions to know some things. I don't have all the answers. I don't have to. I must still preach, teach and exhort to follow the Bible principles that I do know

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