

# Relating to the Divorced and Remarried

Divorce and remarriage have become socially acceptable to many in our time. More and more people whom we meet on the street, in the workplace, among professing Christians, and in our family relationships have been divorced and many of them remarried. Encounters with these people present us with both potential problems and challenges as we relate to them. It is our purpose to clarify the issues and to give some direction for dealing compassionately, redemptively, and biblically with them.

## Basic Principles

Divorce/remarriage is sin. We must never forget that. The New Testament makes it unmistakably clear that a person who leaves a marriage partner and marries another lives in a state of adultery (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2,3). The doctrine is concisely stated as follows: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11,12). The verb tense of "committeth" is present-progressive which indicates continuous action. This should settle once for all that divorce/remarriage/adultery is not just a one time act, but a continuous state of adultery and will exclude one from the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9,10).

Divorce/remarriage/adultery is a sin that can be forgiven just as murder, thievery, or lying can be forgiven. But just as is the case with other sins, divorce/remarriage/adultery must be confessed and forsaken. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Those who do not forsake their sin continue in it.

Christians should consider persons involved in divorce/ remarriage/ adultery as persons in need of forgiveness by God and therefore in need of salvation. They should be considerate of them and compassionate, always seeking opportunities to lead them to sincere repentance and a saving relationship with the Savior. They should relate to them as did Jesus to the

woman of Samaria and the woman taken in adultery, showing compassion and teaching the truth without condoning the sin.

Christians must be careful not to compromise clear biblical teaching on divorce/remarriage/adultery and not to become "partaker" with those involved in their sin. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).

### **Practical Considerations**

In view of the basic principles given in the forgoing section, we offer these practical considerations for guidance in our relationships with those who are divorced and remarried.

1. While we want to lead them to a saving relationship with Christ, our relationships with them will of necessity be somewhat reserved and strained, especially with relatives and those professing salvation. They cannot be considered as those of the faith.
2. We should be considerate of the children of divorced and remarried persons and seek to be of positive influence to them. They are potential converts to Christ in spite of their unwholesome home situations.
3. We should not attend the weddings of divorced persons whose previous companions are still living, and we should not invite them as a couple to our weddings lest by inviting them we may seem to condone their relationship and associate it with the pure Christian relationship.
4. We should not knowingly provide lodging for divorced/remarried couples unless there is urgent need, and then arrangements should be made for separate lodging lest we condone their sin.
5. Where there is real material or physical need, we should be willing to assist as we can to all men including those who are divorced/remarried.

### **Conclusion**

In our dealings with those involved in divorce/remarriage/adultery, we must be on guard lest our sensitivity to the gravity of this sin as well as our

sensitivity to the needs of those involved be dulled. We must clearly communicate the biblical teaching and requirements regarding this sin both with graciousness and with firmness. To make one feel approved in this condition is to encourage him in it and to help him on to eternal damnation. To accept divorced and remarried persons as Christians is to undermine the biblical doctrine and to break down Scriptural conviction among our own people. May God help us to uphold the true doctrine and to share it with those around us.

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