

Divorce - As I See It

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Format:

1. I will use the concept of the *Law of First Mention*, which in my mind implies that the first time a subject is mentioned in the Bible, the basis for the understanding and interpretation of all subsequent mentions of that subject should be filtered through that first mention.
2. I will use the KJV for all biblical quotes for consistency.
3. When a portion of scripture is being given, I will underline it with the reference placed in (parentheses).
4. My style will be conversational – as if sitting in a room together.
5. There are good men who hold different opinions on this subject. I am by no means a scholar and what I share will be from my years of search and study. There may be areas that will seem inconsistent. Because I do not have total understanding, and since nothing can be stated so clearly that it will not be misunderstood, I must come to the conclusion that in time, I will grow in my understanding – or it is a bone too large for me to digest at this time. In such cases I will do as my college professor told me. I will bury the bone in the yard and God will dig it up when He is ready for me to digest it.
6. If I insert a comment with a quote, my comment will be placed in a [bracket] followed with my initials – rs.

To begin:

And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them (Deuteronomy 1:3). If I understand the purpose of this verse, Moses was giving the basis of authority for what he will be writing in this book. In

other words, Moses is sharing with us what God told him to “spake unto the children of Israel... all that the LORD had given him in commandment...”

Therefore, when I read chapter 24 of this same book, I am to understand that the subject dealt with is what God commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel. It is by God’s authority that Moses writes, and what Moses gives to us is only what the Lord commanded him to write. Therefore let’s read what Moses tells us about divorce – and remember the law of first mention. This is the first time the specific subject of divorce is mentioned in scripture. The Law of First Mention makes this the filter for us in all other areas of mention with this subject. Are you ready?

Ok, let’s read: When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let ... (Deuteronomy 24:1).

Divorce is God’s allowance, but not His command. The issue here is not what was His perfect plan; the question is, what does God allow? Does God command a divorce? No. Does He allow it? It would appear so. Is it His perfect plan? No.

We know that from the beginning, He desired for one man to marry one woman and only death to separate them (Mark 10). However, man fell and God must deal with the consequences of this fact. God desired for man to live in innocence in the garden. Yet, man chose to give up that innocence when he sinned. God had to deal with this fact of man’s choice of sin and He made a sacrifice providing a coat of covering. Was the sin of man God’s perfect plan? Not unless you believe that God predetermined man to fall; which I do not. Because of man’s choice, the world fell into God’s permissive plan. As a result, God developed *the way* to reconcile the results of the nature of man and fact of his sin; the blood of Christ and His death on a cross. Because of sinful man [hardness of heart, Mark 10:5 - rs] bringing his sinful nature into the bond of marriage, God’s plan for dealing with the results of the human condition in that marriage bond, is to *allow* [not command] the choice of divorce.

Let's continue to read, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife (Deuteronomy 24:1, 2). Again, this is not a command for her to “be another man’s wife”, but an allowance. The law of first mention will come into play at this point when we read the New Testament Gospel accounts of this subject. It is sufficient at this point of first mention to understand that in God’s instruction on how to end a marriage that is defiled because of our sinful nature, God instruct how to divorce the couple and He clearly gives allowance for remarriage. It is also important to see that God calls this woman the second man’s wife. This would tend to indicate that God has recognized the validity of this second union by the fact that marriage has made the woman this second man’s wife – not his live-in or an adulteress.

And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; 4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 24:3-4).

In these verses, the second man is clearly referred to as the “latter husband” and the first man is called the “former husband.” In other words, God did not now recognize husband number one as her husband; He recognized man number two as her husband. The only thing that caused this change was her divorce from number one and her marriage to number two.

Notice also, once a person has married another spouse, under no circumstances can the first marriage be reinstated – that is an abomination! This presents several thoughts: First, in my experience in dealing with divorce and marriage to another, it is almost without exception that at some point the divorced parties feel that things would have been better in some regard had the first marriage worked; especially if there are children involved. God wants us to understand the finality of divorce and marriage to another. Second, it would seem that the second marriage kills the first union. To put it another way, the first husband died to

the relationship when the spouse married a second person. To reinstate the first marriage at this point would be an abomination and God does not desire this even in emblematic form. Third, second marriages tend to end in divorce also – there is a higher probability for this to happen.

My question would be why the second marriage has a probability of ending in divorce. Could it be that the sin issue which resulted in the first divorce has not been dealt with? Could it be that the divorced person takes the weakness that *killed* the original marriage into the next marriage? Unless the person has repented towards God and been renewed by His Spirit, a vicious cycle has begun that will follow this sinful human. We all need to heed the words of Christ when he said go and sin no more. Accepting God’s forgiveness is not enough. We need to be renewed and cleansed so that this sinful practice is removed from our lifestyle.

It has been stated that divorce destroys the picture in the New Testament of Christ and His bride, the church. A question: does the divorce of your family unit destroy the picture of marriage for my family who does not divorce? No. Though each marriage may be a reflection of the family unit, no one family can destroy that image for any other family union. In similar ways, the only thing that can destroy the picture of Christ and His bride is for Christ to divorce her. Since He will not give us a bill of divorcement, then we are still His bride. The divorce of a sinful couple cannot mar the picture of a Perfect Groom Who is selecting a chaste bride. In fact, the lack of His writing a bill of divorce to His bride is a great example of the grace and mercy that each marriage needs to remain intact.

In Ezra chapter ten, we find that God instructs the Jews to “do his pleasure” and divorce their wives and children. Let us read, Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. 3 Now therefore let

us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4 Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it. 5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware. 6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away. 7 And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; 8 And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. 9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. 10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. 11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives (Ezra 10:1-11).

According to verse ten, it seems clear that *God's* solution to their sin of marrying a Gentile was to divorce their wife AND their mixed children. In fact, if the Israelite did not follow this instruction they were to forfeit their entire inheritance and be removed from the family of Israel. That is a strong commitment that God was requiring. Let me ask, would God require something like divorce that would be sin? What of those who did give up their spouse and child, would God ever allow them to marry a second time to a fellow Jew; or would they live and die without a family heir? If you know anything about the importance of passing on the Jewish family name and God's inheritance to that family, you would know that God would certainly allow these divorced Israelites to marry; for the purpose of perpetuating the family name and their place of inheritance in the Land of Promise.

The next mention of divorce is, They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 3:1). This portion of scripture shows the heart of God; reconciliation. God is here telling His children that He has a biblical / moral right to divorce them. The basis for this divorce would be adultery. Yet, His heart is found in His request for them to return. He is willing to reconcile with them if they will return.

Did Israel return? No, and in the same chapter Jeremiah says, And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also (Jeremiah 3:8). Because of her adultery, God actually divorced her. Why then could He marry her again? He showed reconciliation when He did not marry another. Had He married another nation, He would have forever made it impossible to be married to the Jewish nation – that would be an abomination (Deuteronomy 24:3, 4; Romans 9). He let her go because of her sinful nature AND He took her back because of His reconciling nature.

This heart of reconciliation is what we as Christians have been called to live when Paul wrote to Corinth and said, To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19). Though we may have a biblical allowance to divorce, it would be my encouragement to practice the spirit of reconciliation with the marriage partner. When God makes an allowance for divorce, He also allows remarriage [law of first mention – rs]. However, since we have been called to reconciliation, as much as is in us, we should practice it, If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18). This ends the treatment of divorce in the Old Testament.

In the Gospels, there are a few occasions when Jesus speaks about the subject of divorce. At times, it was His enemies trying to trick him. Usually, it was a question dealing with Moses' – read, God's - teaching on the subject. But, the first time the subject is found is Jesus making a clarification. In Matthew we read, It hath been said, Whosoever shall put

away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Matthew 5:31,32).

A few thoughts: First, remarriage is taken for granted. It is assumed that if there was a desire for marriage to begin with, there is a continued need for the physical / emotional relationship in the future. Second, Jesus does allow for divorce at least for the cause of sexual sin.

Robertson says of fornication: “An unusual phrase that perhaps means ‘except for a matter of unchastity.’ ‘Except on the ground of unchastity’ (Weymouth), ‘except unfaithfulness’” He goes on to say, “McNeile denies that Jesus made this exception because Mark and Luke do not give it. He claims that the early Christians made the exception to meet a pressing need, but one fails to see the force of this charge against Matthew's report of the words of Jesus. It looks like criticism to meet modern needs.”

Vine's defines fornication as, “illicit sexual intercourse, it stands for, or includes, adultery...”

Third, if God is opposed to divorce what do we do with the seeming contradiction of God's instruction to Moses, and His instruction to Ezra and the Jews? Is God at variance with Himself? No, of course not. This is a “bone” area where I do not have enough knowledge or wisdom. However, I do know biblically, that God allows divorce for other causes than sexual impurity. I know that God cannot be divided. Therefore to only allow divorce in cases of adultery would be placing God at odds with Himself.

I have also been taught that at no time do we take one passage and use it to disprove the wealth of other passages dealing with the same subject. For instance, we all understand that grace alone saves. Salvation is provided by God's grace and it becomes our personal possession through our faith (Ephesians 2:8). However, what is done with, He that believeth

and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16)? What does this one scripture say about salvation? It says that one must believe and be baptized to be saved. Is that true? Absolutely not. Is Jesus wrong in His statement of Mark sixteen? Not if He is God; and He is. How then is the subject of Mark sixteen to be interpreted? By taking the subject as a whole and compare it as a template on this one passage. So, His words of Mark sixteen must be interpreted in the context of the subject of salvation as a whole – and this does no disservice to our Lord.

In the same manner I should discern that Christ's words in Matthew chapter five should be placed in the context of the entire subject of divorce – and one must understand, just as in Mark sixteen, this does no disservice to our Lord. I will leave the settling of this portion of scripture to the Holy Spirit and your heart. It is a spiritual bone and when I am old enough, God will dig it up and let me eat it.

The next use of divorce is, The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matthew 19:3-9).

First, it is clear that the intentions are to trap Jesus in being at odds with Moses; they are asking a question about the “some uncleanness” in Deuteronomy. In other words, is divorce for *every* cause or for *any* cause? Jesus responds by giving God's original purpose for marriage; one man, one woman, one lifetime. As dealt with earlier, even though this is

God's original purpose, sin is in the way. As a result, God made a provision of divorce for the sinful nature of man within the boundaries of marriage.

Second, it is clear that the reason for giving divorce to mankind is the hardness of our hearts. If our parents had remained innocent in the garden, there would be no need for divorce. However, since sin entered the human race, and because sin makes us do sinful things, our sin may cause the bonds of marriage to dissolve. Rather than living in that state, God told Moses to allow divorce – because of our hard hearts. Sinful nature is the root issue in every divorce. In addition, when one marries a second time, they are taking their sinful nature and uniting it with the sinful nature of another. The chances of this second marriage remaining intact are as questionable as the first.

Verse nine of this passage is another spiritual bone for me. I will leave you to wrestle in your heart with the Holy Spirit on this verse. I will remind you that the heart of Christ [and therefore the child of God- rs] is reconciliation. I always know I am on biblical ground when I seek reconciliation.

I will share with you the thoughts of R.V.G. Tasker relating to this portion of truth. His words seem to fall close to my evaluation and my spirit is not grieved with his evaluation. I apologize for its length but I do feel that the importance of this discussion warrants the time. Allow me to share his thoughts as he writes, “This passage about divorce is so difficult, and there have been many diverse interpretations given by individual scholars and different sections of the Christian Church, that a commentator may well feel reluctant to express... lest he should be guilty of adding to the exegetical and ecclesiastical confusion. It is with great diffidence... that the present author puts forward some of his own reflections...

“ It is clear that the Pharisees were attempting to place Jesus in a dilemma by forcing Him to say something which would imply that He took either too lax or too strict a view on the ... subject of divorce... the subsequent narrative implies that in effect the answer of Jesus is, ‘If you mean for *any* cause, My answer is Yes; if you mean for *every* cause, My answer is, No.’ First, He reminds them of the truth known to every reader of Scripture that the

purpose of creation of *two* sexes was that solidarity, the continuance and the happiness of the human race might have at its foundation the physical union of man and woman. Such union is an essential part of the Creator's plan, and attempts to thwart it, either by indulging in promiscuous sexual intercourse, or by asceticism and enforced celibacy, or by unnatural vice, or by attempts to break up marriages where the unity that God has in mind is being realized, are all contrary to divine will (6).

“At this point, the Pharisees ask a supplementary question (7) suggesting that, if all this is really so, it would seem that Moses was guilty of an infringement of God's purpose by ordering a husband to present his wife with certificate of divorce if, ‘he hath found some uncleanness in her’ (Dt. XXIV.I). Is not this self appointed Messiah speaking contrary to the law by questioning Moses' decision? In verse 8 Jesus retorts that, on the contrary, Moses was in fact, upholding the divine purpose, for at the time when this legislation was enacted many so-called ‘marriages’ were in fact not achieving but preventing that unity of man and woman which was the reason why God created mankind ‘male and female’. The Mosaic injunction did much to bring this ideal of unity nearer realization. Hitherto, in fact *from the beginning*, the situation had been much less satisfactory. Polygamy had been prevalent, and men had regarded themselves as free to put away their wives whenever, and for whatever reason, however trivial, they might wish. This was the natural outcome of man's fallen nature, his *hardness of heart*. And so long as that *hardness of heart* prevails, there will always be, both within and outside of marriage, ‘unions’ between men and women, which, because they are not real unions at all, cannot be said to have been *joined together by God*. In these cases it may be in the interest of the divine purpose that they should be dissolved. Jesus therefore accepts the interpretation put upon the Mosaic legislation by the contemporary school of Shemmai, which allowed divorce for the case of fornication, as the best way of seeking to interpret the divine will in this matter in the circumstances prevailing at that particular time... It would be not only an act of adultery, but an act of cruelty, for a man to dismiss an *innocent* wife, in order that he might marry someone else, for the divorced wife, under the social conditions of those days, would more often than not be forced into a life of adultery herself... But Jesus is not here laying down in these words addressed to the *Pharisees* any mixed rule which must be followed by *his disciples* at all times in the future. It is strange that Christians,

who have been ready enough to see that Jesus, in dealing with other matters of conduct, is not legislating, have often been reluctant to bring the same consideration to their interpretation of His teaching on marriage and divorce... [because of how women were treated in the first century – rs]. No fixed rules therefore about divorce could possibly have been given which were equally capable of being applied to Christians in the first and in the twentieth centuries...

“It is difficult, then, to feel that this section of Matthew’s Gospel gives us any ground for supposing that Jesus expected His Church to become an ‘anti-divorce society’, which would make no provision for ‘the hardness of men’s hearts’ or would debar from communion those, often more sinned against than sinning, whose marriages have been dissolved... We may conclude a necessarily brief commentary on this section with some further words of Dr. Rashdall, in which he summarized, surely rightly, what would seem to be here laid down for our guidance in this most difficult subject. ‘That the ideal is permanent monogamous marriage is undoubtedly the principle which Jesus taught; and the ideal still appeals to all the higher ethical feeling of our time... And no one branch of Christendom, we may add, has a monopoly of the Christian conscience in this matter.’

(10, 11) “... [Jesus] asserts, that some are prevented from making the attempt to achieve unity between man and woman which demands the physical union of marriage. Some *cannot* do so... while others have deliberately *refused* to do so... But in no other circumstances; He implies, is it right to say ‘it is not expedient to marry’...

“The word *porneia* translated *fornication* is a comprehensive word, including adultery, fornication and unnatural vice... Jesus does not insist that there must be divorce in these cases, for He is not legislating, but that these, and not trivial considerations, are the kind of things [not the *only* things – rs] for which divorce may rightly be granted....” The Gospel According To St. Matthew, by R.V.G. Tasker, Tyndale pp 179-184 [italics were in the original quote].

In dealing with the next two passages on divorce, found in Mark 10:3-9 and Luke 16:18, I would refer you to the above selection dealing with the Gospel of Matthew. The additions in Mark deal with the man leaving parents and cleaving to his bride. Mark also adds that what God joins together no one should separate. Mark also does not deal with a remarriage / adultery issue. It would seem to me that if a second marriage would always cause one to live in adultery [except for fornication - rs], and since adultery is a major spiritual issue, surely Jesus would have included His warning of second marriages in this passage also. Unless Tasker's words shared above are accurate.

In the Luke passage, verse eighteen seems out of place within the context of the passage thoughts. Jesus is dealing with the unfaithful servant; He says that you cannot love God and money; and the covetous Pharisees were listening to His teaching; so Jesus reminds them that they try to justify themselves with men but God knows their heart; the keeping of the law [in the manner they required - rs] was until John, that a camel could do certain things easier than the law could fail; then He *drops* the idea of marriage and the binding of that relationship into the passage. To our knowledge, the Pharisees had not asked Him about marriage and divorce. Again, it would seem that His purpose for inserting this thought at this time would lend credibility to Tasker's presumption shared above. In both areas (Mark and Luke), better sense is made when Tasker's conclusion is received rather than to assume that Jesus had given a complete assessment of the subject of divorce and marriage in His words recorded in Mark and Luke.

Next, Paul writes to the Roman Christians and says, Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions

of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:1-6).

Allow me to use an illustration that I feel would place a parallel thought. My child comes to me asking if he can mow the lawn. In my opinion, this child is not able to do this because the community we live in has a contract with a lawn company to maintain my property. There seems to be a lack of understanding on my son's part. So, to help him perceive the truth of my decision I use an illustration. I remind him that at Christmas his mother always buys a honey cured ham. Normally, I am the one who is allowed to cut the holiday meat. However, the only way we can purchase a honey cured ham includes the fact that the company pre-cuts every portion ordered. The fact is not that Mom does not want me to cut the ham; it's just that there is no need, since the honey cured ham company has already done that for us. *In the same way* [similar to my illustration - rs] you cannot cut the lawn.

Crude as this illustration is, and understanding that *no* illustration can completely answer all areas of question within a subject, what I have done with my son is use an unrelated subject to help him understand the reason why I answered him the way I did. My conversation with him was not to give instruction on honey cured hams nor was I laying a requirement for holiday meals. I was using a tangent [having a common line of thought - rs] to express a truth of a specific subject.

In the same way, Paul uses marriage as an example [tangent] for the Roman Christians. What Paul is teaching the Romans is that when Christ died, we died with Him. Since we are one with Him; since He died to the law; we died to the law also. It is almost as if Paul says, "Let me give you an illustration of what I mean" and then he brings the law of marriage into the equation. He is not giving a decision on marriage and divorce; but an illustration of us dying to the law because we are one with Christ and He has died to the law. When one dies, the marriage contract dies for both of them and the one living is now allowed to marry another. In other words, the husband and wife are one, but, when one dies, both are dead to the law of their marriage. *In like manner*, in Christ, you are dead to the law and you

are now alive to be married to another – Jesus Christ. You are not being unfaithful to Judaism or Moses to now be married to Jesus Christ. You are free from that law.

The final reference to divorce is found in Paul’s writing to the church at Corinth. Read with me, Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Corinthians 6:1, 2). Paul is telling the Corinthians that a purpose for marriage is to avoid sexual sins. In other words, it is to be assumed that when one gets married they are not celibate but have a need for physical relations with the opposite gender. Marriage is God’s design to fulfill this need. Any other process for meeting this need is sin.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency(1 Corinthians 6:3-5). The husband does not own his body; the wife does, and vice versa. If you have a need for sexual relations and you abstain, even for godly purposes, you open a door for Satan and eventual sin. Do not open that door – even for godly reasons!

6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. 7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I (1 Corinthians 6:6-8). Paul encourages these Christians to remain single, as himself, if possible. However, it is recognized that this would take a “proper gift” to accomplish.

9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn (1 Corinthians 6:9). Paul is pragmatic and realizes that if a person does not have the “proper gift of God”, they will burn in lustful desires. In such cases, it is better to marry than burn so

that the single person does not commit a sexual sin (7:2). As righteous as a life of prayer would be, it is just as unrighteous – if in fulfilling that life of prayer, you allow your life to be opened to a life of lust – quit praying! And, as much as living a life of singleness may be good, it is just as bad – if in the fulfilling of that singleness, you open your life to lust - get married!

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: 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 (1 Corinthians 6:10 – 11). He then tells them to stay married and if they separate, remain unmarried – or be reconciled. This is not a prohibition of divorce and singleness but another encouragement from Paul’s opinion that if they have the “proper gift of God” use it. If not, rather than burn in lust, reconcile [which is the heart of God - rs].

12 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. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 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. 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 (1 Corinthians 6:12 – 15). In Corinth, many had believed after they were married. Since their spouse chose to remain unchristian, and since a Christian is not to be yoked with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14), the question was asked (6:1), what do we do; divorce them?! Paul gives his opinion because there are no specific instructions in the scriptures dealing with this [other than Ezra, and the issue there dealt with them refusing to become Jewish proselytes – rs] and his opinion is, if your unbelieving spouse is happy to stay with you, remain married. However, if the unbeliever leaves, the Christian is not under the bondage of the law – rather than burn in lust due to an absent partner, get married (2).

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? (1 Corinthians 6:16). The whole purpose of reconciliation is for the unbeliever to be saved. It is at these points that the Christian can best show the heart of God for reconciliation. So, if it works out, stay with them. It may be their best opportunity to become a believer (1 Peter 3:1).

25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned (1 Corinthians 7:25-28). Again, Paul gives opinion that if they are currently unmarried they should remain in that state; if virgin, remain virgin; if married, remain married; if unmarried, being widowed / divorced, remain single. “But... regardless of virgin, widowed, or divorced, if you cannot contain, rather than burning in your lust, get married. In such cases you have not sinned!”

At least in my mind, verse 28 [the last verse to deal with the subject - rs] returns to the portion and intent of the first mention of the subject (Deuteronomy 24), “she may go and be another man’s wife” (Deuteronomy 24:2). Marriage after divorce is not a sin; in the Old Testament or the New Testament. God would rather you marry than burn in your lust.

In closing I would refer your thoughts to Jesus and the woman at the well. He gives His view on the subject of marriage when He says, 16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. 17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: 18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly (John 4:16 – 18). It would be clear from this that Jesus recognized all five men as her husband; not concurrently, but five in a row. It would also be clear that He did not consider just living together as marriage, “and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband....”

If marriage is until death, then Jesus could only recognize one of the five men as her husband. All the other “husbands” plus the live-in would be her lovers and adulterers. Though this would be consistent with the exclusion clause of the Gospels being the only exception for divorce and marriage, Jesus did not view her circumstances in this manner. I assume therefore, that He allows divorce for other than ONLY adultery. According to the portion in 1 Corinthians, we would at least have to add desertion of a spouse by an unbelieving partner – which was not included in the Gospel accounts of only fornication.

In addition, if Mr. Tasker’s position is correct, the adultery clause of Jesus was used as an example of the serious nature of events leading to divorce and not intended as the exclusive reason. It is not for *any* cause, but it is for *some* causes. The gravity of nature of the event leading to divorce would need to be considered. Allow me to list a few of these events that I would place on an equal plain with adultery: serious physical abuse, sexual abuse of a child, permanent desertion [allowing the fact of lust to enter – rs], one who has been permanently incarcerated with no chance of parole, open perversion exposing a child to its power, and etc. In such cases, I would allow for not only divorce but marriage to a second mate. However, I would encourage a heart of reconciliation where possible.

Conclusion:

1. God’s original design for marriage is one man, one wife, for a lifetime.
2. Man lost his innocence and fell into sin. This choice placed man in God’s permissive plan but not His preferred plan.
 - a. God made a provision for this fall initially through the shed blood of the animal and covering of man’s nakedness – portraying the ultimate sacrifice of the blood of Christ and His covering for our nakedness.
3. God began the idea of divorce and instructed Moses to write it in the book of Deuteronomy as a practice for His children.
 - a. This was done because man has a hard heart.
 - b. This hard heart is at the root of all divorce.
4. In scripture, when there is a divorce, remarriage is always presumed.

- a. If there was a need to marry once [to avoid fornication - rs] there is a need to marry again to avoid fulfilling that lust in a sinful way. “It is better to marry than burn.”
5. Reconciliation is the heart of God and we should seek to reveal this heart to others.
6. When reconciliation is not possible, it is better to remain single.
7. If you cannot remain single without burning in your lust, it is better to marry.
8. “And if you marry, you have not sinned.”