

# **DEALING WITH DIVORCE**

**By:**

**Dr. E. Harold Henderson**

Dr. E. Harold Henderson was for 25 years, from 1972-1997, the principal English language speaker on LifeWord Broadcast, an international radio outreach of the Baptist Missionary Association of America. Dr. Henderson was the Writer of Adult Sunday School Quarterly (Baptist Publishing House, Little Rock, AR) for 39 & ½ years. He authored four books and numerous religious periodicals.

© LifeWord Broadcast Ministries  
Conway, Arkansas  
Reprinted by permission

Prisoners Bible Crusade  
2212 Stonecypher Road  
Lucedale, MS 39452

## **CONTENTS**

<b>THE LAW OF MOSES ON DIVORCE</b>	<b>-----Page 1</b>
<b>THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON DIVORCE</b>	<b>--- Page 3</b>
<b>THE TEACHING OF PAUL ON DIVORCE</b>	<b>---- Page 4</b>
<b>THE EFFECT OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN</b>	<b>-- Page 6</b>
<b>THE REMEDY PROVIDED FOR DIVORCE</b>	<b>--- Page 7</b>

### **The Law Of Moses On Divorce**

God designed marriage so that it would bless the lives of the husband and wife so long as each lived. Not every marriage realizes the divine ideal, however. Some marriages do not endure and some that endure do not bring a blessing to the married partners.

It is important, therefore, that we understand the Bible teaching on the subject of the termination of marriage. There are two basic methods recognized in Scripture by which a marriage can be terminated perpetually; One is death (Rom. 7:1-3); the other is divorce (Deut. 24:1A). We have little problem understanding the termination of marriage by death, but there is much problem concerning the termination of marriage by divorce. Therefore, it is urgent that we seek out the Bible teaching on the subject of divorce.

An understanding of divorce must begin with an understanding of marriage as God designed it. The Bible is clear that God intended one man and one woman to live

together as husband and wife without the union being broken. Human beings did not live up to that ideal. The "one flesh" union was broken in case after case. So it was because of the hardness of man's hearts that God permitted divorce to be entered into divine law, though He never designed marriage to be ended that way (Matt. 19:8).

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 sets forth the statement of Mosaic law concerning divorce: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in 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. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

Why was that divorce permission written into the Mosaic law? It was not for the purpose of giving a legal way to permit married people to get out of an unpleasant relationship. It was to restrict the far too common practice of a man simply driving his wife out of his house upon his whim. It set a legal form which made it more difficult to divorce a wife. It made the divorce a legal and public affair and not a private matter. It was a protection of the wife against an unceremonious expulsion from her home and children.

In ancient times, a woman could not take a job in public employment to support herself as women can do today. She had to be supported by a man: her father, husband, relative, become a slave, or be a prostitute. You can see the great need for protection of a woman from being cast out by a husband who did not love her and no longer wanted her.

What were the reasons permitted in the Mosaic law for divorce? Deuteronomy 24:1 speaks of "uncleanness" as a valid basis. Rabbi Shammai interpreted that "uncleanness" to be moral uncleanness - adultery. Rabbi Hillel interpreted that "uncleanness" to be almost any thing which displeased the husband: improper seasoning of his food, burn the food, go into street with her hair loose, talk to another man, talk loud enough for neighbors to hear, etc. The interpretation of the law still permitted abuse.

Adultery was a valid reason for divorce in ancient times. It was not considered adultery when a man took a second wife or a concubine. But if he dishonored the free wife of a Hebrew, it was so serious a crime that it received the death sentence (Deut. 22:22; Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10).

Religious error was sometimes the reason for divorce. You remember how Ezra required the Hebrew men to put away their pagan wives (Ezra 10:2, 44). The reason was that God had forbidden such marriages in the first place (Deut. 7:1-6). That principle lies behind the Apostle Paul's teaching that if a Christian is married to a non-

Christian, let them not part. But if the non-Christian is not willing to live with a Christian partner and deserts the home, "a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases" (I Cor. 7:12-15).

The wife was free to divorce her husband if he failed to provide her food, raiment, and the duty of marriage (Ex. 21:7-11). That suggests the freedom of husband or wife to divorce the other, and the obligation each had toward the marriage obligation.

There were two specific instances where divorce was strictly forbidden forever. If a husband accused his wife of moral infidelity before marriage, and the charge was proven false, he could not divorce her under any circumstance (Deut. 22:13-19). And secondly, if a man seduced a virgin girl, he was required to marry her and could not divorce her for life (Deut. 22:28, 29). That would indicate God was not giving the legal provision of divorce simply to make it easy for a couple to end an unpleasant marriage relationship.

What about remarriage of one who is divorced? The Old Testament recognizes the right to divorce included the right to remarry. It says of the woman given a bill of divorcement and sent away from her husband's house, "she may go, and be another man's wife" (Deut. 24:2). The Old Testament also recognized that a divorced couple could turn again and remarry each other, thus re-establishing their home. That was the symbol God used when He promised Israel that, though He had forsaken her, He would take her again (Isa. 54:6,7). The Apostle Paul applied that principle in I Cor. 7:10,11. A divorced couple cannot return and re-establish their marriage relationship after either of them has married another whether the second partner is living or dead - "for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin" (Deut. 24:4).

Why are there such stringent laws set upon divorce in the Old Testament? Because God designed marriage to be a one-man-and-one-woman-for-life arrangement. Even though He permits divorce, He does not prefer it. The marriage contract is more than emotional a man and a woman "love" one another. It is more than legal the couple obeys the law of the land concerning marriage. It is spiritual the home is to be a kind of other heaven on earth by which lives can be fulfilled, children can be trained, and God can be glorified. Stringent laws are set around marriage to protect its sanctity.

I sincerely hope you have a happy home and a fulfilling marriage. I hope divorce, which is a problem to so many, is not a problem to you. However, remember that divorce is not an unpardonable sin. A divorced person is not a second-class Christian if his heart is right with God. Keep your devotion firmly settled on God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He will put meaning into your life whether you are married or not.

### **The Teaching Of Jesus On Divorce**

Divorce is a major problem which is threatening the stability of the home in the present generation. In the United States of America, one marriage in three is ending in divorce. Parents without partners, children who are torn between separated parents, the emotional trauma of a married person who is suddenly left without a partner, and kindred problems relating to the break-up of the home is a major area with which counselors are dealing today.

That is why I have chosen to pursue a series of studies with you concerning the Bible teaching on divorce. We have already reviewed the basic Old Testament passages which speak on the subject of divorce. Let us turn now to the teachings of Jesus and find His word concerning it.

There are three passages of scripture recorded in the Gospels which report Jesus' teaching on divorce. Matthew 19:3-12 is the most fully developed discussion, but Matt. 5:31, 32 and Mark 10:2-12 give some extra light on His thinking. We will review those three passages.

*Matthew 19:3-12 "Then the Pharisees also came unto him tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 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. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."*

That passage has been a battle ground for centuries. Some say it is a "kingdom ethic" which is not applicable today, but will apply during the millennial reign of Christ. Others hold it is to be applied strictly today, with adultery being the only basis for divorce and remarriage not permitted even then. Between those two extremes must be what Jesus said and meant.

Jesus recognized the prevalence of divorce in His day, verse 3. Men were putting away their wives "for every cause." Like the ancient Rabbi Hillel, they believed anything which displeased the husband was sufficient ground for divorce if he desired it. Of course, they were wrong.

Jesus recognized the unity of marriage, verses 4-6. He would not discuss divorce without discussing first God's design in marriage. He looked all the way back to the creation of the first man and woman (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:7, 18-25). What did God intend to be the nature of marriage then? Jesus said God intended them to be "*one flesh*." God "*joined together*" the husband and wife. God did not intend that man "*put asunder*" that which God "*joined together*." Marriage is an inseparable union in the purpose of God.

Jesus explained the law of Moses. Why is there provision for the legal procedure in Deut. 24:1-4, placed in the law of God by Moses, if God did not intend for husband and wives to divorce. Jesus said, "That provision was set up because of the hardness of your hearts." It was for the protection of the innocent party, and to place some restrictions on an abuse already current, which caused the law to be placed in the Mosaic code.

Jesus made a distinction between the Divine intention and the Divine permission, verse 8. God's intention was that marriage would endure for a lifetime. Men abused that divine intention. They were breaking the "one flesh" union and innocent parties were suffering as a result of it. Therefore, God permitted a legal procedure of divorce for the protection of the innocent party.

Jesus stressed the seriousness of the act when a married person rejected his partner and took another, verse 9. He stresses two truths. Divorce and remarriage is an act of adultery unless the other partner in marriage has been guilty of fornication. The inference is that divorce and remarriage is permissible where there has been immorality involved. And secondly, absence of moral infidelity does not leave either partner free to remarry without committing adultery. To understand how serious that was with the Lord, remember He was speaking from an Old Testament background which pronounced the death penalty upon one who committed adultery (Deut. 22:22; Lev. 20:10). Monogamy family life was destroyed by adultery and divorce could follow. Observe, however, that adultery is permitted but not required when a partner is unfaithful. It is no sin to live with an unfaithful partner in order to restore the marriage.

Jesus surprised the disciples by so strict an interpretation of the divorce laws, verses 9-12. They said, "Lord it is better not to marry if divorce is that strict." He replied that some should never marry, but that marriage was the normal status for the vast majority of humans.

Matthew 5:31, 32 and Mark 10:2-12. The two other references recorded of Jesus' discussion of divorce add little to the lengthy discussion of Matt. 19:3-12. Matthew 5:32 indicates Jesus expected a divorced person to remarry, for He said the man who puts away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, "*causes her to commit adultery*." In other words, she will remarry. Mark 10:2-12 repeat the basic principles of Matt. 19:3-12, with one addition. The statement, "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her*," indicates that adultery is

not just with someone but also against the married partner. Those two insights help round out the discussion of Jesus on the vital subject of divorce.

Let us summarize. Divorce is a fact of life, and has been since time immemorial. It is because of the hardness of the hearts of men and women. God did not design marriage with the intention that it should be terminated and re-entered at will. A blessed and happy home must be free from the disruptions of separation and divorce. The innocent often suffer the most when a divorce occurs. Divorce is approved by the Lord Jesus only when there has been a moral violation of the marriage relationship. Scriptural divorce carries with it the scriptural right to remarry; divorce without scriptural basis does not carry the right to another marriage.

Divorce is tragic, but it is not an unpardonable sin. You can know peace with God, whatever your marital status may be. But your greater happiness will be experienced when you live by God's intention in every area of life.

### **The Teaching Of Paul On Divorce**

*"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.*

*I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. 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. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not and she be pleased to dwell with him let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called*

*every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches" (I Cor. 7:1-17).*

That extended text is the only recorded instance where the Apostle Paul discussed the subject of marriage and divorce to any length. It makes a significant contribution to an understanding of the New Testament teaching on the subject. Let us review the passage and look for principles which will give insight for today.

It is right and good that people marry, verses 1, 2. There were some situations in Corinth which made marriage a particular problem at that time. It was called "*the present distress*" in I Cor. 7:26. That was why Paul said it was good that "*a man not touch a woman.*" That principle is not to be applied to all situations, however. God instituted marriage and it is holy. Paul states in specific words that marriage is the basis of moral purity. It is a protection against immorality as well as a foundation for the home and the training of children. Hebrews 13:4 says it this way, "*Marriage should be respected by everyone and the marriage relation kept sacred, but God will punish those who are immoral and adulterous*" (paraphrase). No one is a second-class Christian because he is married.

There are mutual obligations which rest upon husband and wife in marriage, verses 36. Each has the right to receive the conjugal rights provided willingly by the other. Neither has sole authority over his-her own body. Withholding sexual relations must never be used as a punishment of the partner, nor the giving of sexual favors a mere reward. To refuse and deprive the partner of what is his-her due is a monstrous offense. The only time when sexual denial is practiced should be by mutual consent; for a set period of time; for spiritual exercises, and with prior agreement to enter into the husband-and-wife relations. To do otherwise is to expose one's self and one's partner to temptation because of lack of control over the fleshly passions. Each partner is obligated to behave himself and to minister to the other partner in the intimate matters.

It is best that some people not marry, verses 7-9. Circumstances in the life of the individual and the condition in which they live will determine whether marriage is advisable to the person who seeks God's will.

Those who are already married should remain married, verses 10, 11. Difficult circumstances should not be permitted to break the home. There should be no separation; but if there is separation the parties should remain unmarried until they can be reconciled and re-establish their home. (Laws which favor single people with greater welfare payments than married people must not persuade married persons to divorce and continue to live together, as some have done.) Whatever the distress, God can provide the way for those who honor Him by faithful obedience to His will. Divorce is admission of a marital bankruptcy; it is a last resort. Those married should remain married.

Religiously mixed marriages are legal before God, verses 12-17. That answers the question, "Is a couple married in the sight of God if they are not both Christians?" The Bible answer is an emphatic "Yes!" Paul spoke of a Christian wife with a non-

Christian husband, or a Christian husband with a non-Christian wife. He said the unbelieving partner is "*sanctified*" by the believing partner. Otherwise, the children would be born under a stain. But not so. Children born to a religiously-mixed marriage are pure. (Marriage is an institution God set in human society, like the government, and is valid even if both partners are not Christian.) That is no basis for divorce.

Desertion of a Christian partner by a non-Christian partner breaks the marriage bond and frees the Christian partner from the obligation of marriage, verse 15. Observe, however, that the initiative to leave must be taken by the non-Christian. Let the Christian live with him and seek to win him to Christian faith. But if the unbeliever is determined to separate, the Christian should let him go. The Christian is not under compulsion or moral obligation to maintain the marriage relationship any longer. God has designed that marriage be lived in peace. What about remarriage under such circumstances? The Bible does not say distinctly. My personal opinion is that "*not under bondage*" means the innocent party is free to be married to whom he-she wills "*in the Lord*" as if the other partner were dead (Rom. 7:1-3).

What insight does the study give concerning divorce? It adds to the other New Testament references. Elsewhere, adultery is grounds for divorce; here, desertion is added to those grounds by which divorce can be secured.

Our greater concern, however, is not how to get out of a bad marriage. It is how to make every marriage good as God intended. If you are considering divorce, set your heart to seek every possible alternative before you make that solemn step.

By the consent of your will and in an act of faith, surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Let Him guide you in your marriage, and every other area of life, and you will not go astray.

### **The Effect Of Divorce On Children**

A study of Bible teaching on marriage and divorce just underscores a truth we have discovered from human experience: every marriage has pressures with which it must contend. Whether the marriage is a "success" or a "failure" will depend on how the parties respond to the pressures they face. It is one of the tragedies of our generation that multitudes of people respond to problems by separation and even divorce. That is why we are investigating principles which will give help with the divorce issue.

One of the basic principles the Bible sets forth is this: Termination of marriage by divorce is not the solution to the problems faced in marriage. God never designed marriage with divorce in mind. Divorce is always a second-best way to deal with the problems encountered in marriage.

One great tragedy of divorce and the break-up of the home is the effect it has upon innocent members of the family, especially innocent children. "But is it not better,"

someone is thinking, "to divorce and get the children out of a bad home situation than to continue in it?" That is the question we will consider now. What effect does divorce have on children?

Conflict between father and mother is always hurtful to a child. They make up his world when he is small. Threats of leaving, of one taking the children away from the other, fills little hearts with dread of the unknown. It is of special difficulty when a child awakes at night and hears his parents in a verbal battle. Insecurity overwhelms him in the dark and does damage to him. That is one of the worst things parents can do to a child; it is as serious (or perhaps even more serious) than physical abuse. Parents should be mindful of what they are doing to their children when they differ and fuss with one another in the hearing of the child.

That is why some people think it is better to get a child out of the "emotional pressure cooker" of a marriage in trouble. That is not necessarily the case, however. There is something more important than getting the child out. Let him see you respond to problems and sufferings in a Godly manner. Let him learn what it means to be loving, forgiving, longsuffering, patient, kind, and all those other virtues which are manifest as a Christian deals successfully with problems.

Some time ago I heard an address entitled "Alternatives to Divorce," delivered by the Rev. Dudley Hall (available on cassette tape from Successful Christian Living Ministries, Box 101, Euless, Tex.). He set out five profound hurts which divorce brings upon a child. I want to list them and speak briefly on each one. They make one wonder whether a parent involved in getting the child out of a "bad situation" by divorce is more interested in the child or in himself.

1. Divorce teaches a child to run from a problem rather than to solve it. Now think about it. Divorce is an unspoken testimony that the problem faced in marriage either cannot be solved or the home is not important enough to go to the trouble of solving the problem.

2. Life is a whole series of problems. The child meets conflicts in his own nature, in his school, among his friends, in sports, with his brothers and sisters, in his employment or business when he grows up, and finally in his own marriage. Surely every parent wants to train up his child so he will be able to deal successfully with the conflicts he faces in life.

3. Divorce undermines what the parent tried to do in teaching the child. It bears unspoken witness that there are some problems from which you run rather than try to solve. Is that what the parent wants for his child? Is divorce preferable to working the problem through to a solution as the child observes? Which is really best for the child?

4. Divorce teaches a child that marriage is not a permanent and sacred contract, but only a matter of convenience. That is not the Biblical perspective on marriage. God says marriage is a solemn union of a man and woman in a life-long and devoted union. The child who shares in a broken home by divorce will be the

more available to be influenced by those who hold a low estimate of marriage and who reject the Bible principles governing it.

5. Divorce teaches a child that a vow is not really binding, but should be kept only so long as it is convenient and comfortable. There will come a time when he will learn the marriage vows contain the words "till death do us part." He will realize that vow was taken in marriage with God and men as a witness. He will know that his parents made that vow, but cast it aside when they ran into difficulty in keeping it.

Which is worse for the child, to see the parent work patiently through a bad home situation or to know the parent deserted his partner and broke his marriage vow because of a problem in the home?

Divorce teaches a child that personal comfort is more important than personal transformation and growth. He will think the most important thing in life is to "be happy" when it is not. The Christian can be filled with joy (that inner spiritual contentment which does not depend on outward circumstances) even when surrounded by difficulties. The child needs to know how he can have inner peace when storms beat around him.

Circumstances in life are occasions of our growth. Working through the problems of a marriage can result in development of patience, self-control, forgiveness, and kindred virtues. Which is better for the child, to see his parents run from problems or stay put and work through them?

Divorce teaches a child that there are some problems which God cannot solve. If he has any religious instruction at all, the child has been taught that God answers prayer and has power to solve every kind of problem. But for a parent to run from a marriage problem, rather than seeking God's help to work it out, tells the child that God cannot handle that kind of situation. That creates a low estimate of God in his mind, and may effect him through all of his life.

If the parent contemplating divorce is really concerned about the welfare of the child, let him consider one other thing. Divorce places the child in a position where he must take sides between parents. That is extremely difficult for the child. Even if the parents agree as to which he is to live with, or if the court makes that decision, the child still has torn loyalties. Such a divided spirit does much harm.

Think about the children. Jesus said, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:5, 6). Yes, think about the children and work out your family problems. Think about the children and flee from breaking the home by divorce.

### **The Remedy Provided For Divorce**

Is there any remedy for the problem of divorce? What can a person do when it seems divorce is the only possible solution to the conflicts experienced in marriage? Those questions indicate a desire to find a remedy or alternative to divorce. There is a remedy, praise the Lord. Your home can be saved from breaking up. Your marriage can be renewed. Here are some principles which, if followed fully, provide a remedy for divorce.

Renew your love for your mate. "But I have lost all the love I ever felt toward him-her," someone objects. That just indicates you had the wrong kind of love. You had a love which delighted to receive, and when your mate quit giving you quit loving. Love is not an accidental passion into which one "falls" without control. Love is an act of the will as well as of the heart. You can renew your love for your mate.

Here is how. Admit your love for your mate was selfish in that it was a love because of what you received from it. Resolve to love unselfishly. Admit to yourself that you have lost that love, and admit the same to God. Recognize that God loves your mate far more than you ever could, and that God can love him-her through you. Offer your body to God as the vehicle through which He can love your mate. Begin looking for needs of your mate and determine how you can meet them in acts of kindness. You follow those principles and it will surprise you how much your love will grow.

Accept responsibility for the failure of your marriage. Give up all right to pity yourself. Stop blaming your mate for all the problems. Do not be like the little child who gets in trouble with a friend and then excuses his guilt by saying, "He pushed me first!" The very idea!

It takes two to fuss. Your mate cannot offend you unless you are willing to take an offense. He cannot keep a fuss going unless you are willing to return harsh word for harsh word, or bitter spirit for bitter spirit. In a family fuss, there is no totally innocent partner.

Your worst fault might be comparing your mate to some other person you know. Perhaps another marriage does seem more serene than yours. Perhaps another person's mate may be more attractive than yours. Stop comparisons. God is not doing the same thing in them that he is in you. Look at your own circumstances, accept your part of the responsibility, make yourselves available to God, and work toward reconciliation of differences.

Forgive completely all offenses and all offenders. If your partner is not fair with you, remember we all need mercy not fairness. Jesus taught us to forgive seven times in one day, if necessary. He taught us to forgive as He has forgiven us. You can never have peace in your home until you develop a spirit of full and free forgiveness.

There are many excuses given why one cannot forgive another. There is no valid excuse. God will enable His child to be forgiving by giving the grace that is necessary.

Most marriage problems accumulate over a period of time. Finally something happens which becomes "the straw that broke the camel's back." What if each partner in marriage had kept current in forgiving each other. There would be no "final straw" in the relationship. Keep on forgiving and the load will not become unbearable.

Work at communication and stop all criticism. That might be the most challenging of all the principles. Give up all right to speak or think any kind of evil against your mate. Surrender it to God as an act of spiritual sacrifice. Leave all judgment to Him. Set yourself to communicate rather than to seek and criticize faults.

Make a list of ten points of strength in your mate. What attracted you to him-her in the first place? Emphasize those strengths in your mind. When your mate falls, look for what he or she is saying to you in falling. Look for ways to express concern, understanding and sympathy. Look for ways to strengthen that area of weakness which the failure indicated. Emphasize the strengths in your thoughts and the weaknesses will diminish.

Approach your marriage relationship with a desire to give rather than to get. Give up all expectation (or demands) that your mate will satisfy you. If your mate is insensitive, pass over his responsibilities. Expect God to give or to withhold from you as He knows is best. Look to God for the satisfaction of your needs, whether through your mate or in another way He knows is best.

Look for fulfillment in devotion to your partner in marriage. Stop depending on a counselor, friend, relative, or any other for support. God gave you a mate to "answer back" to your needs. You must find your fulfillment in that one to whom you pledged your life. There are many instances where a woman has gone to a marriage counselor for help with home problems. She found him so much more understanding, sympathetic, and willing to help than her husband that she became emotionally dependent on the counselor. It must not happen to you, whether you are man or woman. Expect God to give you fulfillment by devotion to your marriage partner.

Establish a clear conscience with every member of your family and with any other persons involved in the relationship. Let no person ever be able to say, "You wronged me and never tried to make it right." Create that kind of attitude which is willing to right any wrong and do whatever you can to effect reconciliation of differences.

That is not easy. You must deal honestly with God in order to deal honestly with people. Ask Him to show you, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, what needs to be corrected and with whom the issue is to be settled and how is the best way to establish reconciliation. You are not responsible for the wrongs others do, but you are responsible for those you do. Settle them and have "a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly" (Heb. 13:18).

And so, we have drawn to the conclusion of our study on divorce. We have investigated Bible teaching on the subject in the Old Testament and in the New, concluding that divorce was not in God's original plan for marriage but was added because of the evil in the hearts of men. Then we looked at the effects of divorce on

innocent children, and finally at how to head off the course that is heading toward divorce court. There is one other word.

Let your will be broken, that you can live with your marriage partner according to the standards God has set. Take up a servant heart which is glad to spend and be spent for your mate, whether your devotion is returned or not. Commit every day, with its blessings and burdens, to God. Forgive what He forgives and whom He forgives. Be the vessel through whom God can pour forth His love upon all, even the unlovely. That way, you will manifest before your family and friends that you are truly a child of your Father who is in heaven. That way your good works will be like a light before people to point them to Him in whom alone is fullness of life here and hereafter.