

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Question about marriage**Question about marriage - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/14 4:46**

Hi everyone,

I just heard a very interesting sermon (yes, on sermonindex) about a person who was a heathen and got married to two women. He later became a christian, and the preacher was saying what he thought he was to do.

So before I tell you what he said, I am just wondering what are your opinions? Does he get to keep both of them, or does he divorce one or does he only get to keep one but not divorce the other, basically condemning her to a life of singleness?

Just wondering what you guys think...

Re: Question about marriage, on: 2007/7/14 12:05

If we are to give spiritual counseling to this man using God's Word, I believe the first question he would need to ask himself is which one did not God tell him to marry? Did he tell him to marry the first, the second, either one of them, or neither of them? In view of the scriptures I believe we can safely say, if these marriages took place after the New Covenant, God did tell him to marry both of women and possibly neither one. If God did not join either together then he would need to divorce both of them to be in keeping of what God has joined together. What God hath joined together let no man separate. In the scriptures the Church is "the Bride and Christ is "the Bride Groom" of the Church. This is a marriage covenant in the scriptures. He must cleave to her and her only and she must respect HIS authority. When a man loves a woman as Christ loves the church, then the woman would not have a problem with submission. When both people do it as the Word says, it works. A Christian man is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave HIMSELF for her. This would not be possible for a man to accomplish having two wives. That's why Jesus in a Christian life must be first and foremost. If Jesus is not first and foremost in our lives we are committing spiritual adultery. I know a man who has been married to 3 wives. 12 years to the first, 1 year to the second, 20 years to the third only the last marriage of 20 years and the one that what requested in prayer has any of the marriages been effective a healthy relationship with each other and in putting Christ first in our marriage. Many times we do not ask HIM whom we are to marry then we don't want to wait for the answer and to be joined to the person and that is why we have so many divorces. There are many sins we cannot go back and fix. If committed a sin and we killed someone, we could get forgiveness but we could not bring them back, but we could get HIS forgiveness. If we steal something we can be forgiven. When a woman makes the mistake of having an abortion she can be forgiven even though she can't go back give birth to the baby she aborted, if we marry a person God has not chosen we can be forgiven. Often in an earthly sense we cannot fix or change what has happened in the past and it causes pain for many people but he can fix it with HIS forgiveness. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He did come for the righteous but to save sinners, it is not the healthy that need a doctor but the sick needs the great physician. Only the people that have sins can be forgiven. I know I don't love the Lord as I need to love HIM, but I want to, is it possible to love HIM as much as He loves us? I don't think so.

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/14 20:32

Well, if he was a heathen when he got married to these two women, it's safe to say that God did not tell him to marry either one - he did so by his own choosing. And it's also safe to say that God forgave him since he did not know until he became a christian that what he did was not according to scriptures, but the question still stands, does he get to have two wives after that? If all 3 are converted and both wives love him, is he allowed according to Scriptures to keep them both?

The preacher I heard said that he only gets to live with one, (I'm assuming he meant just to separate physically from the other and not divorce her since that would be against the bible), and also have limitations on what he can be in the church (for example the Bible says that an elder must be the husband of only one wife, therefore this individual could never be an elder).

Anyways, I'm not in a position where I feel a burden to reach a conclusion in this matter, since I am not a pastor to which this issue has been brought, nor am I looking for an argument, but just contemplating the Christian approach to certain scenarios for which I know the Bible has an answer, I have found that has helped me understand God better.

In Christ

Re:, on: 2007/7/14 21:26

I'm certainly not a Pastor or an elder either, so I was just thinking outloud in my heart and recalling the scriptures on the matter. I reread my post and I left out an important "not" as in Go did not tell him to marry both. oops. I could not hold either position elder or pastor for the reasons mentioned not to say that I meet any of the other requirements. As for the husbands of one wife I would think that would also disqualify a single man and I'm not looking for an argument either. Just thinking outloud again from my memory of the scriptures. I agree he must have been a heathen if he married two at the same time. The thought I was thinking was does a lost person's marriage considered in the eyes of the Lord, Holy Matrimony if both the man and woman are lost. I know it is legal in the bounds of government law, but how does he look on a marriage between two unbelievers?

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/15 15:04

Good question.

I think that God would still count a marriage as valid even if it happened when a couple was non-christian, simply because if that was not the case, then God would have to require every heathen couple that became christian to remarry. And that's not even mentioning people that would see it as a way out of a marriage they don't like and say, "God didn't tell me to marry this person - I'll not remarry them and wait for 'the one' that God will now show me". Imagine what a horrible witness that would be to the world!

Personally, I'm starting to lean on the idea that what that preacher said was right - he only gets to live with one wife (while not divorcing the other).

It would still be nice to be able to find some verses that support that though, because as of now, it's more just an opinion

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2007/7/15 16:51

I would say that he has to remain married to the first one he took as his wife.....and as regarding divorce, there is scripture in which men put away UNLAWFUL wives (Ezra 9-10). God hates the putting away of COVENANT spouses (see Mal. 2---the wife of one's youth).

It is my belief that God joins the first marriages of ALL people---unbeliever and believer. Coming to faith later is important in regards to putting away unlawful relationships---adultery, fornication, incest, multiple marriage partners, etc. Salvation does not change a sinful relationship into a lawful one, so in this case, having a second wife is now akin to Adultery against the first, per Jesus' teachings on one man/one woman FOR LIFE.

Blessings.....

Ps. Zeal, here is a great link to look over in regards to marital practices: www.marriagedivorce.com

Re: Question about marriage - posted by vasilef (), on: 2007/7/16 8:21

Around the first century it was not forbidden by the Civil Law to have more wives. However the apostles taught that the Christians should have only one wife. If someone with two or more wives converted he should stay with all of them but he could not be an elder or overseer in the church.

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Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2007/7/16 10:30

It was taught that ELDERS should have but one wife... not that all believers should be monogamous. But elders were also supposed to set a standard and reflect Jesus, so I can see how this is more widely applied.

In Africa in the mid 1800's there was a revival among a polygamous tribe of African natives. The missionaries insisted that they must divorce all but one of their wives. This meant that hundreds of women were left without husbands or support. Many of them starved, their children died, many of them had to sell themselves into a life of prostitution.

Although the intentions of the missionaries were good, the results ended in much suffering.

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2007/7/16 14:57

Hello Vasilef,

Could you provide evidence of the Early Church's acceptance of polygamy continuing in new converts' lives? I have the ECF's writings (Antenicene) and I don't recall reading this practice in the early church, but I may surely have missed something. Thank you. Blessings.....

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2007/7/16 15:00

Hello Iansmith,

I believe the missionaries were correct to tell the men, as Christians, they were only to have one wife. However, it seems that they left off an important aspect of being a Christian man----he is to provide for those who he is responsible for (ie; wives he took unlawfully as well as those children produced in the relationship). In other words, if a man gets himself into an unlawful relationship, he still needs to provide for those who come out of that relationship in need.....Blessings...
....

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 15:50

I agree with lastblast... remain married to the first wife, legally divorce the second, and accept the fact that this person can serve the Lord, but only in a limited capacity.

There is another option that I am surprised no one thought of.... he could simply convert to Mormonism! :-P

I love my dear wife with all my heart and soul, but I can't imagine living with two women... Further proof that Joseph Smith was a nut-job.

Krispy

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/16 16:11

But isn't divorcing against the Bible? I don't know, it just kind of seems wrong to correct something against the Bible with another thing that's against the Bible.

But either way, if he was to legally divorce her or simply separate from her physically and not live with her without divorcing, I guess the result for the woman would still be the same. She would be unable to marry since the Bible forbids women who have been divorced to remarry, and if she remains married, well, then that's out of the question.

But yeah, I like the idea of him having to stay with the first wife that he married, although it's still so hard to find actual verses to prove that, because even the verse that says that a man should remain with the wife of his youth doesn't quite prove that since he could have married both women in his youth.

Anyways, I appreciate all your responses. God bless you all!

- Alin

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 16:13

I believe you misunderstood or either I was not clear enough in writing. The man divorced the first wife after 12 years of marriage, only after asking for reconciliation, after the divorce he remained single for 3 years. Married the second wife divorced her for adultery. Both for discerned adultery, not caught in the act. Remained single for 1 year and ask God for guidance in Godly marriage for the first time in his life. Married the 3rd wife and has been married 20 years. The couple pray together, study HIS WORD together, discuss the preacher sermon together, in all ways attempt to serve HIM in the church. He was never married to more than one at a time. It is bad enough with the facts don't make any worse. And I might add this all occurred after 18 months of Vietnam and much trouble afterwards adjusting to regular life again and was to hardheaded to let the Lord lead.

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/16 16:14

Iansmith,

Wow, that's quite something. I never heard of anything like that. It hardly seems that those missionaries were doing God's ministry when the women who were left to die along with their children would probably hate God for all their misery. It goes to show what happens when people are all about the letter.

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 16:17

And he did 18 years +

Re: - posted by Iansmith (), on: 2007/7/16 16:25

ZealForTruth,

Yeah, it was an example brought up in one of my missions class for us to understand the importance of how we need balanced teaching in missions.

In the example, they over-emphasized the polygamy issue, and ended up neglecting the need to take care of these women. They had outwardly converted these men to Christ in their actions, but not converted their hearts.

Now the question would be, is it better to tell a man, 'get rid of your extra wives' or 'keep your wives, but make sure that your children only have one wife or husband.'

It's about interpreting our Western church culture as correct. If you read the verses about deacons and elders in the NT, the requirement says 'a husband of but one wife.' Now this makes a strange assumption, that there are those in the church with more than one wife!

It wouldn't be a requirement if it didn't in fact separate.

Now it doesn't say, 'having more than one wife is wrong.' In fact, it may have simply been an assumption that if you have more than one wife, you have more people to feed and take care of, so you shouldn't be serving as a deacon.

But since we read that verse through the lens of our Western church cultures, we automatically assume that all it really says is men shouldn't have more than one wife.

Now I don't support polygamy in modern American culture... but there was a time and place in history where it was acceptable practice.

Even now in some parts of the world, women outnumber men 4 to 1 (namely in the middle east). And if a woman wants security and provision for her needs, she has to become a second or third wife to a man who is already married.

If we look at human history, there were many times that men were killing each other over resources or territory, and they left their women and children to fend for themselves.

We automatically look at a man with more than one wife as if it's a sexual issue. In some cultures taking another wife was a sign of charity and good will. Especially if that wife was the widow of a relative.

Now our world is experiencing something entirely new, in some parts of the world, for the first time in human history there

There are more men than women (India and China as examples) which is going to cause a lot of interesting events in the future.

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 16:29

I believe we all should be about the letter or the word and HIS SPIRIT gives us the want-to to do that. If it wasn't for the letter we wouldn't be able to see we need Jesus. When the Bible talks about the heart, it is talking about the want-to. Many people make many mistakes before they ask for HIS forgiveness and are indwelt with HIS SPIRIT to give them the want-to, at least I did. Because someone stands for truth does not mean they are saying they have always, are even now do not fail to do HIS WILL. Fail or not HE expects us to strive to keep HIS WORD. It doesn't matter how many times we have failed to keep HIS WORD in the past. IT is still truth. Sorry if I stepped on some toes that didn't exactly agree or have the want-to in some elements of some of my post.

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 16:38

Acts 13:50-52

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

KJV

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 16:43

Quote:

moe_mac wrote:

I believe you misunderstood or either I was not clear enough in writing. The man divorced the first wife after 12 years of marriage, only after asking for reconciliation, after the divorce he remained single for 3 years. Married the second wife divorced her for adultery. Both for discerned adultery, not caught in the act. Remained single for 1 year and ask God for guidance in Godly marriage for the first time in his life. Married the 3rd wife and has been married 20 years. The couple pray together, study HIS WORD together, discuss the preacher sermon together, in all ways attempt to serve HIM in the church. He was never married to more than one at a time. It is bad enough with the facts don't make any worse.

And I might add this all occurred after 18 months of Vietnam and much trouble afterwards adjusting to regular life again and was too hardheaded to let the Lord lead.

Mmmm. Jesus did allow divorce for adultery. Anyway, it wasn't so much a rule that He gave, but a demonstration of God's highest. He said that divorce was allowed "because of your hardness of heart...but in the beginning it was not so..."

And it sounds as if this man has repented and been forgiven of any wrong in the past and has settled down with a godly wife.

There's also an OT law that a divorced person who then gets married to someone else can't re-marry the original spouse.

Jeannette

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 16:55

Quote:

iansmith wrote:

It was taught that ELDERS should have but one wife... not that all believers should be monogamous. But elders were also supposed to set a standard and reflect Jesus, so I can see how this is more widely applied.

In Africa in the mid 1800's there was a revival among a polygamous tribe of African natives. The missionaries insisted that they must divorce all but one of their wives. This meant that hundreds of women were left without husbands or support. Many of them starved, their children died, many of them had to sell themselves into a life of prostitution.

Although the intentions of the missionaries were good, the results ended in much suffering.

When in Uganda in the 1970's we knew many brethren who had been saved and blessed in the 1935 East African revival.

There was a man and his wife who was a special friend of ours, and one of the leaders in that area. His wife was also a godly woman. But he had another wife (he'd married both before he was saved). She hadn't yielded to the Lord, but lived nearby in her own house, (I met her).

When Jeremiah was saved he prayed about what to do and believed that he should keep Eleanor as his wife and cease to live with the other lady. But he did continue to support her financially.

I haven't heard of anyone neglecting the wife that was put aside - or that missionaries encouraged anyone to do so.

But in some countries and societies having more than one wife is part of the culture - if a man can afford it - or even "required" of a king or chieftan.

I agree that it's important for an elder or deacon to be "above reproach" in this area, but I'm certain the Lord doesn't condemn polygamy as such, if a man is saved when in that situation.

After all, the OT kings - even the best of them - had more than one wife, and the Lord didn't forbid it, any more than He forbade slavery.

Blessings

Jeannette

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2007/7/16 18:16

In light of this thread I posted this article:

Divorce and Remarriage. Does God Permit It? -feeney

https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=18042&forum=36

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/16 18:31

lansmith,

"In the example, they over-emphasized the polygamy issue, and ended up neglecting the need to take care of these women."

I heard of Brother Zac Poonen talking about this very issue, how some people magnify one truth in the Bible at the expense of another truth. Just like the Pharisees and the Sabbath day, where they would not do good to anybody.

Very interesting point.

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/16 18:52

Here's an interesting thing somebody pointed out to me a while ago that I never picked up on.

1 Corinthians 7:10,11 “To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not SEPARATE from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not DIVORCE his wife."

I was asking an older person from church if God still requires a christian woman, for example, who became christian after she was married, to remain with her abusive husband who is not a christian and who does not want to divorce her.

The answer he gave me was interesting and he pointed out to this verse that said, the woman can SEPARATE, in other words, remove herself physically from her husband, without divorcing him. And if her husband falls into sin, then she is free to remarry. So this is basically God giving the woman a way out if she is being abused physically.

But this is no way a means for a woman to get out of her marriage if she doesn't like her husband any longer, because a verse 10 said, "To the married I give this command... A wife must NOT separate from her husband."

Interesting response, because I thought being "separated" and being "divorced" meant the same thing.

In Christ,

brother Alin

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2007/7/16 22:24

Hi Alin,

I disagree with you. I haven't read all the responses yet, but I'm sure someone has already said what I am going to.

If a wife (a second) comes from an unlawful marriage (never having been in a covenant marriage herself), she is FREE to marry another, since her vows were not taken lawfully to begin with. The only divorced woman who is prohibited from marrying again is one who is bound to her covenant husband until death (Rom. 7:2-3, I Cor. 7:39). A woman who is committing adultery in the Lord's sight (by entering into an unlawful marriage with a man who already has a wife) is NOT bound to him---he already has a wife he is bound to.....Blessings.....

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2007/7/16 22:39

Quote:

-----There's also an OT law that a divorced person who then gets married to someone else can't re-marry the original spouse.

That would be Deut. 24:1-4.....since Jesus said Moses granted divorce for hardheartedness and since the beginning this was not so, Jesus was abrogating this "permission". Instead of a remarriage being lawful, Jesus taught that anyone who marries after a divorce is committing adultery, not entering into a lawful marriage (Mt. 5:32, 19:9-10, Mk. 10:1-12, Lk. 16:15-18, Rom. 7:2-3).

For a couple who enters into an adulterous union to repent of that union is nowhere forbidden by Jesus. As a matter of fact, forsaking sin is called for by Jesus. Just as He told the woman caught in adultery to "go and sin no more", so it is with those who are caught up in adulterous unions. His desire is for them to forsake their adulteries and sin no more.

Re:, on: 2007/7/16 22:41

Of course like most questions on SI I already have what I think is the answer but I just want to get more input. How many failed marriages would one have to have before he or she could be forgiven and saved by the blood of Jesus and become a new creation and have a new heart put in them to serve him?

1 Cor 1:26-2:1

26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things -and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

1 Cor 15:9-11

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/17 3:57

"Of course like most questions on SI I already have what I think is the answer but I just want to get more input."

Haha Moe, you hit the bullseye here! I think you spoke of a great truth, not just of SI, but of human nature ;)

Re: - posted by ZealForTruth, on: 2007/7/17 4:16

Well Cindy,

What you said makes sense, but it brings many questions into my mind about what exactly is a "lawful marriage". Does it refer to a "legal lawfulness" or a "christian lawfulness". Isn't a legal marriage conducted by a government official also sanctioned by God? And in some countries it's legal to get married to 2 women.

But on the other hand, I highly doubt that God would sanction even a "legal" marriage between 2 homosexuals.

But you do bring up some interesting points about her not being bound since it's not a lawful marriage, to be married to someone who already has a wife, but it still brings one question into my mind. Even if God considers her marriage adulterous, she still must get divorced in the eyes of the government, b/c she's still legally married, and doesn't that still go against the Bible? Or does only God sanction marriages that are according to His own will? Hmmm, I think I'm starting to answer my own questions here

:-)

Re: - posted by vasilef (), on: 2007/7/17 4:57

Quote:
-----Could you provide evidence of the Early Church's acceptance of polygamy continuing in new converts lives? I have the ECF's writing s (Antenicene) and I don't recall reading this practice in the early church, but I may surely have missed something. Thank you. Blessings.....

I cannot provide that ... but I cannot provide evidence that they forbade the 2-nd wife to stay with her husband, too.

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We only know that those with more than a wife could not be spiritual leaders in the church and I presume that even if the husband didn't live with his 2-nd wife, he provided for her and their children. But there is no evidence that the apostles told the newly converts to separate from their 2-nd wives...

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2007/7/17 10:15

Hi Zeal,

Yes, this issue brings up many questions. Unfortunately, most will not seek out the full truth in the WORD, but instead heed what their pastors teach (all different teachings, by the way), relying upon them for Truth.

As for "lawful"/"unlawful" marriages, as you said, you are already seeing that just because a government sanctions a union, does not mean that God does ;-). follow this thought out with those unions Jesus has said are adultery. and really ponder what Rom. 7:2-3 means in light of this.

Concerning "I hate divorce" you must read that passage in context (Mal. 2). God is dealing with a man who puts away his COVENANT wife (the one God joined him to as ONE) and then the man marries another.

As scripture shows, there ARE marriages that were put away as acts of REPENTANCE---because the people had disobeyed God in marrying (Ezra 9-10). The divorces in those cases were not sin, they were acts of repentance. Such would be the case today with homosexual marriages, adulterous marriages, and incestual marriages. To "divorce" in such cases would be the fruit of genuine repentance, it would not be sin, as God did not join those unions. The only sin is when man tears apart what GOD joined together (any first/covenant marriages). Blessings.

Re: - posted by lastblast (), on: 2007/7/17 10:34

In such cases, vasilef, we can only go by the teachings in scripture. Jesus made it very clear that a man was to only have ONE wife, and for a wife, only 1 husband. This is the creation intent for marriage which He reinstated. Jesus did not sanction for a man to have 2 or more wives. Any relationship other than with one's first wife is adultery. Many things were "tolerated" in the OT times, but those same things are no longer permissible per Jesus.

If we are to believe that polygamy is still ok/tolerated by God, because of the hardships involved with forsaking such relationships (using that as our reasoning and ignoring Jesus' teachings on one man/one woman for life), then we open the door to any illicit relationship being tolerated in the church because forsaking such relationships may be hardships on those involved.

As to the meaning of "husband of one wife" there has been much discussion on what exactly this means. I have looked at the culture of that time in the writings of the Early Church Fathers and divorce/remarriage was NOT an issue in the Gentile culture. Matter of fact, it was RARE, so I don't believe that is what it was speaking of. I also can't find evidence of polygamy being something very commonly found either.

As much as I hate to say this, I believe the RC church is right on their interpretation of that passage---that having only one wife, means that a man cannot fill such a position if he marries again AFTER the death of his covenant wife. To me, it doesn't seem "fair", yet, I understand how Paul/God wanted men in leadership that personified God. God only has one bride for ever. In this culture of divorce/remarriage, people looking down on singleness, they have said such standards are almost impossible to fulfill. I say, yes, probably, but in Paul's day, fulfilling such standards were not "hard".

We also have to look at this as a big picture: is it EVER ok to divorce one's covenant spouse and then marry another person? I don't believe so, so the "standard" of just the elder not being divorced/remarried does not make sense. God doesn't want ANY of His to be involved in sin, not just the elders. In the same way, if polygamy is sin, then NONE of those who name Christ should be involved in polygamy. So again, we must look at "husband of one wife" as a picture of the PERFECT image of God---who only has ONE wife---for ever. Blessings.