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(unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp)



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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

**PHILIPPIANS
4:8**

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

"Mohammed is not the way, Guatama Buddha is not the way, Krishna is not the way, Torah is not the way - Jesus Christ is the one and only way to God. Modern liberals who attempt to water down this intrepid proclamation of Christ in order to make room for these various religious alternatives to him have learned nothing from their Bible reading. They are 'fools and blind' (Matthew 23:17), for they claim to be adherents and followers of Jesus, and yet they, in their accommodation to rival religions would rob Jesus of the exclusive place in the redemptive plan of God which he and his apostles professed him to have. Whatever may be said of such folks, they can never be described as 'Christians.'" (Daniel H. King, **Truth**

Commentaries: The Gospel of John, 286 [comment on John 14:6]).

"The once-for-all nature of Christ's sacrifice is like a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it is so effective it never needs to be repeated (7:27), but, on the other hand, it cannot be repeated, even if needed. Defection from Christianity, therefore, brings final doom" (Neil R. Lightfoot, **Jesus Christ Today: a commentary on the Book of Hebrews**. 194 [comments on Hebrews 10:26]).

"What greater crime can be imagined than to despise God's Son, regard His sacrifice as no more than an ordinary death, do outrage to His gracious Spirit, and all this by one who once acknowledged Jesus as Lord?" (Ibid. 195 [comments on Hebrews 10:29])

Questions from Kenya

Question

How is a christian related to the temple of God?

Answer

Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). If we commit fornication we defile the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:18). In another sense, Christians make up the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:9-16). We are the living stones from which God builds His temple (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 7:15). As the Lord dwelt among Israel in the temple (1 Kings 8:10-13), so God dwells among His people, His temple, His church (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22). We may defile this temple by following human wisdom rather than the word of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-23) and by sharing in the sins of the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). If we live a life of faithfulness to Christ, He will make us pillars in His heavenly temple (Revelation 3:12).

Question

What is a "saint"?

Answer

The word means "dedicated to God, holy, sacred" (Arndt, W.F. and F.W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 9). This is simply a descriptive name for disciples of Christ. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church (Acts 8:3). In doing so he persecuted the disciples (Acts 9:1), that is, the "saints" (Acts 9:13). These disciples are also called by the proper, God-given name, "Christians" (Acts 11:25-26). We are called "saints" because we have been separated from sin and to God (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

Question

Give two reasons christians must not wear human names religiously?

Answer

Wearing human names religiously is divisive and manifests sectarian loyalty (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

Questions from Nigeria

Question

What is wrong if the moderator of a Sunday service ask brethren individually to pray and talk to God quietly at same time?

Explain with Acts 4:24-31.

This is my own experience, in more than three occasions will I call it dream or trance. I was told to go and warn a young guy from my home town to quite crime that he has only three weeks to live if he fail to quite that he will die. I went to him and told him the message of which the guy told me that he will quite but he never did and before three weeks he was shot by men of the Nigeria army. This one just happened as I traveled to the village a week ago, I was told to go and warn a brother in the faith about drinking alcohol that he will be poisoned if he don't desist from it and I went and as I am writing to you this mail the family called me and informed me that the brother was poisoned in a meeting last week Thursday and he is dead. How do you look at this, is it foul spirit or good spirit? Or does God still reveal something through dreams/trance.

Answer

I do not know of any New Testament example or command for Christians to each individually, silently pray his own prayer in the public worship assembly. Of course, you gave the example of Acts 4:24-31. I add that First Corinthians 14:16-17 implies that a speaker leads the assembly in prayer.

In ancient times God revealed his will to prophets through dreams and visions (cf. Numbers 12:6). But the gift of prophecy has ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-13), so God no longer reveals Himself in those ways. Furthermore, the supernatural work of evil spirits ceased when the gift of prophecy ceased (Zechariah 13:1-2). I do not know the source of your mysterious information, but it is neither an evil spirit nor the Holy Spirit.

What Is A Pastor?

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The term "pastor" is a familiar term to people in most denominations. It is usually applied to the men or women who stand before the congregation and deliver a message from the Word of God as the preacher. And in many situations, the pastor is the one who has the position of authority in the church.

The question is whether or not this practice is in accordance with the teaching of the Bible. We want to examine what the Bible teaches about pastors and their role.

There are three words in the original language of the New Testament Greek, that describe this function. Depending on your translation, there are at least two English words that are used to translate each of the three Greek words.

"Presbuteros" is translated as "elder" or "presbyter." It should be obvious that the Presbyterian Church derives its name from this in reference to its form of government. Is it clear that this refers to someone who is older in years. "Comparative of presbus (elderly); older; as noun, a senior..." (Strong's Greek Dictionary)

"Poimen" is translated as "pastor" or "shepherd." We see the similarity between "pasture," where the sheep graze, and "pastor," describing one who cares for the sheep. Strong's definition is pretty straightforward: "a shepherd (literally or figuratively):--shepherd, pastor."

"Episkopos" is the third term, and is translated as "overseer," or "bishop." Once again, we can see the tie between "episkopos" and the Episcopal Church. Strong defines the word as "a superintendent, i.e. Christian officer in genitive case charge of a (or the) church (literally or figuratively):--bishop, overseer."

These terms all apply to the same work or office. They just describe different aspects of the work. Presbyter or elder obviously refers to an older person, thus someone 20 or 30 years of age would not qualify. Pastor or shepherd is easily connected to the work that is to be done—caring for the flock. Then overseer or bishop refers to the leadership role, a position of authority.

In looking at various scriptures, we can see that these three terms all refer to the same person. In Acts 20:17, we find Paul summoning certain men to come to Miletus so he could spend some time with them. "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." In his charge to them, he gives this admonition: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you over-seers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (v. 28). Thus all three Greek words are applied to the same men.

Another example is found in 1 Peter 5:1-3: "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." In this passage, Peter uses all three Greek terms, one as a noun, and two in the verb form.

Question: Are the terms “pastor” and “preacher” synonymous? We run into a problem when we consider the qualifications that are given for the pastors/elders.

Consider a few of the qualifications cited in I Timothy 3:1-6: “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach. Not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?, and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”

In Paul’s instruction to Titus, he gave similar instructions. “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled.” (Titus 1:5-8)

Now notice a few of the pertinent qualifications for one to be qualified to serve as a pastor/elder/overseer.

1. The instruction is given to men, not women, therefore women are not to be considered for this responsibility.
2. These men are to be married, therefore single men cannot serve as pastors.
3. These men are to have children who are believers, for that is one way they prove their ability to lead others. Thus even a married man who has no children cannot qualify.
4. He must not be a young man, for those appointed are called “elders.”
5. He must not be a new convert, but one that has time to study and be seasoned in the Word.

Another consideration is that we never see a single pastor in a Biblical setting. On Paul’s first missionary journey, as he and his companions were leaving the area after preaching in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, they first “...appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23). In noting Peter’s address in 1 Peter 5, he writes to the “elders among you.” It is obvious that the Lord does not want a “one man rule.” History is full of abuses that have come from power invested in just one man.

This is what God’s Word teaches, but as we look around, we see thousands of pastors that do not meet the qualifications that God has set in place.

Ephesians 4:11-13 sheds some light on the distinction between elders and preachers/evangelists. “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

The work of apostles and prophets was a miraculous office, and it is still with us through the inspired Word. Today we have evangelists, pastors and teachers. The work of evangelists, pastors and teachers continues with the responsibility to teach the Word of God (evangelists and teachers) and care for the church (elders).

In searching the Scriptures, we see the serious responsibilities given to those who are designated as pastors/shepherds, elders/presbyters, and bishops/overseers. They are to

1. Guard the flock (Acts 20:28)

2. Be able to teach (I Timothy 3:2)
3. Be an example (Hebrews 13:7)
4. Watch for souls (Hebrews 13:17)
5. Refute false teachers (Titus 1:9)

One other point should be considered, and that is the practice in many denominations of allowing women to serve as pastors. We have already noted that the references in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are related to men—those who have wives. There is another passage that has a bearing on the matter, and this is I Timothy 2:12: “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” This clearly prohibits a woman from having a place of prominence in standing before a congregation where men are present and delivering a sermon, or serving in some authoritative way.

Biblical teaching about pastors is not ambiguous, but is very clear. One wonders why so many denominations either do not understand, or refuse to follow what God’s Word teaches. Perhaps their situation is similar to that of the Sadducees, when Christ answered a question they had put to him: “But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God’” (Matthew 22:29).

We must be careful to respect the teaching God has given us, so that we “may learn not to exceed what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6).

Does our Lord teach about pastors and their role in the church? We have shown several passages that deal with this subject, thus we must consider 2 John 9: “Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.”

Christ, Our Peace | Ephesians 2:14-18

Pat Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both in one body through the cross thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”

Christ, our peace, has made both Jew and Gentile one, “one new man in place of the two.” He died on the cross for all, and by that death removing the occasion of hostility, the law of commandments, “he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death” (Colossians 1:22).

“Peace”, a lovely word, speaks to relationships temporal as well as eternal. Jesus said, “... be at peace with one another” (Mark 9:50). Paul writes the Romans, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:17). “If possible” points us to a sad reality, that with our fellowman sometimes our desire for peace is spurned; but nonetheless our ambition must be, “strive for peace with everyone” (Hebrews 12:14).

“Peace” – in our homes, in the workplace, with our neighbors, with our brethren: what a wonderful thought; and, as far as it depends on us, we should pursue it.

There is, however, another relationship for peace. Christ “himself is our peace”; the Bible speaks frequently of peace with God, and of its availability to us. Romans 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” When we are justified, we please Him; and when we please Him, we have peace with Him.

Or, Philippians 4:6-7, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Christ is our peace: and in Him are every spiritual blessing. We seek to bring men to Christ, and to be at peace with them; and they may be hostile to our overtures. Let us not be abashed by this; remembering that Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Is Islam Compatible With Christianity? No. 4

Tommy G. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

When Muslims are confronted with the differences between Jehovah God of the Bible, and their god, Allah, they say this is not so. They argue that the God of the Bible is the same god, Allah, of Islam. They try to prove it by misreading what the word of God actually teaches. They refer to Jesus, while hanging on the cross, crying out the words of Psalm 22:1, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is, My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). Some of the Jews thought He was calling out to Elijah, and the Muslims abuse the passage by saying Jesus was calling out to Allah. The Jews were wrong and so are the Muslims. Matthew explains what Jesus actually said in the passage itself. He writes that the Hebrew words, "Eli, Eli," in the Aramaic language are, "My God, My God ..."

If that is not enough some Muslims use the flimsy argument that "Allah" is found in the word "Allelujah" (hallelujah). In reality the word "allelujah" means "praise Jehovah," and certainly does not fit Islam's concept of Allah, as a god to be feared, not be praised. In Islam, Allah is portrayed as an arbitrary, capricious god. A fierce, relentless Oriental despot, who has no love for mankind. One who is whimsical and unpredictable, who acts without rhyme or reason, governed by irrational impulses, forgiving and punishing as he chooses. This is certainly not a god to be praised, but one to be feared.

Having written the above things about the differences between Jehovah God and Allah of Islam, I want to point out one more false doctrine, perhaps the most prominent difference between Jehovah God and Allah.

According to the Islam holy book, The Koran, Surah 112:1-4, Allah is the only one who possesses deity. This strict form of monotheism (belief in one God), called the doctrine of "tawhid," Surah 4:171, denies the idea of three individuals making up who we know as God. That is to say, to the Muslim, there is no God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There is only God and He does not exist in three beings. To call Allah "Father" is blasphemous. To the muslim mind, to call God Father is like saying Allah had sex with your mother. The Muslim find it equally repulsive to call Jesus the Son of God (Surah 119:88-92).

What does the Bible teach about Jehovah God? Is there only one being who is God, or does He exist in three persons? The Bible teaches a triune God, sometimes referred to as the Trinity. The Muslim sees this as an impossibility, thinking $1+1+1=3$. But, note I wrote, triune, not triplex.

Triune is more like $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ as in Matthew 28:19. The Bible describes this concept of a triune God, using the term, "Godhead," or its equivalent in Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; and Colossians 2:9. The word "God" in the Bible is plural, and includes all three persons in the Godhead (hood), the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. Note Genesis 1:26; 3:22; and Isaiah 6:8 where the plural "us" is used. W.E. Vines defines the word "God" as the divine essence of Godhood, the personality of God.

There certainly is a distinct relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each one is separate from the other. Yet all three are called God. We have God the Father (John 20:17) who is distinct from Jesus the Son (John 3:16; 8:16). Yet the Son is called God (John 1:1; Hebrews 1:8), and He is separate from the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; Acts 10:38). But the Holy Spirit is also called God (Acts 5:3-4), yet He is distinct from the Father (John 14:26) and the Son (Acts 10:38). All three exist as God, and

possess all the qualities that make up God, yet each exists as a separate entity, one from the others while working together as one, not only in creation and purpose, but also in the salvation of mankind. This concept of God is repugnant to the Muslim mind, yet it is what the Bible teaches. The Bible doctrine of God is not compatible to Islam.

With the above in mind, let me press on to another tenant of Islam that makes it incompatible with Christianity. That is the deity of Christ. Muslims maintain they believe in Jesus Christ, but not as God's final prophet. To them Muhammad was the last prophet sent by God and the greatest. In my way of thinking this is one of the most dangerous aspects of Islam. The deity of Christ is the foundation for the whole of Christianity. This is evidenced by what occurred when Jesus asked His disciples; "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered for all by saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus then replied, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:15-18). We understand the rock to be the statement Peter made, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

Muslims know this is the foundation (bed rock) upon which Christianity rests, so they attack the deity of Christ, not with a frontal attack, (a complete denial of Jesus Christ) but through compromise. They know it cannot be denied that Jesus lived, so they simply try to make Him into "a messenger" of God. They deny He possessed the nature of deity while on earth, and never made the claim to be "The Son Of God," that He was simply "a servant and apostle of God" in the same sense as other prophets who lived before Him such as Moses. But none of them, Abraham, Moses, David, were as great as the prophet Muhammad. He is an "antichrist" as we shall see in the next lesson.

"You Search The Scriptures"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

Our Lord, in the verse above, is addressing the Jews who sought to kill Him. They had accused Him of breaking the Sabbath and claiming that God was His Father, thus making Himself equal to Jehovah (John 5:15-18). In His defense, He pointed out to those who were making the charges, they searched the word of God, thinking they had eternal life, all the while rejecting Him of whom those Scriptures spoke. The Bible is very clear on this subject, unless one believes that Jesus is the Son of God, he will die in his sins (John 8:24). There is no access to the Father, no fellowship nor relationship, unless ones comes to Him through Jesus our Lord (John 14:6).

Their condemnation is not in the fact they searched the Scriptures; this certainly was good and commendable for one to do. They searched and still did not believe Jesus was who He claimed to be, the Christ. The word "search" is defined as, "to search, examine into" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 249). The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says, "In John the study of Scripture is the point in 5:39 (with a view to finding God's revelation)" (p. 255). It almost seems impossible to us, that one could investigate the Scriptures, be in the audience when our Lord spoke, and be an eyewitness to what He did, yet still not accept Him as the Son of God. There are several lessons to be gleaned from this verse.

Just because a person might study the word of God does not ensure he has the proper understanding of what the Bible teaches on a given subject. I believe there are several reasons for this. Let me suggest just a few.

1. If one is simply studying to prove his point, this may be the only position he will see. For example, the fellow who wishes to show justification is by faith only, will invariably look at the verses which tell of salvation by faith. He often will ignore or try to explain away all the other passages which

mention repentance, confession, baptism, obedience, etc. It should be our desire, when studying God's word, to know His will and not the traditions nor the will of man.

2. There must also be a willingness on the part of those searching the Scriptures, to know all that the Bible teaches on a given subject. This goes hand and hand with the first point. Very few times, in the entirety of the word of God, will you find all the Lord has said on a subject in one verse. Paul declared, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). We need to know everything our Lord has taught us so we might make the proper application of His word.
3. Caution must be taken that we don't misapply the Scripture as well. The Bible is a good commentary for itself. When our understanding of a verse is diametrically opposite to another passage, then our interpretation must be wrong. When studying God's word, we must keep the verse within the context, trying to understand what the writer had in mind to those to whom he was writing when making the statement.
4. There is also a need to distinguish between the Old and New Testaments. We are no longer under the law of Moses nor the Patriarchal law (Colossians 2:14). One cannot go back to the Old Testament to prove some religious practice today. Many try to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship services by turning to Psalm 150. The New Testament instructs us to simply sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), not to play. We are under the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 8:7-13), not the law of Moses (Galatians 5:4).

May we never be guilty of searching the Scriptures and still not knowing the Lord who died for us. We need to investigate God's word daily, desiring to know, understand, properly apply and live by it the rest of our lives, so He will know us when life is over.

Women Speaking In Church

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

In discussing any Bible topic, our aim must be to seek the truth. It doesn't matter what we have believed for many years, what is popular, or what we are comfortable with. We must endeavour to please God, not men (Galatians 1:10), ourselves included.

If the LORD has bound something or loosed something, then we must also bind or loose accordingly (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). To bind where God has not bound or loose where God has not loosed makes us like the Pharisees (Matthew 15:3-6; 23:4). It is sinful to create and enforce spiritual laws that God has not given (Romans 14). It is equally sinful to ignore and fail to keep laws that God has given (Romans 2:21-23).

Before we look at women's participation in public Bible classes, we ought to briefly address the fact that the Bible class, as we know it, cannot be found in the bible. Does that make it unscriptural? No. The church is commanded to teach the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) and to edify and equip the saints (Ephesians 4:11-16). How this is accomplished (ie. lecture, interactive class, Bible readings, printed material, etc.) is left to our discretion. Though a "Bible class" as such is not found in the Scriptures, there are several spiritual discussions recorded in the gospels, Acts 15, and elsewhere in Scripture. The Lord certainly permits discussion as a means of teaching His word.

Let's begin by reading 1 Timothy 2:11-14:

Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Silence - hesuchia

Depending on translation, the Greek word *hesuchia* is rendered as "silence," "quietness," or "quietly" in the

English. The word appears in Acts 22:2, where it is used to describe desistance of speech, as the crowd *"kept all the more silent."* And, it appears once more, in 2 Thessalonians 3:12, where people are commanded to *"work in quietness."* The word does not exclude absolute silence (as was likely the case in Acts 22), but it also does not demand it. The word does not limit speech, but governs the manner of speech. It speaks of a quiet disposition and not causing a disturbance. One who conducts themselves in quietness acknowledges deference to authority.

Authority Structure

1 Timothy 2 states that the woman is to be in "submission." Her role is not to dominate, but to be subordinate to whomever is identified as the authority. It is essential to realize this text does not portray universal submission of all women to all men. I have no right to demand another man's wife to make me a sandwich or clean my house. Neither has a woman violated this text if she teaches me how to tie a tie or fold a sheet. The text is dealing with spiritual activities.

How does the woman show her submission when assembled for spiritual activity? Some believe she is not permitted to speak. If that is what the Spirit of God wanted Paul to write, He would have given him the word *sigao* rather than *hesuchia*. Some believe that she may ask questions, but is not permitted to make affirmative statements. Rather than simply speculate about the speech of one who is in submission, perhaps it would be helpful to look at other relationships that involve authority and submission. We do not want to allow what God forbids, but equally, we do not want to forbid what God allows. Consider:

- **Husband / Wife relationship** (Ephesians 5:22-23). Is a wife permitted to speak to her husband? Must all of her speech be questions? May a wife contribute ideas to a discussion with her husband without it usurping his authority as the husband?
- **Master / Servant relationship** (Ephesians 6:5-6). Is a servant permitted to speak to his master? Must all of his speech be questions? May a servant contribute ideas to a discussion with his master without usurping his authority as the master?
- **Employer / Employee relationship** (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Is an employee permitted to speak to his employer? Must all his speech be questions? May an employee contribute ideas to a discussion with his employer without it usurping his authority as the employer?
- **Teacher / Student relationship** (Luke 6:40). Is a disciple permitted to speak to his teacher? Must all of his speech be questions? May a student contribute ideas to a discussion with his teacher without it usurping his authority as the teacher?

I believe the consistent to each series of questions is yes, no, yes, respectively. The woman's submission as described in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 would be the same as each of the above relationships. If not, why not?

What Constitutes A Teacher?

Thayer defines teach as *"to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them; deliver didactic discourses; to discharge the office of teacher, conduct oneself as a teacher, to impart instruction, instill doctrine into one; prescribe a thing; to explain, expound; to teach one something."* Merriam-Webster defines discourse as *"a long and formal treatment of a subject in speech or writing, lecture, treatise, dissertation."*

The Bible never uses the word teach to describe participation from a crowd in a discourse being delivered by a teacher. It is used of the speech, lecture or dissertation itself, not of comments from those who are hearing it.

Consider a few examples from the secular world to demonstrate the point. If a student in a public school classroom speaks, whether it be a question or a comment, has that student suddenly become the teacher of the class? Or if a college student speaks in the lecture hall, whether it be a question or a comment, has that student somehow become a college professor? It doesn't matter whether it is a public school classroom, a community college lecture hall or the assembly of the local church - participation in a class does not make the participant the teacher of the class.

I have heard it affirmed that every male in a Bible class could be considered a teacher; that each and every man has the ability and authority to assist the teacher in teaching the class, and thus become teachers themselves. A Bible class comprised of 10 men and 10 women does not have 10 teachers and 10 students. It has one teacher and 19 students. Those who participate, whether men or women, are not teachers (again, the New Testament never uses the word teach in this way), but are students.

Paul says the woman is not to *"teach or have authority over a man."* Who has the authority in a class setting? Authority does not belong to every man in the class, but to the one who is leading the class. If we grant that every man is an authority in the class, we invite the type of confusion that reigned in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:26). If every man in the class has authority, why do we appoint a teacher? If every man in the class has authority, why is there one man standing apart from the rest?

1 Timothy 2:11-12 is not an injunction against women participating in a Bible class: it is an injunction against her being the teacher, the one who has authority in the class, for a woman is not *"to teach or have authority over"* men.

In John 4, Jesus taught the Samaritan woman and eventually the entire city of Sychar. In the course of their conversation, there is no doubt that Jesus is the teacher, yet the woman made more affirmative statements than she asked questions. Jesus did not rebuke her for trying to teach Him or usurp His authority, but answered her questions and addressed her concerns in order to effectively teach her.

In Acts 18, Apollos, an eloquent and powerful preacher, came to Ephesus. Aquila and Priscilla were among those who heard him speak, and they heard him teach John's baptism rather than baptism into Christ. Verse 26 says, *"When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."* Who took him aside? Both. Who explained to him the way of God more accurately? Both. We don't have details about the conversation, but the text tells us that Priscilla was involved. She participated in a submissive fashion, not violating the authority of her husband, not taking the lead in the study, not becoming the teacher; but was still able to participate.

But what if a man learns something from a woman's comment?

Is a woman's ability to participate in a class to be determined by the lowest Bible knowledge among the men? If the teacher poses the question, "How many days did Jesus spend with His disciples after His resurrection?" and a woman answers, "40," has she just become the teacher of the brother who did not know this? Does the grade 1 student who answers a simple addition question become the teacher to any children who didn't know the answer? Again, we need to use the word teach in the same way the Bible does, and call one a teacher in the same way the Bible does.

What if her comment steers the class in a different direction?

First, we should not use the possibility that something wrong might happen to justify binding something beyond what the Scriptures bind.

Second, do we think it is acceptable for a brother to do this? Hijacking someone's class is wrong, whether it is done by a man or a woman. Yes, 1 Timothy 2:11-12 addresses women; they are not to teach or usurp authority. However, that doesn't mean that the men in a class setting are free to usurp the authority of the one who is appointed to teach.

There are two occasions that come to mind where Jesus was teaching and someone from the crowd spoke up, essentially changing the direction of the discourse. It would seem that it lies in the teacher's discretion (since he is the one with authority in the class) whether to pursue the topic raised or to defer discussion on that topic until a later time. In both cases where we find one from the crowd speaking off topic while Jesus taught, the Lord chose to change the course of His teaching to accommodate their comments.

In Luke 12, Jesus warned people about the scribes and Pharisees, and then cautioned against the blasphemy of the Spirit. As He taught, a man from the crowd spoke up, selfishly demanding, *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance"* (v 13). Jesus rebuked the man (He wasn't there to settle family disputes), and then chose to teach on covetousness. Through the course of this event, Jesus did not cease to be the teacher, nor did this man become the teacher. His request was off topic and out of line, but did not somehow give him or make him the authority or teacher on that occasion.

One chapter earlier, Jesus spoke about casting out demons by the power of God, and the need to fill what has been cleansed with good, lest evil come once more and reside there. The text tells us that *"a certain woman from the crowd raise her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!'"* (Luke 11:27). The woman made an affirmative statement, unrelated to Jesus' discourse. One verse later, we see that Jesus took her statement and from it, He taught, *"More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it"* (v 28). Through the course of this event, Jesus did not cease to be the teacher, nor did this woman become the teacher. Her statement was off topic, but unlike the man in Luke 12, it does not appear that it was out of line (Jesus did not rebuke her). Her statement did not somehow give or make her the authority or teacher on that occasion.

But 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 forbids her to speak

Let's read through the text:

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

The word "silence" here is from the Greek *sigao*, defined as *"to keep silent; hold one's peace ... to be kept in silence, be concealed"* (Thayer's). *Hesuchia*, used in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 governs the manner of speech (quietness, not causing a disturbance); it allowed speech, but acknowledged deference to authority. *Sigao* however demands absolute silence, no speech at all.

This text is not a blanket injunction against women speaking in church. It is a specific application of 1 Timothy 2:11-12, which teaches that she is not to "teach or usurp authority." She is not permitted to take a leadership role in the assembly. It is essential that we understand 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in its context if we are to understand what Paul is forbidding.

That the text is not forbidding all speech is evidence for a few reasons:

- If women are not permitted to speak at all, 1 Timothy 2:11-12 would have used *sigao* rather than *hesuchia*. There is a reason for Paul using two distinct words.
- Ephesians 5:19 tells us to *"speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."* In fact, Colossians 3:16 says when we are doing so, we are *"teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."*

1 Corinthians 14 is part of a 3 chapter context addressing miraculous gifts. Chapter 12 introduces the gifts; chapter 13 speaks about their duration; and chapter 14 addresses their use in the assembly. In chapter 14, the word *laleo* (to speak) appears 24 times. Consistently it is used to address miraculous revelation (prophecy, tongues, etc.). These would be used by those who were leading the congregation in their worship and instruction. Paul did not stray away from the miraculous context in verses 34-35. There was no need for him to specifically mention tongues, prophecy, revelation, etc., for a woman was not to teach or usurp authority over a man. Though she might have a miraculous gift, she was not permitted to use it in the assembly. Thus, in a context about the use of spiritual gifts, Paul says *"they are not permitted to speak"* (v 34).

The word *sigao* (silence) is used 3 times in the text. In verse 28, it is used of the male tongue speakers, *"if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church."* In verse 30, it is used of the male prophets, *"if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent."* And then in verse 34, it is used of the

women, *"Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but they are to be submissive..."*

Again, set into the context, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 forbade women from using their spiritual gifts in the assembly. Any conclusion but this avoids the context and leaves the text open to misuse and abuse. It is a specific application of the principle established in 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Does this make it a useless text, since the time of miraculous gifts has passed? Absolutely not. Do we discount John 14-16 because it contains some promises specific to the apostles and not for us? Are there still not things to learn, as we rightly divide the word? Despite the miraculous context of 1 Corinthians 14, there are timeless principles given:

- Do things with the spirit and the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15)
- Let all things be done for edification (1 Corinthians 14:26)
- God is not the author of confusion but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33)
- Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40)

As the law also says

Above we have used a few examples that some might discount because they happened under the Old Law (the Samaritan woman of John 4; the woman who spoke up in Luke 11). What makes these Old Testament texts valid for our discussion? In both 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14, Paul appeals to the Old Testament as the source for what he wrote.

In 1 Timothy 2:13, Paul links the woman not teaching or having authority in the assembly to creation itself. Genesis 2:18 identifies Eve as *"a helper comparable"* to Adam. In Genesis 3:16, Eve is told *"your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."* The authority structure established by God in the home is the basis for the authority structure in the local church as well.

1 Corinthians 14:34 says the women are *"to be submissive, as the law also says."* There are no *"a woman shall not be a priest"* texts in the Old Testament, but consistently texts speaking about the Levitical priesthood identify them as male (ie. Leviticus 21:1-4). That said, there were women prophets in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:20-21; Judges 4:4-5; 2 Kings 22:14-17; 2 Chronicles 34:22-25). Each of these women used their ability to prophesy in the presence of men, and yet without violating the submissive role which the law prescribed for them.

The submissive role for women is prescribed by God for the home (Genesis 2:18; 3:16; Numbers 30:1-16; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6) and the assembly of God's people (Leviticus 21:1-4; etc; 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Chronicles 14:34-35) in both the Old and New Testaments. However, no text states that every woman is subject or submissive to every man in every setting. In fact, Deborah served as a judge over Israel. This gave her judicial and political authority in the nation over men and women, including over Barak, a military captain in Israel (Judges 4:4-9), but she did not have religious authority (did not and could not serve as a priest).

Let her ask her own husband at home

1 Corinthians 14:35 reads, *"if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church."* What is she prohibited from doing in church? What is she to do with her husband at home?

A straight reading of the verse, void of it's context, would mean it is wrong for a woman to ask a question for the purpose of learning or seeking clarification. If someone wanted to take a super literal reading of the verse, they might conclude that a woman is not to learn anything at the assembly; all her learning should be done at home with her husband. I don't know anyone who takes that position, but if we are going to completely ignore the context of the verse, it is as valid an explanation as any other that might be given. We must keep in mind that Paul is addressing the fact that women cannot use their miraculous gifts in the assembly; his words are not about limiting her capacity or opportunity for learning.

When people see the words "learn" and "ask" in the text, it is assumed by some that she desires clarification about something that was said in the assembly. Again, this ignores the miraculous gift context. The speech under consideration are miraculous gifts, and the women were not permitted to use them in the assembly. so, where and when can she use her gifts? I suggest Paul is saying in verse 35 that she is to ask her husband at home, not questions about what happened at the assembly, but to use her gifts in his presence at home. One of the definitions given by Thayer for *manthano* (learn) is "*learn by reason of use.*" If she wants to use her gifts, let her ask her husband at home - ask permission, not a question.

Wouldn't she be usurping her husband's authority? If God's word tells her to ask her husband at home, then the Lord did not count it a violation of the husband's authority. And presumably, if his conscience is weak and he feels threatened by it, he would have the right to say no. To give a modern equivalent, my wife cannot lead a song that she knows which others do not in the assembly. For her to lead the assembly in song (any song, whether known or unknown to the group) would usurp authority and cause her to become a leader. However, in the privacy of our home, she can share her knowledge of the song with me.

Conclusion

May we not bind where God has not bound, nor loose where God has not loosed. Let us consider the instruction given in Paul's letter, along with the examples of women's participation in spiritual activities recorded in the Bible, and be sure that we are doing things God's way, not our own.

Life Is Fragile

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

We should be impressed with how fragile life is for us. We are literally one heartbeat away from leaving this world forever. We might be driving home from the store, leaving a restaurant, going to ball practice, or making a quick trip to the bank, and in an instant be transported from this world into the next...never to return here. Then it will be as God warns, "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Amazing!

Imagine what that moment will be like for you. You have your day planned out and are busy pursuing your interests, but in a second your life is taken from you. Jesus said people will experience one of two possibilities at death: torments or comfort (Luke 16:19-31). So it will be for you and me. After death, we will be in one of those environments as we await our moment to give account to God. "For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:11-12).

The Bible warns that all who live for carnal desires will not go to heaven (Galatians 5:19-21). Specifically, God says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). At death, we will know immediately we had believed a lie if we tried remaining in these sins while professing faith in God. The only people prepared for death are those who serve God in faith and righteousness (2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1).

The good news is Jesus can prepare us for eternity. "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). We obey Jesus by putting our faith in Him as God's Son (Romans 10:9-10) and repenting of sin (Acts 3:19). Then, Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). No one is saved before baptism, despite what false teachers say, nor is anyone in Christ apart from it (Galatians 3:26-27). Those who are baptized to show they are saved have been misled. The purpose of baptism is to wash away sin (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). If you have not obeyed that gospel, please put your faith in Jesus and

obey His will. Life is too fragile and eternity is too permanent to trust in the teachings of men.

The Comprehensive Will of God

Sean P. Cavender | Raymore, Missouri, USA

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus appealed to his audience to make the proper applications in their lives of the things which they had heard. Christ warned of the strait and narrow way to eternal life and how few would obtain it, while many would choose the wide and easy way to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). Taking the path towards everlasting life will not be a life of ease and luxury, but a life of trial and difficulty. The road to heaven means that a person must do the will of God, even in hard times. Jesus provides the harsh reality of just the kind of people who will be unable to enter the kingdom of God.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:21, 22)

So, what is the will of God? The word “will” means a desire, purpose, or decree. Jesus identified one aspect of God’s will as believing in the Son of God. “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life...” (John 6:40). God’s will is that everyone will believe on the Son of God in order to obtain everlasting life. God’s will is for all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. He does not wish for any to perish (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

Sadly, many people are deceived and believe that at the point of faith they are saved. They quote Acts 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” Those who deny that a person is saved by faith alone, without any act of obedience miss the fullness of God’s will. It is certain that God’s will is that everyone come to faith and belief in Christ. Consider the nature and scope of the faith that God desires for one to have – an obedient faith. The Hebrew writer said “by faith Abraham obeyed...” (Hebrews 11:8). James teaches that Abraham was justified by the works and demonstration of his faith (James 2:24).

In Acts 20:21 the apostle Paul speaks about how he had testified and proclaimed God’s word, and led people to repentance towards God and faith in Christ. Repentance and faith are joined together perfectly. A person must repent, turn to God, and do the works meet for repentance (Acts 26:20). These are other aspects of doing the will of God because Paul testified he was speaking the words of “truth and soberness” (Acts 26:25).

In a parable of Jesus, near the end of His life, He taught of a man who had two sons. The father asked his first son to go into the fields and work, but the son refused. Later he regretted his sin and went out and worked as his father had requested. The second son was also approached by the father with the same request. This son said he would go work, but he did not. Jesus asked his audience “which of the two did the will of his father?” The crowd correctly stated “the first” (Matthew 21:31). Then the main point of Jesus’ parable: sinners and prostitutes would be granted entrance into the kingdom of God based upon their repentance! When a person repents of their sins they are granted everlasting life. Repentance is doing the will of God.

A person must repent of his sins in preparation to be a genuine disciple of Christ. The Lord said “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). The cross is a very vivid reminder of the death of Christ. A disciple must deny himself and die as he takes up his cross daily, following the Lord.

To become a disciple and follower of Christ a person must be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Then a disciple of the Lord means a life-long desire and commitment to learn and observe all of Christ’s teachings (Matthew 28:20). When we repent and turn to God, we are giving up our desires, pride, and sin. Then we follow Christ. Our primary responsibility then becomes to serve Christ each day. Just as Paul said “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). Performing the will of God requires faith, repentance, and obedience.

Jesus was not condemning the professing of a person's faith in Matthew 7:21. He was demonstrating the folly in self-approval and self-righteousness. Matthew 7:21 indicates there will be many people who are confident they have believed in God. They come to Christ and acknowledge him as "Lord, Lord..." They also acknowledge they have done many good deeds in the name of the Lord (Matthew 7:22). Yet there is more to Jesus' point.

Throughout the sermon, Jesus had been rebuking the Pharisees for their self-righteous as they approached God through their giving, prayers, fasting, and judgments. They did all of these things to be seen of men (Matthew 6:1) and to bind heavy burdens upon people (Matthew 23:4). In spite of people appearing to be religious, Jesus warns his audience of self-righteousness and what the judgment of God will be -- "I never knew you...depart from me..." (Matthew 7:23).

One of the dangers that exists for Christians is to adopt a self-righteous attitude, similar to the Pharisees. The Pharisees despised sinners, even though Jesus taught sinners to repent. "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:11-13).

We need to understand the comprehensive nature of doing the will of God -- it is not simply believing Christ as your personal savior and saying the sinner's prayer. Neither is doing the will of God merely based upon acts that appear to be good, religious deeds. A person who does the will of God must believe, repent, and obey God. They must acknowledge the mercy of the Lord. A person must be committed and diligent in their service to the Lord. We must travel the strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life!

Divorce

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

When my wife and I were young, and our children were small, we lived and I preached in Baytown, Texas, where the Houston Ship Channel empties into Galveston Bay. I was a small town boy from land locked Arkansas, and I delighted to see the huge ships weighing thousands of tons move effortlessly up the channel to discharge their cargo at the Port of Houston or to off load oil at the Exxon Refinery in Baytown. I marveled that such enormous vessels could glide so gracefully through the water.

These great ships were skillfully designed to navigate through water, but the integrity of their hulls had to be maintained to prevent the sea from pouring inside the vessel. As the Titanic spectacularly demonstrated, when the sea gains entrance into the ship, tragedy follows.

Just so, the church of our Lord is meant to be in the world (John 17:15; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10) but not of the world (John 17:16; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). When the evil world seeps into the church, tragedy follows. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

Divine Law on Divorce

The New Testament is as clear on the subject of divorce as it is on baptism. Many brethren are confused on the subject of divorce because they desire to justify sin, they have been influenced by the evil world in which we live, and false teachers are willing to tickle their ears.

Most of the New Testament Scriptures pertaining to divorce are quotations from the Master during His earthly ministry. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ contrasted the righteousness of the kingdom with the that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20) by forbidding divorce except for sexual immorality, ("

fornication" - **KJV**), i.e., "illicit sexual intercourse" (Matthew 5:31-32). When the Pharisees asked Him if it was "lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason," He replied, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:3-6). When they inquired why Moses allowed divorce, the Lord still forbade divorce "except for sexual immorality" (Matthew 19:7-9). His disciples thought this was too strict, and He informed them if they couldn't obey it, they could remain celibate (Matthew 19:10-12). Mark 10:2-12 is parallel to Matthew 19:3-9, except in this passage the exception, for sexual immorality, is not mentioned. In Luke 16:18 He forbade divorce and remarriage without stating an exception. Thus, the only valid reason for divorce the Lord Jesus Christ allowed is "for sexual immorality."

The apostle Paul used marriage to illustrate the relationship of believing Jews to the Law by stating the responsibility of the wife to remain married to her husband until he dies (Romans 7:1-4).

In First Corinthians seven the apostle answered questions the Corinthian brethren had about marriage. He prohibited even temporary separation except for spiritual reasons (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). He forbade the wife to leave her husband, the husband to divorce his wife (verses 10-11), and the believing spouse to divorce the unbelieving spouse (verses 12-14), but instructed the believer not to try to force the marriage relationship on an unbelieving spouse who departs (verse 15).

There is no scriptural difference between divorce and separation. The wife who leaves her husband is unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). The same Greek word translated "leave" (1 Corinthians 7:10, "chorizo") is the term the Lord used to denote divorce (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9). The Pharisees asked about divorce, and Jesus replied, "let not man separate" ("chorizo").

Marriage is for life, until "death do you part." The only exception is the innocent party may divorce the spouse who is guilty of sexual immorality (fornication).

Divorce Without Remarriage

Usually brethren discuss divorce and remarriage together under the assumption, which is in almost all cases correct, that those who divorce will remarry. But the Scriptures forbid divorce itself. The prophet Malachi declared, "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16).

The Lord hasn't softened His attitude on divorce. One who divorces his/her spouse for any reason other than sexual immorality places before the spouse the temptation to commit adultery (Matthew 5:31-32). The Master warned:

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

"Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:6-7)

The Pharisees didn't ask Jesus about both divorce and remarriage; they inquired of Him about divorce (Matthew 19:3). In reply, He sternly warned, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6; cf. Mark 10:2-9). Their further questioning was still just about divorce (Matthew 19:7), and the Lord's only concession was "except for sexual immorality." It is insolent rebellion against the Almighty to loose what God has bound.

First Corinthians 7:10-11 does not allow separation or divorce without remarriage. The apostle forbids both separation and divorce. He instructs the wife what her options are if she sins or has sinned by separating. The passage is parallel to First John 2:1-2, where John instructs us not to sin, but tells us what to do if we do sin. If the passage allows separation or divorce for any reason, it allows it for every reason, for no reason is given; it is totally generic. If you're tired of being married, just walk out. If he has halitosis, sayonara! Such a position nullifies everything the Lord teaches about the permanence of marriage. One who sins by leaving the spouse for any reason other than sexual immorality should seek reconciliation if possible, for a penitent sinner must "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). If reconciliation is

impossible, he/she must remain single (1 Corinthians 7:10).

A Shocking Development

About thirty years ago the teaching of Brother Homer Hailey on divorce and remarriage became a divisive issue among brethren. Some associated with **Truth Magazine** took the lead in opposing and publicly exposing his position. This was painful to me, because I was a student of Brother Hailey, I still consider him the finest Bible teacher I ever had, he was very good to me when I was a young preacher, and I had deep love and admiration for him. Nonetheless, the **Truth Magazine** writers were correct, and I supported them.

In recent years some of these same writers have themselves taken a shockingly loose position on divorce. What deepens the irony is that the very ones who strongly criticized **Christianity Magazine** for refusing to allow both sides of the issue of fellowship with Brother Hailey to be discussed now refuse to open the pages of **Truth Magazine** to discuss their position on divorce. For shame, dear brethren!

They take the position that there are multiple reasons for divorce as long as the one getting the divorce does not remarry.

Their argumentation, though loosely based on misapplied Scripture references, ignores the several passages that plainly forbid divorce except for sexual immorality. A primary principle of Bible study is, if my inference contradicts a plain statement of Scripture, my inference is wrong. Human reasoning is highly fallible; the Word of God is infallible (Proverbs 16:25; Jeremiah 10:23; 1 Corinthians 1:19; Romans 3:3-4).

Even these brethren admit the law of Christ expressly commands us not to divorce except for sexual immorality. They nonetheless contend the Lord allows divorce for multiple reasons.

First, they contend, "A person may have to divorce his mate to break an unscriptural marriage (Matt. 19:9). In this case, one is divorcing for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Of course this is correct, since the marriage was not approved of God to begin with. It is parallel to the case of Herod.

"For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife'" (Mark 6:17-18).

The second reason given is "A person may have to leave his mate to become or remain a Christian (Luke 18:29-30; 1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 10:34-48; Luke 14:26). In this case, one is divorcing for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Now, it is true that these passages sustain the principle that we must be willing to break an unscriptural marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mark 6:17-18), and they also prove we must put the Lord ahead of family ties. But it is patent absurdity to contend that we may disobey the Lord, who forbids divorce except for sexual immorality, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Shall we "do evil that good may come?" (Romans 3:8) First Corinthians 7:15 doesn't allow divorce, it instructs the believer not to try to force the marriage relationship on an unbeliever who is determined to depart.

Third, these brethren assert:

"A person may be in a marriage relationship in which his mate runs up bills which he has no intention of paying. In this case, one's responsibility to God to pay one's bills would demand that he not be supportive of his mate's ungodly behavior (Rom. 13:8)."

Again, this is simply asserting, "Let us do evil that good may come." It's the doctrine that the end justifies the means. If having a spendthrift spouse justifies divorce, why wouldn't it justify theft?

Fourth:

"A mate may be abusive to the children (beating). A person has a responsibility to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). To fulfill that

responsibility, may require him to leave his mate to provide for the children.”

Once again, shall we do evil that good may come? This is also deeply ironic, because biblical parental discipline is generally considered abuse today, and many Christians share this misguided opinion (cf. Proverbs 13:24; 29:15,17; Hebrews 12:7-9). But, if a parent is causing physical injury to a child, and the other parent cannot personally prevent it, that parent is obligated, out of love for the children (Titus 2:4), to contact the civil authorities and have the violent mate arrested (cf. Acts 25:9-11).

Again, they assert, “There are some cases in which one must leave to have physical and emotional health. One’s obligation to serve God would require him to preserve his physical and emotional well being.” If your spouse is beating you, call the police (Acts 25:9-11). If he/she is shouting, screaming, and calling you insulting names, talk to the elders of the church, if your spouse is a Christian. If not, you may have to endure hardships for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. Christ submitted to death on the cross, even though it brought Him such emotional anguish that he sweat great drops as blood (Luke 22:44). Aren’t you glad He didn’t turn back from the cross for His “physical and emotional health”? Did His service to God “require him to preserve his physical and emotional well being”? And He is our ultimate example of suffering for righteousness’ sake (1 Peter 2:21-24). In this immediate context the apostle directs wives to submit to their own husbands, even if the husbands are disobedient to the word (1 Peter 3:1-6). It is this quiet submission that might win the husbands to Christ.

Then our brethren assert:

Sometimes a couple becomes so alienated from each other, the hostilities have reached such a point, that they must live apart.

1. *Cf. Prov. 21:9; 25:24; 1 Cor. 7:15-16.*
2. *We cannot force them to stay together.*
3. *The Scriptures do not teach a person that he must become a doormat to his partner to keep the marriage together. A person who becomes another’s doormat will do more to destroy his mate’s love and respect for him than about anything else he can do. A person has to maintain his own self-esteem to have proper Bible love. One is to love his neighbor ‘as himself’ and the husband is to love his wife ‘as his own body’ (Matt. 22:39; Eph. 5:33).*

There you have it. Forget that “the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth.” Forget “she is your companion and your wife by covenant.” Forget “the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce.” Forget “what God has joined together let not man separate.” Accept the ungodly, immoral, dishonest philosophy of a worldly, unbelieving society. Maintain your self esteem. Don’t be a doormat. Get a divorce for incompatibility. I am appalled.

Yes, it’s difficult to live with a “contentious woman” (Proverbs 21:9; 25:24) or man. But, if placed in that situation, we must do so for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. First Corinthians 7:15-16 doesn’t tell anyone to depart. Of course we can’t force them to stay together, as if anyone claimed we could, but we must not condone unscriptural divorce. Where, pray tell, do the Scriptures commend “self esteem,” i.e., pride (Proverbs 3:4; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). Yes, it is precisely by humble submission, even to unjust and harsh demands, that we let Christ shine in our lives and win unbelievers to Him (1 Peter 2:13 - 3:6). That is not a failure to love ourselves, but it is the willingness to lose even one’s life to serve Christ (Matthew 16:24-27; Mark 8:34-37; Luke 9:23-26).

Then they observe:

“Obviously, there is going to have to be left some room for judgment in these matters. (Those who allow a ‘separation’ but not a ‘divorce’ agree that there are some areas of human judgment that we must leave for each other.)”

There’s no difference between permanent or long time separation and divorce, so this is irrelevant. There is no more room for human judgment in this than in baptism. The Lord God commands baptism (Acts 2:38).

The choices are to obey or disobey. The Lord God forbids divorce except for sexual immorality (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). The choices are to obey or disobey.

My brethren assert:

Sometimes we place the blame for divorce on the wrong shoulders -- we blame the mate who has reached the end of his rope in tolerating an intolerable situation and in his desperation has filed for a divorce, rather than blaming the one guilty of the ungodliness who created the intolerable circumstances.

Both spouses may be guilty of sin, and maybe a wronged mate is justified in calling the police, but the Lord won't allow Satan to tempt us beyond our ability to withstand (1 Corinthians 10:13), and the only justifiable reason for divorce is sexual immorality (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

Then they claim, "If one must separate from his mate in order to serve his God, that is exactly what he should do!" So, if you need to sin to serve God, by all means sin!

One of these brethren, a long time friend of mine, corresponded with me privately by e-mail concerning divorce and stated his messages were not for publication. I will respect that and not include what he wrote. I did inform him that I am willing to debate the issue, so if anyone thinks I have misrepresented his position or that I am doctrinally wrong, I will be delighted to have either a written or an oral exchange with him. I will affirm, "The only scriptural reason for divorce from a scriptural marriage is fornication." I will not presume to write the proposition for my brother.

I'm always extremely skeptical of a position that relies upon lengthy, complex argumentation to negate plain statements of Scripture. Obvious examples of this are the "Constituent Elements" and "Galatians 6:10 Part of Paul's Great Collection" arguments by institutional brethren for general church benevolence. His argumentation on divorce/separation rivals them in complexity.

He plainly contended that the law of love trumps the divine law concerning divorce. This is simply "Situation Ethics." The philosopher Joseph Fletcher popularized this philosophy with his 1963 book **Situation Ethics**. Wayne T. Galloway wrote of this philosophy:

According to Fletcher we should approach a situation with the Bible in mind but be able to disregard or compromise it if we find the Biblical way in contradiction to the most loving thing to do. In other words we can disregard the laws of God if we think it wiser or more loving to do something else ("Situation Ethics," **Truth Magazine** XXIII: 41, pp. 665-666, October 18, 1979).

He admits God's law is that fornication is the only reason for divorce (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) but argues that the law of love gives other causes, primarily abuse, if the situation demands it. This is precisely the "Situation Ethics" position of Joseph Fletcher.

His sophistry (Situation Ethics) places love for myself and my neighbor above love for God. The first and greatest commandment is to love God (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-31). We express our love for God by obeying Him (1 John 5:3). He commands no divorce except for fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

In fact, to divorce one's mate for a cause other than fornication is a failure to love your neighbor as yourself, for it places before the mate the temptation to remarry, and the one who divorced that mate is responsible for the resultant sin (Matthew 5:32; cf. 18:6-7). Those who advocate divorce for reasons other than fornication share the blame.

My friend parallels leaving a bad job or escaping an unjust prison confinement with leaving an abusive marriage. The law of Christ does not forbid leaving unjust prison confinement (Acts 5:17-20; 12:5-11) or a bad work place (1 Corinthians 7:21). It does forbid long term separation or divorce (biblically the same) for any reason other than fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

The most disturbing statement by my brother was his application of Isaiah's condemnation, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil"(Isaiah 5:20) to those who insist that sexual immorality is the only reason for divorce. Brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who so stated (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Did He call good evil and evil good? To so assert is blasphemy!



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