

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT **Marriage, Adultery, Divorce & Remarriage?**

Presented by Bro. Melvin L. Otey  
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## Introduction

While this study will emphasize the Bible's teachings regarding the ending of marriages, it is unwise to consider permissible grounds for ending a marriage without first considering God's design for marriage. Marriage is a divine union where one man and one woman are bound to one another by God in a covenant until one or the other dies (Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39). As the creator of man and the architect of the marital covenant, the Lord is the ultimate authority on the subject of beginning and ending marriages.

God established the institution for a number of reasons, at least three of which deserve our recognition here. First, man needed companionship and support in carrying out the responsibilities set before him by God (Gen. 2:18). Second, only in marriage are man and woman authorized by God to act upon the sexual desires that He gave them (1 Cor. 7:2). Third, God's intent was to produce a world populated with godly people (Gen. 1:27-28; Mal. 2:14-15). Ultimately, then, in marriage, He has provided for man's social compliment, spiritual partnership, sexual satisfaction, and propagation, all for His glory.

When people follow the Lord's blueprint for marriage, He is glorified because the relationship between husband and wife is intended to represent Jesus' relationship with His bride, the church (Eph. 5:23-32). However, the unfortunate reality is that men and women do not always follow the divine blueprint for marriage. When they fail to do so, they deny the faith (cf. 1 Tim. 5:8). The percentage of co-habiting, unmarried couples is increasing along with the percentage of marriages ending in divorce. The aggregate result is that, while the overall U.S. population is increasing, the percentage of married couples is rapidly decreasing.<sup>1</sup> It is vital, then, that we carefully consider the permanence of the marital covenant and circumstances under which one can be scripturally released from it.<sup>2</sup>

There was a time, not so long ago, when divorce carried an oppressive social stigma. Today, commensurate with the rise of humanism and ethical relativism, a spirit of liberalism proliferates society at-large and has infiltrated the church; the rise of these mind-sets has been manifested, in

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<sup>1</sup>Bramlett MD and Mosher WD, *Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the United States*, National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Health Stat 23(22) (Hyattsville, MD: Department of Health and Humans Services, 2002), 4.

<sup>2</sup>We begin with the assumption that all understand that pre-marital cohabitation (cf. Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Thes. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:22; Jam. 1:14) and pre-marital sexual relations (Deut. 22:20-21; Rom. 1:28-32; 1 Cor. 5:11, 6:18; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Thes. 4:3) are sinful.

part, in an increasingly permissive attitude toward divorce. However, all need to remember that man's changing and changeable sensitivities are not the divine standard for marriage. (Remember, man now widely accepts homosexual unions and allows gay "couples" to adopt children).<sup>3</sup> The unchanging, unchangeable word of God provides the standard for all who seek to please Him and hope to spend eternity with Him in heaven. "Marriage was designed for man by God, not by man."<sup>4</sup>

Human authorities do have the ability to administrate marriages (e.g., marriage licenses) within the regulations that God has given, but man cannot lawfully supersede the regulations that God has given (cf. Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-4). God has regulated marriage for all, even those who refuse to acknowledge or accept His laws. Remember that the institution began with Adam and Eve, the progenitors of the entire human family, and continued with their offspring (Gen. 4:17, 7:7, 12:5, 19:14); therefore, it is as old as humanity and is not contingent upon any special relationship that God subsequently entered into with specific segments of humanity.

One critical thing to appreciate about God's regulation of marriage is that He hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). Therefore, when entering into the marriage covenant, the godly mind will intend that the union will continue exclusively and perpetually, and will work to that end, until either the husband or the wife dies. The ungodly mind may have a different mind-set, but it does not change the responsibilities of the covenant given to man by God.

All those who fail to maintain the responsibilities of the marital covenant are condemned by scripture as covenant breakers and are worthy of death (Rom. 1:31-32). Clearly then, it is sinful for men and women to divorce their mates without God's authorization because such a divorce involves the breaking of a covenant. Of course, in today's society, like so many other sins, this has become a common and accepted practice by most, and tragically, the church does not always aggressively deal with this dilemma through proper teaching and admonition.

In the end, God only permits and recognizes divorce when one spouse divorces the other because of the other's sexual infidelity (Matt. 5:31-32, 19:9). It is important to note that this is the same reason that God reserved to Himself for divorcing His spiritual wife, Israel, in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:32, 3:8). The injured party, of course, also has the option of continuing in the marriage, as God continued with Israel for so long. If a divorce occurs for any reason other than fornication, neither party to the marriage is freed by God from their covenant with one another and, consequently, they are not free to marry other people. If either of them does so, the subsequent relationship is adulterous and, if repentance does not occur, the parties to that relationship will not obtain a heavenly reward (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21)

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<sup>3</sup>Homosexuality is clearly condemned by God (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

<sup>4</sup>James Woodroof, *The Divorce Dilemma* (Nashville, TN: Christian Family Books), 18.

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## I. Matthew 19:1-12

“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.” (Matt. 19:9)

### A. The scenario

Person A (Husband 1) divorces Person B (Wife 1) for a reason other than fornication. Jesus says that Person A (Husband 1) commits adultery upon marrying Person C (Wife 2). If Person D (Husband 2) marries Person B (Wife 1), then Person D (Husband 2) also commits adultery.<sup>5</sup>

### B. Questions to ponder

1. To whom does Jesus say that this law is applicable?
2. Does Person A “commit adultery”? If so, how?
3. Does Person B “commit adultery”? If so, how?
4. Does Person C “commit adultery”? If so, how?
5. Does Person D “commit adultery”? If so, how?
6. Does Jesus condemn (as an adulterer) one who divorces because of his wife's fornication if he takes another wife?
7. Does this passage authorize one who is put away because of his or her fornication to marry again?

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<sup>5</sup>The meaning of adultery is clearly illustrated in scripture (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22; Jer. 29:23). According to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, the word translated “committeth adultery” and “commit adultery” (*moichao* - 3429) means “to have unlawful intercourse with another's wife.” According to *Webster's Dictionary*, adultery is “voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man and someone other than his wife or between a married woman and someone other than her husband.”

8. How did Jesus' disciples respond to this teaching?
9. Did Jesus indicate that everyone would not yield to this teaching?

### **C. Conclusions**

According to Matthew 19:1-12, what specific actions constitute adultery and for whom?

- 1.
- 2.

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

“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.” (Matt. 5:32)

### **A. The scenario**

Person A (Husband 1) divorces Person B (Wife 1) for a reason other than fornication. Jesus says that Person A (Husband 1) causes Person B (Wife 1) to commit adultery.<sup>6</sup> If Person C (Husband 2) comes along and marries Person B (Wife 1), Person C (Husband 2) commits adultery.

### **B. Questions to ponder**

1. To whom does Jesus say that this law is applicable?
2. Does Person A “commit adultery”? If so, how?
3. Does Person B “commit adultery”? If so, how?
4. Does Person C “commit adultery”? If so, how?

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<sup>6</sup>The word translated “causeth” (*poieo* - 4160) means “produce, to be the author of, to make ready.” The Bible recognizes that sexual relations are a natural part of marriage (Ex. 21:10; Heb. 13:4).

5. Does Jesus condemn one who divorces his wife because of her fornication as an adulterer if he takes another wife?
6. Does this passage authorize one who is put away because of his or her fornication the option of marrying again?

**C. Conclusions**

According to Matthew 5:31-32, what specific actions constitute adultery and for whom?

**III. Mark 10:1-12**

“And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.” (Mark 10:11-12)

**A. The scenario**

Person A divorces Person B and subsequently marries Person C. Jesus says that Person A commits adultery “against” Person B under this scenario.<sup>7</sup>

**B. Questions to ponder**

1. To whom does Jesus say that this law is applicable?
2. Does Person A “commit adultery”? If so, how?
3. Does Person B “commit adultery”? If so, how?
4. Does Person C “commit adultery”? If so, how?
5. How is it that Person A’s marriage to Person C is “against” Person B?

**C. Conclusions**

According to Mark 10:1-12, what specific actions constitute adultery and for whom?

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<sup>7</sup>The word “against” is translated from the Greek word *epi* (1909), which means “upon, on, at, by, before.”

#### **IV. Luke 16:18**

“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”

##### **A. The scenario**

Person A (Husband 1) divorces Person B (Wife 1) and subsequently marries Person C (Wife 2). Jesus says that Person A “committeth adultery” under this scenario. If Person D (Husband 2) marries Person B, Person D “committeth adultery” also.

##### **B. Questions to ponder**

1. To whom does Jesus say that this law is applicable?
2. Does Person A “commit adultery”? If so, how?
3. Does Person B “commit adultery”? If so, how?
4. Does Person C “commit adultery”? If so, how?
5. Does Person D “commit adultery”? If so, how?

##### **C. Conclusions**

According to Luke 16:18, what specific actions constitute adultery and for whom?

- 1.
- 2.

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

“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. 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.”

##### **A. The scenario**

If Person A (Wife 1) marries Person C (Husband 2) while her husband, Person B (Husband 1), is still alive, Person A (Wife 1) is an adulteress. If she marries again after her husband dies, then she is not an adulteress.

## **B. Questions to ponder**

1. According to this text, how long is a woman bound to her husband?
2. According to this text, how does a woman become an adulteress?
4. Is Person B (Husband 1) an adulterer?
5. Is Person C (Husband 2) an adulterer?

## **C. Conclusions**

According to Romans 7:2-3, what specific actions constitute adultery and for whom?

## **VI. I Corinthians 7:10-11**

“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.”

### **A. The scenario**

If a woman is married, the Lord commands that she not leave her husband. If she breaks this commandment, she must either remain unmarried or be reconciled with her husband.<sup>8</sup>

### **B. Question to ponder**

1. If one spouse leaves (without scriptural authorization), what options does this text of scripture afford the one who leaves?
2. If a person chooses a third, unauthorized option (e.g., taking another spouse), how can that person come back into compliance with the scripture?

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<sup>8</sup>The Greek word translated “remain” here is *meno* (3306), which means “to remain, to abide, to continue to be, to endure, to wait.” The Greek word translated “unmarried” here is *agamos* (22), which means “unmarried, unwedded, single.”

## VII. Questions in Review

1. Do any of the preceding scriptural texts authorize a person who puts away his or her spouse, for a reason other than fornication, to marry again?
2. Do any of the preceding scriptural texts authorize a person who is put away by his or her spouse, for a reason other than fornication, to remarry?
3. Do any of the preceding scriptural texts indicate that persons who divorce for a reason other than fornication commit adultery if they do not marry another person?
4. Why do the preceding scriptural texts label one who remarries after divorcing a spouse for a reason other than fornication an adulterer or adulteress?
5. Adultery must involve at least how many parties?
6. What does one who has entered into a subsequent marriage after divorcing for a reason other than fornication need to do in order to come back into compliance with the scripture?

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT Marriage, Adultery, Divorce & Remarriage?

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## Q & A

Note: The following questions were submitted in writing and, accordingly, I have attempted to provide written responses. I have not necessarily been as exhaustive as I could have been in writing the responses because many of these matters were discussed during the class. If further clarification is needed, however, I am happy to provide it.

1. **“What characteristics does one use to recognize a legitimate marriage between a man and a woman?”** A “legitimate” marriage is a covenant entered into by an eligible man and an eligible woman in compliance with the applicable civil laws. “Eligible” persons include those who have never been married (1 Cor. 7:2); those who are widowed (Rom. 7:3; 1 Cor. 7:39); and those who have divorced their previous spouse because of the spouse’s sexual infidelity (Matt. 5:32, 19:9).
2. **“States have laws that say a man and a woman are considered married after living together for a certain period of time. Question: Is this a marriage recognized by God? If so, do the divorce and remarriage scriptures apply to this kind of marriage? [Note: If one obtains a marriage certificate, the states recognize the union as marriage. If a man and woman lives together for a certain length of time, the states also recognize this as marriage.]”** Let us remember that man’s civil law must be respected as long as it does not contradict God’s law. Man-made government is a tool for protecting society at-large, and Christians in particular (Rom. 13:1-7). That being said and understood, “common law” marriages generally do not reach God’s standard for biblical marriage. Marriages in the Bible involve a public covenant to be married by the parties (or the parents who had the authority to give them in marriage). The rules for common law marriage vary from state to state, but it generally involves two people living in a sinful relationship long enough that the government declares them married. However, when two people continue in a sinful relationship and refuse to repent, God does not suddenly change His mind and consider it an acceptable relationship after a certain amount of time has passed. Sin does not stop being sin because people engage in it for an extended period of time.
3. **“Please elaborate: God will forgive one for the sin of adultery and divorcing for unscriptural reasons. But just because God forgives one of the above sins does not equal the right to remarry.”** A sinner can certainly be forgiven of his or her sins. In 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Paul reminds the Corinthians that, before they were baptized, they had engaged in a myriad of sins, including fornication and adultery, prior to their conversion. Once they obeyed the gospel though, and their sins were washed away, they were no longer guilty before God of those sins. The washing mentioned to in verse eleven clearly refers to baptism (see Acts 22:16).

Of course, this baptism had to have been preceded by repentance (Acts 2:38, 17:30; Luke 13:3, 5), meaning that the Corinthians turned away from those sins before baptism as a prerequisite to forgiveness.

Likewise, if one commits adultery or divorces without God's permission today, that one can repent (turn away from those sins) and either obey the gospel, if he or she is not a Christian, or ask for forgiveness, if he or she has already been baptized in accordance with the scriptures (Acts 8:22-23; 1 John 1:9). Forgiveness means that one will not bear the eternal consequences of his sin and can still have a right relationship with God. However, it does not mean that he will not bear the earthly consequences of his sin.

The husband or wife who divorces (according to man's laws and procedures) for a reason other than the spouse's fornication is still married and bound to the spouse by God. Clearly then, they are not free to take a new spouse. Paul specifically says that such a one must remain single or be reconciled with his or her spouse (1 Cor. 7:10-11). The one who is guilty of adultery, and is put away by his spouse, is not permitted to take a new spouse. Remember, the general rule is that divorced persons cannot remarry (Luke 16:18). The "exception clause" is specifically for the "innocent party."

4. **"If a married couple does not want to be together and refuses to work things out to stay together, can they just have that agreement and stay away from the paper filing of a divorce?"** Yes, if the parties to the marriage refuse to work on their marriage, they can agree to separate. However, sin is clearly occurring because the parties are not honoring their lifelong marital covenant (Rom. 7:2). Going through the motions of getting a legal divorce before man is meaningless unless one has the scriptural grounds for such an action (cf. Matt. 22:21; Acts 5:29). It would actually be best to avoid filing the paperwork so that others are not deluded into thinking that the parties are not married. Also, by avoiding the court process, the likelihood for reconciliation, which is what God would desire for them, if possible, is probably greater if they do not involve the court system.
5. **"Regarding the party guilty of committing adultery who has been put away by the innocent party: If the guilty party wakes up one day and wants to go back to the innocent party, the innocent party may not want the guilty party back. Please elaborate on the consequences of the innocent party no longer desiring to be with the guilty party."** There are no additional consequences under this scenario. The person who was put away because he or she was guilty of sexual infidelity still is not authorized to take a new spouse, but the "innocent party" can do so if he or she chooses.
6. **"A person is unable to remarry because the divorce was not scriptural. If the person remarries anyway, it is a sin. A person is unable to remarry because the divorce was not scriptural. If the person remains unmarried and commits fornication, it is a sin. If the person remarries, the sin of fornication is eliminated, but now, the person becomes an adulterer for sure if they were not one before. Please confirm and or elaborate on this more. Also, either way the person goes, sin is inevitable. Might as well go ahead and remarry since the person is going to fornicate being single. [Note: the person does not**

**have to fornicate, but some people are going to do it anyway.]”** As an initial matter, we must observe that sin is never inevitable. We all have free will. Those who are not authorized by God to engage in sexual relations must abstain from doing so in order to have a home in heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21). People who are not scripturally married must buffet themselves and remain within the constraints placed upon them by the word of God. Secondly, one who is unscripturally divorced is still bound to his or her first spouse. Any physical relationship with another person is fornication, in general, and adultery, in particular (Matt. 19:9, 5:32; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). Remember that, like homosexuality, incest and bestiality, adultery is a specific type of fornication. Fornication cannot be eliminated by marrying another after an unscriptural divorce because this second marriage is biblically invalid.

7. **“When a person does not have grounds to remarry, yet that person goes ahead and remarries anyway, is that person then in a continuous state of sin?”** Yes, when one chooses to take a new spouse under these circumstances, that one is continually violating the restrictions given by God in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. As long as one is violating this restriction, that one is in a continuous state of sin. This is also confirmed by considering the Greek words penned in the gospel accounts. The word translated “committeth” in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 denotes continuing action. Until a person repents, and comes out of the adulterous relationship, he or she is continuing in sin. It is the same as two people who have never been married being in a relationship that involves fornication. They are in a continuing state of sin as well.
  
8. **-“A marries and divorces B for unscriptural reasons. C marries and divorces D for unscriptural reasons. A & C meet and get married. A & C are baptized. After realizing their divorces and their marriage to each other are not acceptable to God, are A & C required to divorce and/or separate and be by themselves?”**  
**-“If a person marries, divorces, and remarries before he or she obeys the gospel and the divorce is not because of infidelity, fornication, or adultery, then what is the spiritual state of that person, his or her spouse, and the marriage in God’s eyesight?”** Each would have to repent and come out of the unscriptural marriage because each is actually married to other people. According to the Lord, A and C are in an adulterous relationship with one another (Matt. 5:32, 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). Baptism did not change their marital state, and, until they repent, they are not forgiven of continuing in that unauthorized relationship after baptism (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 8:22-23). I am assuming that neither party knew at the time of their baptism that they were not scripturally married. If they knew this and refused to repent, there is serious question about the efficacy of their baptism. Repentance must precede baptism.
  
9. **“If both parties commit adultery, of course they are able to divorce, so does that also mean they are both unable to marry again unless their spouse passes away?”** If one party commits adultery and the other chooses to forgive and stay in the marriage, this former act of infidelity cannot be used as grounds for dissolving the marriage later. Therefore, it is wise for the “innocent party” to pray and think very carefully before deciding to continue in the marriage. If that party later commits adultery, the formerly “guilty party” would then have a scriptural right to end the marriage and take a new spouse. There is no *quid pro quo* requirement in that regard. If both spouses are simultaneously engaging in adulterous

relationships, there is no “innocent party.” They would probably be better to seek the Lord and stay together. Otherwise, neither would be free to remarry (Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). Please see the next question and answer also.

10. **“Is the guilty partner free to marry after the innocent party’s death?”** No, the “guilty” person who is put away for fornication is not authorized to marry even if that person’s former spouse dies. Remember that, under the Old Testament, the “guilty” person’s life ended because of their infidelity (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22), and the “innocent party” could go ahead and marry again. In the New Testament, the prohibition against the “guilty party” marrying another is not because he or she is bound to the first spouse. Indeed, the first spouse is as free to marry again as he or she would be if the person were actually dead (1 Cor. 7:39). The guilty one who has been put away for fornication must make him or herself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven’s sake because he or she is not authorized in scripture to marry and have a physical relationship with another person (Matt. 19:12).
11. **“For this study are we considering adultery as the unlawful sexual intercourse with someone other than your spouse (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) or looking and lusting after someone that’s not your spouse (Matt. 5:28)?”** Our emphasis in this lesson has been unlawful sexual intercourse because this is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 5:32, Matthew 19:9, Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18. He specifically states that the adulterer or adulteress actually goes and takes another person. In Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus is pointing out that giving oneself to contemplating and calculating sin is itself sinful. In Matthew 15:18-20, Jesus explains that sinful actions, including adultery, originate in the heart. However, there is a difference in earthly consequence for sins “in the heart” versus sin by action. If I plan, in my mind, to hurt someone, God will judge my secret thoughts in eternity. However, if I actually and intentionally do hurt someone, not only will God judge my actions in eternity, but man will judge and punish them here on earth. Likewise, committing adultery “in the heart” is not grounds for dissolving marriages here on earth, although it might condemn one eternally if that one does not repent and pray for forgiveness.
12. **“Is divorce, itself, a sin, even if it is not because of infidelity, fornication, or adultery, and both parties do not remarry or reconcile, yet they both make a vow and decide to remain single the rest of their lives? Or does sin enter the picture when one of the parties decides that it’s okay to remarry?”** Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman before and with God (Gen. 2:24-25; Mal. 2:14; Mark 10:6-9). That covenant includes certain responsibilities (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:3-5; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Tim. 5:8). By refusing to honor the responsibilities of that covenant for a scripturally impermissible reason, the divorcing parties would be guilty of covenant breaking, a crime worthy of death before God (Rom. 1:31). If one party must separate for safety (e.g., domestic violence, drug abuse, etc.), neither is free to take another spouse. Any efforts to do so would be sinful.
13. **“If a couple divorces and many, many years go by and they never see or hear from each other ever again, then one spouse finds love, again. How is that person able to know that he or she is eligible to get married if he or she never again sees or hears anything concerning the former spouse, despite her/his searching to see if the former spouse has**

**broken the bond (i.e. committed adultery) or entered into another relationship, thereby freeing him or her (i.e. the person who has found love) to remarry? To what extent, if any, does or should a person go to determine the faithfulness of the other party (i.e. is he/she still single)? Let's just say that the divorce was over money or something other than fornication.**" The rule is that, if the reason for the divorce is not fornication, the party who is looking to marry again cannot do so (Matt. 5:32, 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). He or she must either remain single or be reconciled to the first spouse (1 Cor. 7:11). If this person actually left the marriage or initiated the divorce, he or she would not be eligible to marry another even if the first spouse had a sexual relationship with someone else because this person would actually be a cause of the adulterous relationship (Matt. 5:32). If the person was left by the "former spouse" without consent or scriptural cause, and the "former spouse" subsequently marries another or enters into a sexual relationship with another, then and only then would the person be free to marry another. Please see the next question and answer also.

14. **"Since it is unlikely to catch someone in the very act of adultery, what evidence is enough to get a divorce? Is it confession? Is it a paper trail? Both? Can one instinctively know he/she is being cheated on, and act on it, especially if a spouse denies?"** In order to initiate a scriptural divorce, the person would have to know for a certain that his or her spouse has actually committed adultery. If the person does not know for a fact that his or her spouse has been sexually unfaithful, then he or she runs the risk of being a covenant breaker and, ultimately, guilty of adultery. Feelings are not enough. Notice that Jesus did not provide an exception for suspicion (Matt. 5:32, 19:9). Obviously, eyewitness "testimony" or a confession is ideal. Under certain circumstances, letters or other paper records could be sufficient. This would be case specific, but it would have to be very strong to justify scriptural divorce.
15. **"If an abused spouse leaves the marriage (not with consent), and the abuser commits adultery, is the abused spouse at fault and not permitted to marry?"** No one is obliged to endure physical abuse in marriage. However, physical abuse is not grounds for divorce. Physical abuse by either husband or wife clearly breaks the love aspect of the marital covenant (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19; Tit. 2:4). If a physical separation is necessary because one party is physically abusive, and the abusing party subsequently commits adultery, this would be grounds for a scriptural divorce by the abused. So long as the abused spouse has separated because of the abuse and is not seeking to terminate the marriage for this reason, which would be unscriptural, then this party is not the "cause" of the other's adultery described in Matthew 5:32.
16. **"Can a spouse legitimately bring up an adulterous affair and get a divorce, though initially the couple attempted to resolve it? When is it too late to divorce?"** It is difficult to say that there is a particular time limit, but when the "innocent party" agrees to continue in the marriage, unless there is a new act of infidelity, that party could not legitimately use the previous affair, which has been repented of and not repeated, as just cause for divorce and re-marriage. This is one more reason that a person should give prayerful and careful thought before deciding whether to stay in the marriage. Some people try to divorce ten years after an affair ended and claim that fornication is the reason. Five years and two children later, just for an example, is clearly too late.