

Divorce, Remarriage and Adultery

By Leon King

Matthew 5:32 *"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."*

I have assembled a number of witnesses who have commented on this scripture. As we shall see, all give the opinion that divorce and remarriage is permitted by the Lord because of adultery. Here are their comments:

Albert Garner¹: "Saving for the cause of fornication,' (parektos logou porneias) 'Apart from anything except fornication,' sexual or conjugal infidelity of relations she has engaged in with another party, Mt. 19:9. This appears to be the only Divinely, now sanctioned basis of marital divorce."

Charles H. Spurgeon²: "This time our King quotes and condemns a permissive enactment of the Jewish State. Men were wont to bid their wives "begone," and a hasty word was thought sufficient as an act of divorce. Moses insisted upon "a writing of divorcement" that angry passions might have time to cool and that the separation, if it must come, might be performed with deliberation and legal formality. The requirement of a writing was to a certain degree a check upon an evil habit, which was so engrained in the people that to refuse it altogether would have been useless and would only have created another crime. The law of Moses went as far as it could practically be enforced; it was because of the hardness of their hearts that divorce was tolerated; it was never approved. But our Lord is more heroic in his legislation. He forbids divorce except for the one crime of infidelity to the marriage-vow. She who commits adultery does by that act and deed in effect sunder the marriage-bond, and it ought then to be formally recognized by the State as being sundered; but for nothing else should a man be divorced from his wife. Marriage is for life and cannot be loosed except by the one great crime which severs its bond, whichever of the two is guilty of it. Our Lord would never have tolerated the wicked laws of certain of the American States which allow married men and women to separate on the merest pretext. A woman divorced for any cause but adultery and marrying again is committing adultery before God, whatever the laws of man call it."

J. Vernon McGee³: "Here the Lord gives the grounds for divorce. If someone is divorced for a reason not given in Scripture, that person is an

adulterer. This is something that is entirely ignored today in Christian circles. This, however, will be the Law during the kingdom age because there will be men and women who will want to leave their mates during that period. We will deal with the divorce question in some detail when we get to chapter 19. -- Adultery breaks the marriage relationship and provides the one ground for divorce. Somebody says to me, 'Yes, but there is this poor Christian woman married to a drunkard!' Or a fine Christian man is married to a godless woman. What about that? Well, believers may separate on other grounds, which seems to be the whole point of 1 Corinthians 7, but divorce is permitted on only one basis, adultery."

David Brown⁴: "The one legitimate ground of divorce allowed by the enactment just quoted was "some uncleanness" ** in other words, conjugal infidelity. -- for anything short of conjugal infidelity,"

John A. Broadus⁵: "It has been well remarked that as the only ground of divorce which our Lord admits is one pertaining to the essential nature of marriage relation, no changes in the form of the outward union, or of the outward divorce, can make any difference in this respect. -- It follows that all legislation which allows of divorce 'from the bond of marriage.' except for the cause here named, is contrary to Christ's teaching. It may be very well to legalize separation, with reference to questions of property, support, the control of children, etc., as is done in the so-called divorce 'from bed and board'; and in cases where the civil law does not provide for this, but permits a complete legal divorce, it may be allowable to seek such divorce as an arrangement for separation; but still neither party has a moral right to re-marry unless the religious union has been violated by the unchastity of one of them. In that case the innocent party has a right to full divorce and re-marriage; our Lord has said nothing as to the question whether the guilty party has a moral right to marry again."

Matthew Henry⁶: "How this matter was rectified and amended by our Saviour. He reduced the ordinance of marriage to its primitive institution: They two shall be one flesh, not to be easily separated, and therefore divorce is not to be allowed, except in the case of adultery, which breaks the marriage covenant; but he that puts away his wife upon any other pretence, causeth her to commit adultery, and him also that shall marry her when she is this divorced."

John Gill: "which must not be taken strictly for what is called fornication, but as including adultery, incest, or any unlawful copulation; and is opposed to the sense and practices of the Pharisees who were on the side of Hillell; who admitted of divorce, upon the most foolish and frivolous pretenses whatever;"

Albert Barnes: "One of the famous schools maintained that it might be done for any cause, however trivial. The other maintained that adultery only could justify it. - - Our Saviour brought marriage back to its original intention, and declared that whosoever put away his wife henceforward, except for one offence, should be guilty of adultery. This is now the law of God. This was the original institution. This is the only law that is productive of peace and good morals, and that secures the respect due to a wife, and the good of children. Nor has any man or set of men—any legislature or any court, civil or ecclesiastical -- a right to interfere, and declare that divorces may be granted for any other cause. They, therefore, whoever they may be, who are divorced for any cause except the single one of adultery, if they marry again, are, according to the Scriptures, living in adultery."

Matthew Poole: "This particular indulgence was an appendix to the moral law, by the seventh commandment, to which our Saviour is now speaking, and giving the true sense of it. He here opposeth the Pharisees in two points. 1. Asserting that all divorces are unlawful except in case of adultery. 2. Asserting that whosoever married her that was put away committed adultery. -- But if we take divorce for the voluntary act of the husband putting away of his wife, it is unlawful in any case but that of adultery, which dissolves the marriage knot and covenant."

● **An apparent consensus.**

These nine writers all appear to tell the same story regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. With one voice, they maintain the one exception which would permit divorce and remarriage is adultery or marital infidelity. These are men that nearly all of us who possess any kind of biblical reference books have read for many years. Are they right? or could it be they are mistaken?

There is no easy way to say this, so I will just say it and be done with it. I believe these men are mistaken. I believe the mistake centers around the definition of fornication.

The matter of divorce, re-marriage, and adultery is no small thing. Yet, we must hasten to say that this sin is not the unforgivable sin. Like the murderer, the thief, or the one who dishonors parents, the adulterer will find wonderful forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is no quick spoken matter, but is one that has been pressing on me for years. There are many books on my shelf which have taken this subject up for explanation and exposition. There are many ideas, and I am sure what I say here will bear little weight for others who are wrestling with this topic to know the truth. That is my desire in the matter - to know the truth. With that in mind, I prayerfully and meekly submit these words for the consideration of the reader.

● **The exception considered.**

The exception - "*because of fornication*" -- is stated in Matthew 5:32 which I have quoted in the heading of this article. It could be rightfully said of some, that they are looking for a "loophole" to be rid of the marriage relationship. When life becomes difficult and the mate seems to contribute to the unhappiness, then the sufferer wants to find solace in some "out" of the unsavory circumstance. The "exception" is also stated in Matthew 19:9 from which I quote:

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. -- Matthew 19:9.

What we believe about this topic must come from a definition of the word *fornication*. The word is translated from the Greek word (*porneia*) *porneia*. I will come back to this Greek word a bit later. At this point, I want to look at the definition of the word fornication from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Here is the meaning:

"Voluntary sexual intercourse between a man (in restricted sense, an unmarried man) and an unmarried woman."

Now, let us look at all the other New Testament scriptures which use the word fornication and try to discern what they are talking about. The word fornication or its plural is found in thirty verses of the New Testament. We have already listed two of those verses from Matthew.

- **Verses with first and primary meaning of fornication.**

For the sake of space and unnecessary repetition, I will list a series of verses from the thirty which speak of fornication in its primary sense - that is, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defined it. These verses are:

John 8:41; Acts 15:20,29; 21:25; Romans 1:19; 1 Corinthians 6:13,18; 7:2; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; and Revelation 2:14,20,21.

- **Verses using fornication in a spiritual or figurative sense.**

Besides these verses which list the primary meaning, we have other verses which give us a different meaning. They are Revelation 14:8; 17:2; 18:3,9; and 19:2. These verses speak of fornication in a spiritual or figurative sense. I quote the first two passages as examples:

And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. -- Revelation 14:8.

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. -- Revelation 17:2.

- **Verse using fornication to describe adultery and incest.**

The case of the fornicator in 1 Corinthians 5 suggests that fornication might include adultery and incest. This man had taken his father's wife and committed such fornication that was not named among the heathen. I quote:

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. -- 1 Corinthians 5:1.

- **Verse using fornication to describe sodomy.**

Now, let us notice a passage from Jude which speaks of the fornication in Sodom. Their gross wickedness was later named sodomy after the deeds of the men of Sodom. In our day, such euphemisms as gay and homosexual are attempts to play down the explicit meaning of Sodomy. I quote from Jude:

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. -- Jude 1:7.

- **Some verses use both the terms adultery and fornication together.**

Next, let us notice that some verses have both fornication and adultery listed. Because both are listed in the same verse, they cannot be the same thing. The terms are different or they would not be separated. The word *fornication* comes from the Greek word porneia (porneia) while *adultery* comes from moichao (moichao).

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: -- Matthew 15:19.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, -- Mark 7:21.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, -- Galatians 5:19.

Taking all this information together, I must conclude that fornication and adultery are two separate and distinct ideas. They are not the same thing. Although we have seen that the word fornication is used to describe sodomy and incest, it remains that adultery and fornication have separate meanings. Paul made the distinction between adultery and fornication in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11;7:2 and Galatians 5:19. The term adultery could not have been used in 1 Corinthians 7:2. Notice: "*Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*" This verse shows us clearly the sin to be avoided in taking a wife or husband is fornication - not adultery. It could not be adultery.

Now that we have defined fornication, let us consider the exception. Again, I quote the verses where the exception is given:

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. -- Matthew 5:31-32.

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 marieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. -- Matthew 19:8-9.

Let us apply the dictionary meaning to these verses of scripture. I will write the verse containing the exception with the dictionary meaning inserted. "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication (voluntary sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman), and shall marry another, committeth adultery.*

We ask ourselves, "Is this passage recorded by Matthew in conflict with the account in Mark and Paul's letter to the Romans?" No, it is not. We dare not array the scriptures against one another, but learn to let them harmonize. They are in total harmony. Let us quote from Mark 10 and Romans 7:

Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. -- Mark 10:11-12.

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. -- Romans 7:1-3.

An objection is made by some that Romans 7 isn't speaking about marriage, but serves as an illustration of how we are dead to the law to be joined to Christ. The objectors allege correctly. That is the proper context, but the illustration comes from God's truth presented elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures concerning the marriage relationship. So the objection is invalid.

Putting these passages together with the exception passages in Matthew 5 and 19, we conclude that a person is married for life unless the partner has committed fornication. That fact cannot be ascertained until the *marriage partners come together. If fornication has taken place, he (or she) **may** divorce and remarry without committing adultery. The marriage partners are under no obligation to put the other away, even though fornication has taken place. They may. Otherwise, the marriage remains binding until death of one of the partners in the marriage relationship.*

● **Background for the exception.**

A key thought concerning this matter is contained in the Pharisees' question to Jesus in Matthew 19. "*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*" -- Matthew 19:3b. Because of the hardness of men's hearts in earlier days in Israel, God had permitted Moses to allow a writing of divorcement. That procedure is described in Deuteronomy 24. I quote:

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour 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. -- Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

We must consider the uncleanness mentioned in this passage to be the same as fornication. I believe that is what Jesus is explaining by the exception. It was not for every cause that a man could put away his wife,

but for fornication only. How can this be? It can be explained by the laws concerning fornication and adultery given to Israel. Adultery was not the reason a man was permitted put away his wife and give her a writing of divorcement. Why not? Because the law said that adultery was punishable by death for both parties involved in it. Notice this passage:

If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. --
Deuteronomy 22:22

If a woman were betrothed unto an husband, she was considered to be his wife even though they had never come together in the conjugal act which would make them one flesh. Marriage is first a covenant, then the conjugal act. If a virgin was in such a betrothed condition and voluntarily lay with another man, the act was treated as adultery. If she were raped, then the man that forced her would be put to death. I quote Deuteronomy 22:23-27:

"If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. But if a man bind a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her." -- Deuteronomy 22:23-27.

Another aspect of this is the virgin not betrothed to a man who lay with a man voluntarily. The man was required to marry her and could never put her away. This follows the God-given pattern from Genesis that marriage is for life.

"If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; then the man that lay

with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days." -- Deuteronomy 22:28-29.

It was for these very reasons that Joseph considered putting away Mary, his espoused wife, when he found her with child before they came together. We do not know exactly how long Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, but we do know that when he saw that she was with child, he was minded to put her away. Being a just man, he did not want her to be made a public example, but determined to put her away in a private fashion. Such an action on his part would have required a writing of divorcement because of the supposed fornication or uncleanness found in her. Let's look at the scripture concerning this matter:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." -- Matthew 1:18-20.

We can see clearly from this passage that a man and woman were thought of as "man and wife" during the betrothal period (see Matthew 1:18-20). The circumstances concerning Joseph and Mary lead me to believe that he intended to put her away because of the suspected fornication done before the betrothal period. Otherwise, if the act was committed during the betrothal period, she would have been put to death for adultery. If either person were unfaithful during the betrothal period, it was as serious a matter as if it had been done after the marriage was consummated.

● **To whom is Matthew addressed?**

Some think the book of Matthew was addressed to the Jewish people because Jesus Christ is presented as a king in that gospel. I must dissent from this position. I believe the New Testament scriptures were given to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore it would not be sound to say that one gospel is written to the Jews, while another is written to gentiles. I

suggest it is sound Bible study to apply the scriptures in their context and consider the person or persons to whom they are addressed. The account in Mark 10 is a parallel scripture to Matthew 19. Both accounts show Jesus addressing the Pharisees. We can say that is true in either case. The Pharisees were trying to tempt the Lord as we learn from Matthew's account. They were aware of the law of Moses. He told the Pharisees what the will of God was concerning marriage. It was not just to Jews - but to all men. Israel had been permitted to put away their wives for uncleanness because of the hardness of their hearts, but from the beginning, it was not so.

According to some scholars, there was a school of thought in Israel which said "men may put away their wives for any reason." That was the question the Pharisees were asking the Lord Jesus. I believe these two accounts are recorded so that we know all we need to know concerning this matter - not that one part was addressed to Israel and the other the church. If we take the position that Matthew is addressed to Israel, we have some serious problems in study of other areas in the book.

● **What about desertion?**

Some people believe that Paul's instructions to the Corinthians regarding believers who are married to unbelievers give them permission to divorce and remarry. I believe this is not the case. The Corinthians were plainly told in 1 Corinthians 7:10-15 not to depart; not to put away. If an unbelieving person departed from the believer, then the believer was not in bondage for the normal duties of marriage. The relief of bondage in the duties of marriage does not take away the teachings concerning divorce and remarriage otherwise found in scripture. Paul wasn't disputing any of those things. Everything he said to the Corinthian church concerning the marital relationship must harmonize with the other scriptures we have already considered.

● **Is adultery a continuous state or is it an act?**

This is an area of much contention and debate. Marriage is the one institution that God set in motion before the fall of man. The law of marriage applies to the saved and unsaved alike. In other words, the law of God concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage is applicable to a man whether or not he is regenerated. Marriage, divorce, and remarriage for reasons other than the stated exception causes the person to commit adultery no

matter what his state with respect to regeneration. The sin of adultery is the same as murder, theft, blasphemy, or any other such sin, in that it cannot be undone once it is done. When a person marries another unlawfully, he commits adultery. It is an act. Because of the act, he (or she) is an adulterer. In the same way, a person who unlawfully takes the life of another is called a murderer. A person who gets drunk is called a drunkard.

Jesus died for the adulterer just as he did for the murderer or liar. He paid for all the sins of his elect, not just some of them. Our sins, every one of them, were paid for on the cross. While I certainly am not an advocate of divorce and remarriage - consider it sin against a Holy God, and would never counsel people to do it, I can say the same of murder. There are penalties for both. Society's laws punish murderers. There are consequences for both sins, albeit, not altogether as they should be for murder in our day. I use murder together with adultery to show what some people consider extremes in sin. Murder is about as bad as it gets. There's not a person who will say that God doesn't forgive the sin of murder even though it is a sin that cannot be undone or retribution made to the offended party. Society may kill the man who murders - and should - but God can and does forgive murder on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ. That is so whether a person commits murder (or adultery) as an unbeliever or a believer.

We would not think of making a person who has recently made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus put away his wife if he has been married, divorced, and remarried. We would say that God takes him as he is. A case in point is the woman at the well in John 4. I quote Jesus' words to her:

"Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." -- John 4:16-18.

The point is that Jesus didn't tell her to undo all the things she had done. She could not do it any more than a murderer could have undone his wicked deed. I believe she became a child of God. Since Christ paid for all the sins of his elect when he died on the cross - every one of them - it is grossly inconsistent to demand a child of God who commits the sin of adultery in remarriage to undo the adulterous marriage when we do not

demand the same of a new believer. We know there are people who come from a life of unbelief where they have been married, divorced, and remarried many times.

According to the regulatory divorce principle from Deuteronomy 24, a woman is freed from her husband by virtue of the writing of divorcement. The scripture states that the woman, so freed, may now go and be another man's wife. Indeed, she is no longer the wife of the man who put her away - nor could he take her back once she had been defiled by another man.

Hear me out. You may think I am soft-soaping this issue and trying to provide an occasion for the flesh, but that simply is not so. I cry long and loud against adultery - just as urgently and strongly as against fornication, murder, or lying. I want to think that God's people who want to serve the Lord and bring honor to his name abhor adultery just as much as they abhor murder or other grievous sins.

Forgiveness puts away the sin completely but does not remove the temporal consequences of it. It is so with adultery. How many people today are in a quagmire of family problems because they hardened their hearts against the will of God in the matter of marriage! Children in many of these dysfunctional families - his, hers, and theirs - don't know how many grandpas and grandmas they have. Too often, there are differences made in families where there are children from previous marriages, particularly those which ended in divorce and remarriage. Love toward "hers" or "his" is not the same as toward "theirs." Instead of love, parents of these step-children tolerate them. Such tolerance is usually very painful for the children. Are there serious consequences that follow divorce and remarriage? Be sure there is!

Our understanding about how one is saved and what is behind it largely determines what we believe about forgiveness of sins. As a believer in sovereign grace, I know the Bible teaches that salvation is totally of grace and that man has nothing to do with it except receive it. Fallen man is regenerated by an act of God and readily, upon being regenerated, believes the word of God when it is preached to him. In man's regeneration, he is given faith and repentance through which he willingly receives the gospel message. Regeneration is the cause. Faith and repentance are the effects. Salvation is the end. God is the doer of it all. The righteousness of Jesus

Christ is imputed to the sinner and all that it means. Every sin is under the blood of the blessed Savior. Not just the sins of his past are under consideration, but all of his sins he committed in his entire life. Jesus died and paid for all his sins at once. So, adultery is forgiven. Marrying a person after divorce for some other reason than fornication is an act of adultery.

● **About the multi-married bishops and deacons.**

I have shown that adultery is forgiven and shown that forgiveness is not the same thing as removing the temporal consequences of sin. One of the temporal consequences of the sin of divorce and remarriage is that an individual is not qualified to hold the office of bishop or deacon. God's requirement for the office of a bishop or deacon is that a man be the husband of one wife. It is the requirement for the office in the same way that federal law requires that senators and representatives meet certain criteria for the office. The bishop or deacon must be a one-woman man just like the widows taken for support by the church must have been a one-man woman. If God requires a supported widow to have been the wife of one man – how much more a bishop or deacon!

*"Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, **having been the wife of one man**, well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." -- 1 Timothy 5:9-10.*

The idea for the bishop or deacon is the same as for the widow. It is foolish to try to make this scripture say that the woman must have been the wife of one man at a time. It doesn't say that. In my humble opinion, it is manifest folly to say that a man can be divorced and remarried once - then become a pastor or deacon when such a move leaves the door open to any number of divorces and remarriages before serving as a pastor or deacon. How many would you tolerate? I believe that why both of these scriptures are contained in the Pastoral letters.

I fully agree that it is God who calls men to the ministry. And what is this call as it relates to the pastorate? Is it not a God-given desire which the man cannot rid himself of? I believe, according to this passage and my own experience, that God puts a desire inside that will not go away until it is satisfied.

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. -- 1 Timothy 3:1.

Some men say that they have no desire to be a pastor, per se, but rather are interested in doing the work of a missionary or evangelist. Is not a missionary doing essentially the same job as a pastor - except that he normally moves from his home to another area where God in His providence has taken him? My point is this: Along with the man's professed desire to "preach the gospel," "to have the office of a bishop," he must be judged objectively by the church which appoints him to the office. He must meet the objective criteria written in the scriptures for the office of a bishop. The church collectively places her approval on the man by the stretching forth of the hands. That is essentially what ordination is as I understand it. When a church chooses a man, then they have recognized his desire, attested to his pastoral gifts, and seen that he is objectively qualified according to the Scriptures. If he doesn't meet the qualifications, then he must not be appointed.

Observation of men who are divorced and remarried in the office of a bishop is not criteria upon which to make decisions regarding appointment of others to the pastoral office. Outwardly, these divorced/remarried men may serve and do a better job in the view of men than others who have never been divorced and remarried. A preacher acquaintance said, "Brother so and so has done a great job as pastor. He really loves the people and the people respond to him. He is a good preacher!" Results are God's business - it is the duty of the men of God (and all, for that matter) to be faithful and leave the results to the Heavenly Father.

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