

What is “The Law of the Husband?” (Rom. 7:2) How Does It Affect Church Policy on Divorce and Remarriage?

The subject of divorce and remarriage has been the cause of much heated debate over the years in both Sabbatarian and Sunday-observant churches. According to the grace which has been given to me as one who has labored in the Word of God and in Doctrine (I Tim. 5:17), I herein present a thumbnail sketch of my somewhat unique findings on this subject. Whether I have labored well I leave to the judgment of the body of Christ. The comments I have received have been favorable over the past fifteen years since it was penned.

There have been many zealous command-keeping churches who have looked at Yeshua’s (Jesus’) statements on divorce and remarriage and concluded that He forbade remarriage altogether, or only allowed it for the cause of *porneia* (which they usually limit to adultery and or fornication). As we shall see, *porneia* is the most important factor giving grounds for dissolving the marital bond in Christ’s teaching in Matt. 5:32 and 19:6. In the Septuagint^[1], which was *the* Bible in the Synagogues of Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, and other places where the Apostle Paul raised up countless churches, we find *porneia* being used to translate various words relating to wickedness. It was used to refer to Israel’s adoption of the heathen, idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations. They went “a-whoring” after the nations, or “played the harlot” by trusting in strategic political alliances with Gentile nations. For this the word *porneia* is used. *Porneia*, as the sound of the word might suggest to the hearer, also refers to a range of illicit, lewd, lascivious, and perverse sexual activities or fantasies. Hence, this will broaden our application of the chronic, irremediable conditions (which should be determined by elders) requisite for “putting away” a spouse. A brother or sister is not bound under such a situation to one who is perpetually backsliding into such *porneia*. The sloth of the Church in not defining critical Bible terms, and relying solely on erstwhile translators and disobedient theologians, leads to grievous misunderstanding and exploitation of the ignorant. It is truly a case of the blind leading the blind and everyone eventually falling into the ditch or error and bondage. In this case, limiting “except it be for fornication” to the meaning of the contemporary word “fornication” is simple-minded, since fornication only defines part of the meaning of *porneia*.

To limit *porneia* to only adultery or fornication would also make the Savior’s comments contradict the very plain conditions for divorce listed in Ex. 21:10-11. It is the Torah—the teachings given to Moses by Yahweh on Mt. Sinai in Arabia—which lays the foundation on this subject. Yahweh later became a man by shedding His glory and divinity (see Phil. 2:6-7), and took the Name Yehoshua (or Yeshua). We prove elsewhere that it was the pre-existent Yeshua and not the Father who did the speaking and interacting with Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and all the prophets of Old. Therefore, the instructions in the Old Testament bearing on sexual and marital affairs are as much the teaching of Yeshua as that found in the four gospels! (Read Heb. 4:2!)

I have been blessed with an understanding that breaks down and removes the seeming contradiction between the Old and New Testament teaching, and which does no violence to the marriage law given by Yahweh, the Great Lawgiver. Interpretations which view the New Testament teaching as somehow superceding or canceling the Old often are mere artificial contrivances designed to bring men and women back into bondage. Yeshua Himself said that not one jot or tittle could be erased from the Law until the heavens and the earth pass away (Matt. 5:18). Those called “Great” in the Kingdom of Heaven will be those who have upheld the validity of “the least of these My commandments.” Lev. 26:15 labels the Statutes and Judgments found in the Pentateuch as *mitzvot* (Hebrew for “commandments”).

Many believers have been relieved to learn of the sound wisdom and judgment of Yahweh on divorce and remarriage contained in the Old Covenant scriptures. Countless Sunday-observant Christians, weak in Torah knowledge, have been set free from the spirit of condemnation, fear, and

bondage to reprobate, covenant-breaking spouses—ones with whom there was little or no prospect of reconciliation. They learned that Truth sets one free. Not free like the scribes and Pharisees, who used Deut. 24's law unlawfully (see I Tim. 1:8) as a license to put away their wives for any reason; but free rather to pursue their life in Christ anew, with a clean break from the past, with all its abuses, mistakes, and disappointments. For many Church pastors and boards of elders, divorce is the one sin that they feel is incapable of being wiped off the slate by the blood of Jesus. This becomes transparent when otherwise qualified men in the congregation are passed over for speaking and leadership roles, ordination and such, simply because they have not been, during the term of their lives, the husband of absolutely one woman. This high-minded doctrine, based on human reasoning, ignores the fact that Abraham and King David, two of the most highly qualified servants of Almighty God in the entire Bible, made mistakes that caused them to not be the husband of only one wife. The Churches who hold this policy would not even deign to hire Abraham to be their deacon, or King David to be their pastor, based on their false interpretation of I Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:6 (which merely prohibit polygamous or bigamous men in the congregation from being bishops or deacons). When, on the one hand, the New Testament gospels and epistles make several dozen positive references to David and Abraham, but on the other hand you have countless fundamentalist churches who would not even allow these great men of God into their pulpits, ever, because of a New-Testament-only theology, one can readily see the need for a different approach to this subject. Well did Isaiah prophesy of a certain group of latter-day religious people in Isa. 65, who continue to eat swine's flesh (v. 4) and break a whole slew of other Mosaic laws (see vss. 2-3), and yet say "Stand by yourself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou [perhaps because they've only been with one woman their entire life]." For the record, the Law given to Moses was silent about forbidding a divorced priest from remarrying and remaining a priest. It merely stipulated that he marry no divorced woman, or harlot, or profane, or widow (Lev. 21:13-14).

There are, at least, two fundamental scriptures that the no-remarriage teachers need to get a handle on. The first is Gen. 2:18—"it is not good that the man should be alone." The second is I Cor. 7:2—"To avoid fornication (Gr. is *porneia* here, meaning illicit sexual activity), let (allow or permit) *every* man have his own wife, and *every* woman have her own husband." To make such a broad, sweeping statement like this right out of the gate in answer to the Corinthians' questions about whether sexual relations and marriage were appropriate, shows the priority that Paul and the Holy Spirit placed on marriage for each and every Church member as a means of avoiding a host of sins that would deprive them of eternal life (see I Cor. 6:9 in this regard). Thirdly, 1 John 5:3 says that the commandments of Yahweh are not grievous or burdensome. How religious zealots can so casually consign divorcees to an indefinite life of loneliness and a forced, obligatory celibacy, no matter what the circumstances, no matter whom the abusive or negligent party was, is ultimately a matter of the heart--a lack of perception of the heart and law of Yahweh, a lack of compassion and love. Yahweh is Himself is a divorcee (Jer. 3:8). In fact, He is planning to remarry; yea, He is already espoused to the Church (II Cor. 11:2).

Having said this, no doubt there are certain adulterers and chronic, irresponsible Covenant-breakers in our midst, for whom remarriage would be severely frowned upon by Yahweh until they have undergone genuine repentance and reconciliation with The Father and with those they have hurt.

What Is the Law of the Husband?

To get to the nature of the Marriage Covenant, I would like to begin our discussion with Romans chapter 7. This passage is leaned on heavily by the "once-married, always married" proponents. But I will show they are misinterpreting it by ignoring "the Law of the Husband" mentioned by Paul in verse 2. Again, the Church neglects defining crucial terms, being clueless as to any kind of internal Biblical definition of "the Law of the Husband." But this is chiefly because the theologians of mainstream Christianity are averse to going to the most logical place in the scriptures for defining "the Law of the Husband," i.e. the Old Testament.

However, Paul had no such aversion. For him, the Hebrew scriptures were the only authority for doctrinal and theological arguments. He even said the basis for a woman keeping silence and not speaking in the Church lay with the Law (I Cor. 14:34). Notice how Paul begins his arguments about marriage in verse one of Romans 7:

"Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the Law (the five books of Moses), how that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives [This, of course, is a very distressing statement to most of our theologian and preachers]. For the woman which has an husband is bound by the Law (the Torah) to her husband so long as he lives; but if he be dead, she is loosed from **the law of the husband.**"

I might point out that when Paul originally penned these words, it was understood by the greatest linguistic scholar of the 4th Century (Jerome), that "Paul, being a Hebrew, wrote in Hebrew." Thus, the Law being referred to here would necessarily have been the Torah. The English translators very frequently use the word "law" to translate "torah" in the Old Testament.

Again, I say, what a pity those leading God's people^[2] NEVER VENTURE TO EXPLAIN WHAT 'THE LAW OF THE HUSBAND' IS. Nor do they bother, when the subject of legitimate divorce surfaces, to tell us the Biblical definition of what a husband *actually is*. One answer to both of these questions may be found in Exodus 21:10-11:

"If a man takes himself another wife, her food, her clothing, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three things to her, then she shall go out free, without money."

You will not find a more good, just, or holy law anywhere in the scriptures (these adjectives are used by Paul to describe the entirety of the Torah in Romans 7:12). People who really don't believe what Yeshua told the devil in Matt. 4--"You shall live by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of Elohim"—would have us ignore Exodus 21 and the rest of the lawful and fair judgments of Yahweh. They deem them as irrelevant in today's culture, as not applicable to modern situations. At best they would relegate Exod. 21:10 to the very narrow case of a master taking to himself a second wife from among his maidservants.

But is that how Yeshua and Paul used scripture? I don't think so. One of the established methods used by Jewish rabbis for interpreting a Biblical precept and applying it to a living situation involved extrapolating from the lesser case to the greater case. For example, in Luke 9 Christ said if the Pharisees allowed a man to loose his ox from a ditch on the Sabbath day, should not a daughter of Abraham (the greater case), bound for eighteen years by a spirit of infirmity, be loosed on the Sabbath day. In John 7:23 He reasoned with the unbelieving Jews using the same principle:

"If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken: are ye angry at Me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? ...judge righteous judgment."

Using this same method of interpretive reasoning, we can logically assume that if a maidservant taken to become a man's second wife is now entitled to the full marital rights (food, clothing, and love) and privileges as the man's free-born first wife, and would be allowed to go free should her master-now-become-husband ever renege on his responsibilities towards her, then how much more should the free-born wife be permitted to divorce if she is defrauded of the duties of the husband. (Obviously, if the man

becomes disabled, and cannot fulfill his role as provider, then the Torah provided for community responsibility. The exception does not negate the rule.)

Make no mistake, brethren, this is “The Law of the Husband” to which Paul refers in Rom. 7:2. You will search in vain for a more concise delineation of the responsibilities that husbands have towards their wives anywhere else in the Torah.

No marriage can endure unmanifested, unexpressed respect and love over a prolonged period of time. The human spirit and personality dries up and is broken when forced to endure unreciprocated love year-in and year-out. With Christ’s indwelling, the believer might exercise unconditional love which bears, endures, hope, and believes all things over an extended period of time. But eventually, such an effort becomes an exercise in futility, if no change for the better is exhibited. I Cor. 6:14-16 elucidates profound principles that have practical implications which argue strongly against religious absolutism:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he which believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the Temple of God with idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God: as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore 'come out from among them, and be ye separate,' saith Yahweh [Paul is here quoting from Isa. 52:11], and touch not the unclean thing."

I wonder how many religious spouses, compelled by overly zealous^[3] pastors and their false notions of righteousness, have acquired communicable diseases by remaining faithful to someone who was unfaithful.

The Law of the Husband is pivotal in any discussion of other verses dealing with divorce and remarriage because *it defines what a husband is!* It is one who provides food, clothing, love and sex to his woman (not necessarily in that order). It also makes plain the fact that Marriage is a conditional covenant, based on obligations of service and love. If those conditions are not met, then the vows and agreements are null and void because of broken promises, which is the same as fraud.

Yahweh married ancient Israel at Mt. Sinai, when they agreed to obey Yahweh’s commandments, statutes, and judgments. This Marriage Covenant was ratified with the sprinkling of blood over all the people in Exod. 24. Nowhere in the Bible do we find marriage presented as an unconditional covenant. To teach it as such is irrational and irresponsible in the extreme, and earns a just disdain and disrespect from thinking people outside the Church. It is bondage and cruelty to tell a woman who has suffered violence, verbal and emotional abuse, and/or financial irresponsibility from her husband year-in and year-out, who will not seek counseling to resolve his vices or lack of concern and/or natural affection (whatever the case may be), that she “must stick it out” indefinitely. Oftentimes, without the leverage of separation and divorce as a possible option, the woman is deprived of the only valid and viable means she has left to bring the man to his senses.

Such a man obviously is not “pleased to dwell” (I Cor. 7:13-14) with the woman he had promised to love and cherish. It would seem to be the case (for whatever reason) that “she finds no favor in his eyes” (Deut. 24:1), or else he would behave himself differently. The man who violates Exod. 21:11 may be brought, by his wife, before ecclesiastical elders endued with the wisdom and the courage to address the situation (assuming such exist in her fellowship), and the woman may be granted a bill of divorce, accordingly, if the situation warrants. Obviously, over the past two centuries, the Church has lacked the will, the wisdom, and the fortitude to judge its own business, its own feuds, and its own marital affairs. Since nature abhors a vacuum, the state has had to come in and take over these areas of responsibility that Bible-believing colonial America handled via the influence of the Church. This, and the fact that the

Churches all pronounce couples man-and-wife in the name of the State where the couple resides, is a great testimony against the Church. The Paul who wrote I Cor. 6 would have a hard time believing that a Christian nation could let the secular authorities take over the institution of marriage and the administration of divorce.

Why the Bill of Divorce Law in Deut. 24?

Let us take a closer look at the much-maligned law in Deut. 24:

"When a man has taken a wife, and married her, and it comes to pass that she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her; then let him give her a bill of divorce, and give it into her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife."

Is she committing adultery when she remarries? Absolutely not! So does the law allow remarriage? Of course! Why then, in Heaven's name, did a perfect Lawgiver, full of righteousness and glory, ever allow such a law as this to be put forth by Moses? Was it a compromise by Yahweh, to allow for the inevitable hardness of the human heart (Matt. 19:7-8)? Is that what Yeshua meant when He said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives"?

The answer is a surprising "yes". Yahweh seems to be saying He would rather see a spouse free to pursue another marriage with another who truly loves them, than be stuck with a mate who does not love them. While Yahweh was not condoning the hardness of heart, He also wanted to spare the woman from having to live with such hardheartedness. However, every avenue of counsel and effort should be exhausted over a long period of time to address the "issues", whatever they may be. But, in the end, the Deut 24 law would act as an emotional safety valve, allowing for the lesser of two evils.

How many bills of divorce could a Pharisee, Sadducee, scribe, or Jewish lawyer, or businessman living in first century Palestine, issue his serial wives before he would be embarrassed to face the community at large. Rather than be faced with the social stigma of such a track record, it is probable that many of the religious hypocrites of Yeshua's day were neglecting to obey Deut. 24's command to issue the apostasion^[4] (the bill of divorce, called "get" in Hebrew). I adduce as evidence for this the fact that in Mark 10 they called it a permit or allowance, instead of what Christ called it, a solid demand of the Law. I explain in the following pericope.

Mark 10 Exposes the Rabbis Hypocrisy in Matter of Divorce

A closer look at Mark 10:2ff. will give us a hint as to why and how the Deut. 24 Law was being misused by the Jewish men of Christ's day to abuse their women.[see footnote 4] The Pharisees came to Him (v. 2) and asked Him,

"Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" [R. Hillel, whose teaching many 1st C. Pharisees followed, taught that one could do so for any cause, just as in the Muslim religion.] But [Yeshua answered them, "What did Moses *command* you? And they said, Moses *suffered* (i.e. allowed/permitted) us to write a bill of divorce (Greek is *apostasion*), and to put her away (Greek *apoluo*).

Yeshua implies strongly in Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9 that men were putting away their wives for reasons other than *porneia*, simply out of the hardness of their hearts, i.e. for largely carnal reasons. But in order to cover up their carnality and hard-to-please attitude, they were also neglecting to issue the bill of

divorce, causing the woman and her new husband to commit adultery. The woman would be merely “put away” (Gr. =*apoluo*), not legally divorced. Also factoring into the sociology of this time period in Jewish history is the fact that Judaism, contrary to the Torah passages already looked at, did not recognize a woman’s right to initiate divorce. Hence, the women of this evil time were being left in legal limbo, i.e. out of house and home, but not free to marry another man. It is interesting to note, that later, after the Temple was destroyed and the Jews were left desolate, the rabbis came to the conclusion that it had all come about because “*they hated without a cause.*” While this certainly applied to what they did to Jesus and the Jewish Christians, it also applied to their adoption of Hillel’s^[5] (rabbinic school of Hillel founded during the reign of Herod the Great) heinous license with respect to divorce and remarriage, and how they were treating their women.

The bill of divorce was a command because it formalized the break, thus barring the man from leaving his woman in marital limbo the rest of her natural life. And this is the situation we find the Savior addressing—where spouses have been put away, but not legally divorced (Matt. 5:32, 19:9, Mk. 10:11-12, and Luke 16:18). If He is talking about any other situation other than this, then we make Yeshua’s statements false. Notice, Yeshua says in the Mark 10 passage quoted above, “Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, commits adultery against her.” But Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 He tells them the husband can put away and marry another, if she has committed porneia. Furthermore, Mark 10 cannot be a contradiction of Exod. 21:10-11, because the scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). In Mark, Yeshua is speaking of a spouse who is putting away their mate for no lawful reason, so they can go and marry another. This interpretation fits the context of the passage, in which the doctors of the law wanted to justify putting away for any reason, and then pretend that the issuing of the bill of divorce was optional on their part.

Likewise, Matt. 5:32 must not be interpreted so as to do away with Deut. 24 or Exod. 21, because we are not to think that Yeshua came to do away with any portion of the Law (Matt. 5:19). The only thing “done away” was the sacrificial code that He was about to fulfill on Calvary, since it was only added until the Seed should come to whom the promise was made (Gal. 3:19).

It must be pointed out in Matt. 5:32 that the word “divorced” in the KJV is a flagrant mistranslation of the Greek word *apoluo*, which they translated “put away” earlier in the very same verse (and in vs. 31 also). *Apoluo* is not the Greek word for divorce. That word is *apostasion* (see footnote # 3 below). Matt. 5:31, 32 should be translated,

“Whosoever shall put away (*apoluo*) his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement (*apostasion*). Whosoever shall put way (*apoluo*) his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery, and whosoever marries her that is *put away* (*apoluo*) commits adultery.”

All three times *apostasion* occurs in the New Testament, it refers to the legal document of Deut. 24:1. The Septuagint uses the same word there for “bill of divorce”.

Luke 16:17 says “it is easier for the heavens and the earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law (Torah) to fail.” That includes Exod. 21:11 and Deut. 24:1-4. These come under the category of the immutable judgments of Yahweh, which are the under-girding of His very throne (Ps. 97:2): “Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne.” They are good, just, and holy laws which serve their purpose, which to protect the island of the innocent and lovingly shield and free the unloved.

Paul's Teaching in I Cor. 7 Runs Counter to the No-Remarriage Myth of Fundamentalism

Paul clearly debunks the “no-remarriage” myth in I Cor. 7. It seems to me that if the only two kinds of people who can marry are widows and virgins, then Paul and the Holy Spirit should have stated this succinctly in this, the main chapter addressing such concerns in all of Paul's numerous epistles. Then we could have all been saved a lot of time and trouble, and spared a great deal of haggling and arguing over a difficult issue. Instead, he says the “*unmarried* and widows” (v. 8) may marry (v. 9). He does not address virgins until vs. 25. Verse 27 is most interesting:

"Are you bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife."

If, as some try to say, the only way to be “loosed from a wife” is via death, then why didn't Paul use the term “widow” instead? He may recommend not seeking a wife, but he says if you marry (after being loosed from a wife), you have not sinned. This sounds very harmonious with Deut. 24:4-5 (“when a man has taken a *new* wife”). In fact, Paul, in treating the subject of an unbelieving spouse who departs from the believer, expressly states that the original marriage contract “has not enslaved” the left-behind believer. That is the meaning of the Greek word *douloo* used in I Cor. 7:15:

"But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart; a brother or a sister has not been enslaved."

[\[6\]](#)

It makes no sense to use such strong language in declaring the freedom of the forsaken believer in such an instance, and then argue, as some do, that somehow it is not freedom to remarry. Pseudo-fundamentalist constructions of Paul's and Christ's ethical teaching are less “free” than the law of Moses, strangely enough. The same word *douloo* is used by Paul to describe our *being made bondservants* to righteousness (Rom. 6:18). Therefore, we conclude that I Cor. 7:15 looses the believer from any legal obligation to serve their departing spouse. No doubt (for reasons he has elucidated in II Cor. 6:14-16), he says “let them depart,” as if to say “better to be at peace with yourself and the Lord, than to be yoked to a displeased, strife-causing, unbelieving spouse.” “If her husband be dead [spiritually or literally], she is at liberty to marry whom she will, only in the Lord (I Cor. 7:39).” If the unbeliever is “pleased to dwell” with the believer, then none of this applies. “Let her not send him away.” (the correct rendering of the Greek) is Paul's instruction (see I Cor. 7:13). Likewise, “If any brother has a wife that believes not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not send her away.” (I Cor. 7:12)

Another reason that Paul is not talking about widows in I Cor. 7:27 when he says “Are you loosed from a wife?” is because he has already addressed them categorically in verses 8 and 9. If “loosed from a wife” (Gr. *lelusai*) meant a widow, then verses 27-28 would be redundant.

Binding and loosing ([deō](#) #1210 and [lelusai](#) #3089) are polar opposites. The authority to do either was given to the apostles in Matt. 16:19. These are the same words used in I Cor. 7:27. Matt. 16 shows that these words imply broad authority to decide the legal or moral status of a person, their sins, marriage, or any other matter that the Word of Yahweh addresses. [Deō](#) is used in Acts 20:22, where Paul was compelled or bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. Thus, common sense compels us to see “loosed from a wife” as **divorced**, the opposite of bound to a wife, which phrase means **married**.

When I Cor. 7:39 and Rom. 7:2 declare that a wife is bound by the Law (Torah) to her husband so long as he lives, it is talking about a man who is fulfilling the basic Torah requirements that make him a husband. Why do we persist in calling men husbands who are not fulfilling The Law of the Husband? “Husband” is a sacred office and title shared by Yeshua in His role toward Israel and the Church [see Eph. 5, Hosea 2:16, Jer. 3:20]. One is not entitled to the title simply because one has walked down the

aisle and made a vow. It is the one who loves in deed and truth (I John 3:18) who we call “Husband.” So likewise, it is only those wise virgins who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, who get to go into the Wedding Supper and become the Bride of Christ.

However, it must be noted in the story of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel—where Yahweh Himself directly meted out the punishment—that Yahweh never did strip Cain of his office of father and husband! We should be equally reluctant to deprive a man of these roles, and reluctant to tolerate a woman who abuses the world’s court system to get her way, without first letting the elders in the Church judge the situation.

The passages in Matt. 5, 19, Mark 10, Luke 16, I Cor. 7, and Rom. 7 which talk about husbands, are not even talking about men who have abandoned the home, or who come home drunk several times a month, who dissipate their income on gambling, personal habits, and luxuries at the expense of their children’s needs, or those who indulge in sports and foul habits while neglecting their own offspring and wife. And I would go so far as to say that a man whose heart is so bound up with covetousness, lovelessness, and /or unconquered, inordinate lusts is in danger of *gehenna* fire, much less losing his family. These things undermine the very purpose of the relationship, which is to model love (Mal. 2:15). This is true no matter how good a provider he or she is. The obligation of “conjugal dues” of Exod. 21:11 is more than just sex. It is the expression of and deeds of love, kindness, affection, thoughtfulness, gentleness, faithfulness, and outgoing concern displayed throughout any given week, and month to month.

We tend to emphasize the rampant lawlessness prophesied by Paul for “the latter days” before Christ returns—men being lovers of their own selves, boasters, proud, unholy, unthankful, without natural affection, covenant-breaker, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despiser of good people and things, traitors, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (II Tim 3:1-5). How then can we turn right around and insist that spouses “stick it out” with these very kinds of people, no matter how unwilling they are to change or seek help. This does not make sense, or adorn the doctrine of God our Savior (Titus 2:10).

I have been in ministry on the road for almost twenty-five years, and I have seen children and wives lose their lives because the pastor had not the courage or the discernment to tell a woman the hard decisions she needed to make in order to protect herself and ensure the safety and welfare of the children. As Dr. James Dobson has said, there are women who “love too much.” In Springfield, MO. Back in the 1980’s I once heard of an Adventist woman who lost her life along with her two small children to a deranged church-going father who should have been recognized as demon-possessed long before the murder-suicide came about.

I have also seen women who’ve stuck it out so long with mean, abusive men that their own personalities became warped because of the perceived need to continuously use false coping mechanisms, such as regression, self-delusion, lying and deceit. Woefully unsatisfied emotional needs lead to grossly distorted perceptions of reality and inability to trust or believe in anyone, including God Himself. They wanted, perhaps, spiritual leadership and devotion, but instead they found themselves the victim of the axiom “Evil communication (companionships) corrupt good manners.” (I Cor. 15:33)

What fellowship can the righteous [spouse] have with the unrighteous?” (II Cor. 6:14) The example of the believing spouse is supposed to sanctify and draw the unbelieving spouse toward righteousness (I Cor. 7:14). If that does not come about, there is a problem. People either draw closer together or they grow farther apart. Either the believer is not exemplifying the love of Christ, or the unbeliever is refusing to be sanctified and affected by the believer’s example.

Now at the same time we have had “lawlessness abounding, and the love of many waxing cold” (Matt. 24:12), and almost a wholesale degeneration of character, commitment, and the institution of marriage, we have ignored another trend among the religious folks to set up extra-Biblical, super-

righteous standards that make life miserable or cheat believers out of legitimate enjoyment. Phariseeism invented even more ridiculous, unscriptural particulars after the fall of the Temple. Sabbath restrictions of the rabbis became progressively more ludicrous during 2nd and 3rd Centuries as a means of exerting dominion over their fellow Jews. Christian Gnosticism and Asceticism gained many converts the further down the road from the Apostolic Age the Church progressed. Jerome insisted celibacy was the ideal, that Jesus had no brothers or sisters, contrary to the gospel accounts, that Mary was a perpetual virgin and was “immaculately” conceived herself. How many millions of pagans have been turned off and away from The Faith over the millennia by unreasonable, unwarranted claims on people’s lives, all done in the name of the Bible or the Church? Prohibition against even the moderate use of wine and alcohol, prohibitions against dancing and romantic music for even married couples. Insanely Victorian prudery even spilled over into some of the marital instruction given by the prophetess of 7th Day Adventist fame, Ellen G. White to the effect that couples were told to limit intercourse to once every three months.

But over-much “righteousness”^[7] and strictness was prophesied for the latter days by the Apostle Paul in I Tim. 4:1-2:

"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from The Faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron: Forbidding to **marry**, and commanding to abstain from meats and foods which Elohim/God has created to be received with thanksgiving by them which believe and know the truth."

The consignment of divorcees to a perpetual life of living alone, unmated, is part and parcel of what the Spirit had in mind when He used the phrase “forbidding to marry.” The Sabbatarian churches have largely taught that this refers to the Catholic Church’s teaching forbidding priests and nuns from marrying. But that is hardly unique to the latter days, dating as it does to pre-Christian pagan religions. No doubt this interpretation was a convenient diversion away from the horrifying fruits of Herbert Armstrong’s own No-remarriage policy (discontinued in 1974). If you were living happily with a second mate and new children, they regarded it as adultery, no matter what the circumstances were in the first marriage that brought it to an end. Therefore, they made you separate with your second mate before you could attend their church! This teaching caused much emotional devastation in the homes of new converts. What a mountain of misery Herbert Armstrong and the Church of God 7th Day have inflicted on divorcees with this stubborn, fleshly, misguided pursuit of righteousness. The fruits of this diabolical teaching failed to move the church’s leadership to relent, until finally Ken Westby and forty other ministers revolted against dictatorial, oppressive policies such as this in 1974. Elder Raymond Cole and Richard Nichols of the Bible Sabbath Association refused to budge, and there remains a contingent who cling to this miserable teaching to this day.

I do not hesitate in stereotyping every person I’ve tried to talk to who holds this doctrine of devils as being very stubborn, implacable to reason and scriptural evidence. It is usually the ones who have been blessed with long-standing, good marriages who will take this position, rarely those who have gone through the hell of unfaithfulness or loneliness. The same people who would not think of interpreting the New Testament to do away with the weekly Sabbath or Yahweh’s annual holy days, manage to find a way to pit our Savior’s teaching against the wisdom and practicality of Deut. 24:1-4 and Exod. 21:10-11.

Their unthinking stubbornness is borne of Pharisaical self-righteousness. For they bind upon the divorcee “heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, but they themselves will not move them with one of their little fingers.” (Matt. 23:4) May Yahweh forgive them, for they know not what they do.

^[1] The Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, i.e. the Old Testament.

^[2] As Isaiah says, “O My people, they which lead thee cause you to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.”

^[3] Rom. 10:2-3 applies to many in the Church as much as the Jews: “For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”

^[4] Apostasion is used in the Septuagint’s Greek in the Deut. 24 passage (“bill of divorcement”), as well as in Jer. 3:8 and Isa. 50:1.

^[5] Hillel understood the expression “thing of uncleanness” in Deut. 24:1 in a wider sense as referring to almost any cause of displeasure on the part of the husband, such as an ill-cooked meal, burnt toast, or the sight of a more beautiful woman [see Jewish Publication Society Tanakh’s notes on Deut. 24]. However, the same expression-“thing of uncleanness” is used in Deut. 23:14 to refer to body effluents that were to be buried by the Israelites, lest Yahweh, who was sojourning among them, should turn away from their midst.

^[6] See marginal note in E.W. Bullinger’s Companion Bible.

^[7] Solomon warned against this in Eccle. 7:16—“Do not be excessively righteous, and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself?”