

Study 0084

Practical Issues in Marriage (3.1)

In the last study, we saw that divorce, remarriage, and polygamy are alien to Christianity. Unfortunately, in many of our churches today, it is not uncommon to find these things present.

On the matter of divorce, we saw that it has no place in Christian marriage, as God hates it, neither did He intend for it, nor, advocate it as a solution for irreconcilable differences between a man and his wife. And even though fornication or sexual immorality was given as a condition for divorce, we noted that this provision cannot even apply in the case of fornication, unless the man is himself a virgin, and refused to proceed with the consummation upon the discovery. Also, the New Covenant's standard of forgiveness is very high, and that ought to be applicable where sexual immorality is the case; and that by no means permits the offending Party to continue therein. The Lord attributes divorce to hardness of heart, which results in a person refusing to listen to the voice of God, rejecting the word of God, and always resisting the Spirit of God.

If however, a couple get divorced, the bible does not advocate remarriage. Indeed, the bible insists that a divorced couple should either remain unmarried or be reconciled to each other. The bible goes further to state that even if an unbelieving spouse leaves the marriage, the believing spouse should remain unmarried! (**1 Corinthians 7:12, 15**). If, however, a spouse dies, the surviving spouse is then free to remarry, only in the Lord!

Then we considered the issue of polygamy, and noted that when the bible says, "*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh ... they are no more twain, but one flesh.*" (**Matthew 19:5-6**), the crucial words are, 'wife' not 'wives'; and, 'twain' or 'two' not three or more. We thus inferred that God only intended that one man will be married to one wife at any one time, and that only the death of one, can make marriage to another person possible. A situation where a woman is not a first wife is polygamy, and the Christian woman who is not the first wife (if indeed, she is a child of God) ought to leave that unholy union!

Finally, on the basis of all the above, we noted that those who have crucified the flesh along with its passions and desires are able to get married, and should, except they have the gift of continence or celibacy, or, they are unable to fulfil the conjugal obligations required in marriage, due to sexual impotence arising from birth defects, castration, and other forms of biological impotence. A believer who has totally consecrated himself to preaching the gospel to the exclusion of marriage may abstain from getting married, only if he is able to control the passion that burns within him (**1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 7-9, 25-40**). And unless a man is so gifted, he should get married. And even if a man had taken a vow of celibacy and then discovers that he is unable to control his passions within him, he should seek to get married—it is not a sin!

Since there is no room for divorce, those who go into marriage should do so bearing in mind that there are five 'C's that should attend every marriage. These are commitment, commonality, communion, communication, and conflict resolution. In this study, we shall look at commitment.

Commitment

Commitment can be said to be a deep involvement in a thing or cause, or, to a person; and can also refer to a pledge or promise to be engaged in a thing or cause, or, with a person, irrevocably. The story of Ruth in **Ruth 1:1-18**, is a classical illustration of what commitment entails. There really was nothing for Orpah and Ruth, Naomi's two daughters-in-law, to look forward to, who along with her, were now all widows: Naomi couldn't support her widowed daughters-in-law, couldn't give them replacement husbands (as was the custom, had she had sons left), she worshipped God, while Orpah and Ruth worshipped strange gods, and, Naomi's people may not have been kindly affectionate toward Ruth and Orpah, they being Moabitesses. With such a grim situation and future, Naomi urged her two daughters-in-law to return to their people and gods. While Orpah returned, Ruth clave still unto Naomi, and made a statement of commitment: "... *whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.*" (**Ruth 1:16-17 KJV**). Commitment is thus cleaving to someone or something, and not letting go no matter what.

Commitment in marriage means being deeply involved with each other such that nothing can dissuade either the man or his wife from continuing therein. It involves sticking together through thick and thin, good and bad, and, pleasantness and unpleasantness; and this is the essence of the marriage vows: *for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; till death do us part*. But before a couple can truly be committed to each other, they must each first have been committed to God; for, it is our commitment to God that enables us to receive the supply of grace to be personally committed to each other. The key to commitment is trust and loyalty between a man and his wife. Unfaithfulness, betrayal, and treachery, in marriage, are directly linked to lack of commitment (**Malachi 2:14**). It is strange to claim to be committed and, at the same time, be disloyal. Commitment does not mean that a husband or wife take each other for granted; rather, it implies accommodating the other person's faults until such a time as God will complete His work in both of them. Commitment also implies a refusal by either husband or wife to consider a way out of their marriage, before or in the marriage!

Looking at the Lord's refusal to commit or entrust Himself to those who believed in Him only because of His miracles, and, for what they could get for themselves (**John 2:23-25; 6:1-31**), we learn the following about commitment in marriage:

- (a) Commitment for the purpose of getting something out of the marriage for oneself alone is no commitment; for commitment involves selfless giving.
- (b) Commitment for a selfish reason or cause is really no commitment.
- (c) You cannot, and should not, commit yourself to someone whose commitment to you is for what you have, and, what he or she can get from you.
- (d) The implication of (c) above is that you should either know the person you want to be committed to for the rest of your life where that is possible, or, trust God's choice for you, knowing that He knows all things, and all men.
- (e) It does not make sense to commit to anyone based on trivial and emotional considerations. To know someone whom you have not had, and cannot have any long term interaction, is to all intents and purposes, impractical. Hence, God's revelation concerning your spouse-to-be is essential (this makes the matter of conviction even more essential).

There are those who get married because they believed that the other person had something which they could benefit from. In such a situation, commitment is really not possible. For

