

# MARRIAGE and DIVORCE

by George C. Clark, Sr.



*“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.”*  
2Corinthians 6:14

Concerning marital status, the apostle Paul distinguished three groups in the body of Christ:

- (1) Unmarried and Widowed Believers
- (2) Believers Married to Other Believers
- (3) Believers Married to Unbelievers

Here are Paul’s instructions to each group:

## (1) THE UNMARRIED AND WIDOWS

*“It is good for them if, like me, they remain unmarried. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn [with lust].”* (1Cor. 7:8-9)

Here, God requires us to do some *“rightly dividing the word of truth.”* For example, when the Devil attempted to persuade Jesus to leap from a pinnacle of the temple by quoting Psalm 91:11-12, what was Jesus’ reply to this subtle temptation? *“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God”* (Mt. 4:5-7). One should always be mindful of what is “written again” on the same subject, thus allowing one Scripture to illuminate another.

Paul taught that marriage is preferable to being overpowered by natural passions; however, it is “written again” that believers may marry *“only in the Lord”* (1Cor. 7:39). To suffer alone with God is better than to be joined to an unclean spirit. Paul was adamant on this point, as is every other true man of God.

## (2) BELIEVERS MARRIED TO BELIEVERS

*“A [believing] wife must not separate from her [believing] husband, but if she separates, she is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And the husband is not to divorce his wife. A wife is bound [to her believing husband] as long as her husband is alive, but if her husband falls asleep, she is free to marry whom she will – only in the Lord.”* (1Cor. 7:10-11, 39)

In spite of the fact that the separation of married believers is discouraged, it is permitted in God’s family, within certain guidelines. If believers do separate, they may later be reconciled and, so, re-establish their marriage, but divorced believers are forbidden to marry anyone else.

Of course, if a believer commits adultery, his or her spouse is free to marry someone else (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). The Greek word for “adultery” in those verses from Matthew denotes “every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.” (From that Greek comes the English word, “pornography”.) No believer is required by the Lord to remain in a marriage in which he or she must submit to perverse behavior of any sort. Holiness is not contrary to common sense. If one is being abused, one is free to divorce and to remarry. Those who walk in the Spirit are never boxed in by evildoers.

Now, since Paul dealt with “the unmarried and widows” in Group One, and with “believers who have believing spouses” in Group Two, we know to whom he was speaking when he wrote “to the rest”, for there are only these remaining:

## (3) BELIEVERS MARRIED TO UNBELIEVERS

Many can bear witness to the sorrow of

believers who marry out of the divine order. Sometimes, God may demand a rebellious believer to repent of his disobedient marriage by divorcing the unbeliever. But if God does not demand that, then Paul’s instructions apply. “Unequally yoked” marriages can also come about when two unbelievers are married and then one of them is converted. However, regardless of how a believer comes to be in such a marriage, God’s will is clear. Jesus gave no instructions concerning such marriages, but Paul wrote:

*“And to the rest I myself speak, not the Lord. If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she is pleased to dwell with him, he is not to leave her, and if any wife has an unbelieving husband, and he is pleased to dwell with her, she is not to leave the husband.”* (1Cor. 7:12-13)

At this time, it is necessary to use some of those “it is written again” Scriptures, for God has not left it to us to judge whether an unbeliever is “pleased to dwell with” a believer. Paul described the truly “pleased-to-dwell-with” spouse:

*“The [pleased-to-dwell-with] unbelieving husband is sanctified by the [believing] wife, and the [pleased-to-dwell-with] unbelieving wife is sanctified by the [believing] husband; otherwise, your children are unclean. But now [since the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer] they are holy”* (1Cor. 7:14).

So, if an unbelieving husband is truly “pleased to dwell with” his believing wife, he will come to Christ and be sanctified with his wife. If, however, the unbeliever rejects Christ and departs, the believer is free to marry again, but this time, only in the Lord. Paul said it this way: *“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases”* (1Cor. 7:15).

To confirm the believer’s liberty to remarry, we must also know what is “written again” concerning the word *bondage* as it relates to marriage:

*“The woman who has a husband is **bound** by the law to her husband so long as he is alive, but if he be dead, she is **loosed** from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband is alive she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband be dead, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another.”* (Rom. 7:2-3)

“Bound”, then, means forbidden to remarry, and “loosed” means permitted to remarry. It is in this sense that a believer is not “bound” if an unbelieving spouse departs. Nevertheless, because *“God has called us to peace”* (1Cor. 7:15), believers must be faithful and good to unbelieving spouses, for it is far better to convert unbelievers than for marriages to end in divorce.

*“For, wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband, or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”* (1Cor. 7:16)

The desired end of an unequally yoked marriage is the conversion of the sinner and an equally yoked, happy home. When that happy goal is not reached, however, it is not always the unbeliever’s fault. Sometimes a believer fails to live according to God’s standard. In that case, the unbeliever hasn’t been given a fair opportunity to see the light of Christ or to feel his great love. Many unequally yoked marriages thus grind along for decades. And if a believer’s ungodly behavior hinders his unbelieving spouse from coming to Christ, the Lord may hold the believer responsible for that lost soul in the Final Judgment. Those who are guilty must examine themselves, for they will answer to God; I am not the judge.

### **WHAT SHALL WE DO?**

Servants of Jesus everywhere should strive together to uphold God’s standard for marriage; yet, the sad truth is that many leaders among God’s people promote these ungodly unions. God has made it clear from Genesis to Revelation that marriage between His children and the

unconverted displease Him; but as it was in Israel long ago, misguided ministers are the principal culprits in this transgression (Ezra 9:2), and the river of tears continues to flow. The body of Christ needs men who are truly anointed of God, men who know God and, in humility and love, will maintain God’s holy standard and keep themselves and their flocks from being unequally yoked in any way with this sin-sick and sin-loving world.

We are living in a time of gross spiritual darkness; nevertheless, the Star of divine truth has shined on our path to lead us to a comprehension of the truth. We are told by James, *“The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”* (Jas. 4:4). Friendship usually precedes courtship, and courtship, marriage. My dear young believer, whom do you count as your friend? *“Do not be deceived,”* wrote Paul, *“bad companions corrupt good habits”* (1Cor. 15:33).

Oh, how the tender heart of Jesus must long to see his people liberated from the confusing web of earthly entanglements and be a separate, holy people! *“Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD”* (Ps. 144:15).

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LEAVE A TRACT FOR SOMEONE.  
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### **WAIT ON GOD!**

By John David Clark, Sr.

Scriptures tell us sin will sell us  
into death if we depart  
from the sureness of God’s pureness,  
lusting for some unclean heart.

Stay the course! Resist the forces!  
Wait on God to find your mate.  
Trust in Christ! Take his advice.  
He is neither wrong nor late.

Sad the house wherein one spouse now  
loves the flesh, while one, the Lord.  
Best to be alone and free  
than be taken from God’s word.

There you are, not very far from  
death, which Jesus warned us of,  
if you’re joined to one unborn  
in marriage and in unclean love.

No communion in a union  
of the sinner and the saint.  
Discontentment and resentment  
wait for those who do not wait.

God alone makes right the home, and  
saints with sinners must not be  
joined in life. It makes for strife, for  
Christ and Baal are enmity.

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### **REMEMBER!**

**IF A CHILD OF GOD MARRIES A CHILD OF  
THE DEVIL, HE IS CERTAIN TO HAVE  
TROUBLE WITH HIS FATHER-IN-LAW.**

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*Many in Christ are burdened with wrong ideas concerning marriage and divorce. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ, young and old, are longing for understanding. Use this tract to instruct them, and you may lift a heavy burden from some precious child of God. There is both a great need and a great reward for doing that!*

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