



**GROW  
IN  
GRACE**  
NEWSLETTER

**Volume 44, No.18, May 2 , 2017** / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter **is a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

## **REMAIN in Your Present Marriage— The Permanence and Sacredness of Holy Marriage!**

**Ed Wheat, in *Love Life For Every Married Couple*, is correct in stating that** allowing even the faintest possibility or option for divorce will sabotage your efforts in trying to work through a difficult marriage problem. If you are holding on to divorce as an option— you will not love sacrificially, unconditionally, forgivingly, and redemptively! **\*\* If there has already been a divorce and remarriage, then please hear this:** There are no Scriptures that even hint that sins relating to divorce and/or remarriage are unforgivable. Yes, God hates divorce, (Malachi 2:16). He no doubt hates all sin. **\*\* However, God delights in and blesses those with repentant, broken, and contrite hearts! (Ps. 51:16-17; Prov. 28:13; Isaiah 57:15)**

HERE ARE IMPORTANT WORDS to those of you who are already divorced and remarried— even if more than once: **1. There is no New Testament Scripture** that teaches that in order to show evidence of repentance, you

would have to break your present marriage. (If there were, then 1 Corinthians 7 would have to read very different!) **2.** Those of you with previous marriages and divorce in your background— many of you did what you did with some preacher’s blessing! Yet, many still have guilt! **The solution**, in all of these kinds of cases is to— **take a Biblical point of view:** You missed the mark of God's standard. Make no excuse. Blame no one else. With a broken heart for missing God’s good way, ask for, rest in, and rejoice in God’s wonderful forgiveness. **Maybe you are the “so-called” innocent party!** Even so, it is highly unlikely that you are totally without sin! (1 John 1:7-10) **Follow Daniel’s example:** He was a very godly man who experienced undeserved hardship due to the sins of others in Israel— EVEN SO, he prayed, “WE HAVE SINNED!” See Daniel 9!

**Experience God’s blessing and favor** by committing to spend the rest of your life showing forth an incredible pattern of God’s love and mercy **in your present marriage!** **OPENLY TESTIFY:** “My previous spouse and I failed to experience God's all powerful love in our marriage. In our ignorance and/or rebellion, **we both** contributed to the failure of that marriage.” **“My present marriage?** Well, my present spouse and I have repented of our past sins against God and our former mates. **Our present marriage**, (while not an example of God’s clearly commanded pattern), **is an example of His amazing mercy!** And we are committed to glorifying God in this present marriage, ‘till death do us part!’

**“PLEASE, please, those of you struggling in your marriage—** it would break our hearts if you used our 'good second marriage' as any part of an excuse for wanting to divorce and find someone else. **Our present marriage** is successful because we are now doing what we failed to do the first time— namely, both submitting to God and submitting to one another in the fear of God!”

## JESUS on Marriage and DIVORCE!

Many are quick to claim that the Bible approves several different ‘grounds’ for divorce. **IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, Jesus dealt with the**

**Pharisees on this subject! Reading the relevant passages one finds that,**

**(1) Jesus ignored** the opinions of the “religious” authorities of that day.

**(2) Jesus turned** to the Sacred Scriptures as the only real authority.

**(3) Jesus** (along with Paul) **went back to Genesis** when answering marriage/divorce questions; and when teaching the permanence of marriage. This is no surprise, for as John 1:1-3, 14 reminds us— JESUS is the Creator God who is revealed in Genesis!

**(4) Thus, God’s first word** (The first word of Jesus!) on marriage is found in Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25! (These verses remain in effect in our sin polluted world!)

**(5) Furthermore,** Jesus told the Pharisees that the bottom line reason for the various divorce statements by Moses was because of **“hardness of heart... but from the beginning [Genesis] it was not so.”**

**(6) In fact, Jesus gave an addition to the Genesis teaching: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9)

**STUNNED:** When Jesus proclaimed the permanency of marriage between ONE MAN TO ONE WOMAN— **His disciples were absolutely stunned!** (Matthew 19:3-10) Had Jesus simply agreed with any of the religious opinions of that day, it would have been no big deal. **The disciples were stunned— for they realized that Jesus had just closed down the divorce loopholes!** Realizing that the duly married, (male and female), couple has no righteous exit from marriage other than death, (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39) — the **Disciples were so stunned that they**

proclaimed, ***“If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is good not to marry!”*** (Matthew 19:10)

**Further note: EVEN IF** one grants that the ‘exception clause’ of Matthew 19:9 permits divorce — there is certainly NO COMMAND or requirement to divorce; and, moreover, in Matthew 19 Jesus made NO provision of marriage to someone else. [CONSIDER: a right application of Matthew 19:9, which is dealing with a FORNICATION situation — would be one like that which Joseph thought he was facing with Mary: Matthew 1:18-23].

**REALITY: In New Testament revelation about divorce and remarriage, JESUS** did not cater to mankind’s ideas. When someone starts talking about a loophole for divorce— **Jesus STILL says, “From the beginning, it was not so... what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Matt. 19:8, 19:6)

*BUT WHAT ABOUT 1 Corinthians 7 on divorce and remarriage?* According to Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39— death alone ends a marriage. Divorce is not allowed in 1 Cor. 7:10-11). Here, the divorced have two options: (1) reconciliation to one's spouse; or (2) the single life. **1 Corinthians 7:12-14 is clear and strong** NOT TO PUT AWAY an unbelieving spouse— for you may be able to win such ones to Christ!

**HOWEVER, 1 Corinthians 7:15**— What if the unbeliever initiates a separation and leaves or deserts the marriage? What should the Christian do? Let the departing one go. The Christian is not enslaved to that mate in the sense that **domestic proximity** is absolutely required (1 Cor. 7:15). NOW: The New Testament term **for divorce** (literally, to loose away; cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:3,7-9; Mk. 10:2-4,11-12; Lk. 16:18), **is avoided** in First Corinthians 7:10-15. 1 Cor. 7:15 does not

state a divorce and/or remarriage option at all. (The Holy Spirit does have PAUL to set forth a remarriage option for WIDOWS: 1 Cor. 7:39.)

**NOTICE:** In 1 Cor. 7:10-11, the Holy Spirit has Paul clearly prohibiting divorce and remarriage. AND in 1 Cor. 7:15, divorce and remarriage are not mentioned. There is much debate as to what this verse does communicate. One has stated, “**Being in bondage is contrasted with being at peace.** Rather than being a slave to, in submission to a spouse who has deserted the marriage, the believer can be at peace in the midst of a difficult situation.”

**RESPONDING TO A HARD CASE:** Let's assume that you are in a most difficulty place. Your mate has committed adultery. **Maybe like Hosea, you have a mate who has become a whore and is a deeply bound slave to sin.**

Surely, you have “grounds” for divorce and “freedom” to remarry— right? After all, you are the “innocent party” and “God wants you happy! — right? **Actually, YOU ARE CALLED TO WALK IN THE STEPS OF JESUS!**

**1. YOU ARE CALLED to rejoice that** you are being persecuted for righteousness sake! You remember that sometimes our enemies are they of our own household. Moreover, you keenly remember being dead in sin and under the wrath of God as others; and yet God had mercy upon you, a sinner. **Thus, you are ready** to own your privilege to walk in the steps of Jesus, down the Calvary Road— to be redemptive, to invest love, and kindness, and forgiveness toward your offender.

**2. YOU ARE CALLED to overcome evil with good.** You live on the edge of your seat in hope, because the offender may yet be won! Thus, you continue to love, to bless, to do good, and pray. (Romans 12:14-21; Ephesians 4:32)

**3. Thus,** when or if the door opens, **you will be ready,** (as Hosea of olden time with wretched Gomer), **to “buy her back and to love her!”** (Hosea 3:1-5)

“BUT LORD, I could never trust her again!” RESPONSE: *“Your assignment is ONLY to LOVE HER, as I have loved you! Do you think for one moment that I, ALMIGHTY GOD, love you because I trust you?”*

**“BUT LORD, my pastor teaches that EVEN GOD HIMSELF IS A DIVORCEE!”**

**RESPONSE:** I tremble when I read such careless remarks, claiming that God is a divorcee— when He plainly declares that He loves with an 'everlasting love!' Read all the Old Testament statements of God's dealing with Israel. Yes, sin caused a separation. Yes, sin brought chastening! But God in His everlasting, unfailing love, (even as was pictured with Hosea and Gomer), brought and will bring His remnant home to Himself! The same is true in the Jeremiah passages.

**Don't just read Jeremiah 3:8 and claim a proof text in an attempt to justify a divorce. Also read Jeremiah 3:14!**

Moreover because of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:7-21; 17:7) **the relationship between God and Israel can never be severed.** God has unconditionally and unilaterally bound Himself! **Romans 11 cries out, “Hath God cast away his people? GOD FORBID...!”** **APPLICATION:** Therefore, out of love and worship to Jesus— **keep your marriage vow! Do not close the door.** If the door is to be closed, your offending spouse will have to do so by not only divorcing you but also by marrying someone else!

**SADLY, THE REALITY IS THAT MOST** who are claiming to be the

“innocent party” are as guilty as sin! True, their mate may be the one who went out and committed adultery. But they both contributed tons to the failure of the marriage. **Often, the “innocent party” was consumed with** career, or sports, or hobbies, or ‘Christian’ ministry; or maybe he/she **contributed much destruction to the marriage by anger, resentments, bitterness,** etc.! **He/she may be many things; but “innocent” is not one of them!** A spouse who spends YEARS destroying his/her spouse with neglect, lovelessness, anger, and/or harshness and then presents himself as innocent is grossly deceived.

**It is a rare but wonderful day when such “innocent” parties are broken-hearted over their own sin: “O LORD God, had I only been the spouse You called me to be— most likely I would not be facing this present trial. O God forgive me. O spouse, please forgive me. O God, change me! Help me to win back the heart of my spouse!”**

**REALITY:** Sin always complicates things! You may feel that you have a very unique situation. There are certainly times when a spouse is 'basically' the innocent party; and they did not want nor seek divorce— but were divorced against their desires. **So now what? In this article we are not able to give a specific answer to every situation. However, the Scriptures in this article will serve all of us well— THESE Scriptures reveal that God is still pro-marriage and anti-divorce.** (And these Scriptures give clear instruction to those already divorced and remarried.) **THESE Scriptures** call upon us to love and to forgive IN THE SAME MANNER as we have been loved and forgiven! **THESE Scriptures remind us all** that each of us will have to stand before God and give an account— **it is not enough to have the blessing of all the pastors in the world!** [**SAD REALITY:** More and

more divorced pastors are quick to bless divorce and remarriage for others. **Nevertheless, God still hates divorce.**

God still calls Christians to demonstrate the HIGH ROAD miracles of redemption, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation!]

**THESE Scriptures** remind us that God's grace reached down to us when we were the unlovable, the undeserving, and the unresponsive.

Now, let us be channels of His kind of love!

***Who needs to experience the love of God more than a wayward spouse— most especially when we are the ones who GREATLY WOUNDED THEM?***

Christians often speak of praying for and laboring sacrificially on behalf of a lost soul for many years.

***To our spouse we vowed before God, 'For better, for worse... until DEATH do us part!' Shall we not labor for them and for the sacred marriage covenant?***

Moreover, one sin never justifies another:

So, your spouse violated his/her marriage vow. That is horrific! **But that does not justify you or require you to violate the vow you made— especially IF it was YOUR SIN that helped bring destruction to your marriage in the first place!**

**THESE Scriptures call us to DENY OURSELVES**, to take up our cross, and to follow Jesus! Function as **a believer priest**, make sure things are settled before God, in accordance with the Word of God... and then, go forward in peace.

**FOR THE GOSPEL'S SAKE:**

**Remain in your present marriage and/or do not close the door to a troubled marriage or even one that is presently in a state of divorce where your spouse has not married anyone else— WHY?**

1. **BECAUSE** you refuse to set a limit on what God's love and forgiveness may want to accomplish IN YOU and through you.

2. **BECAUSE** as a Christian, the love of God has flooded your heart!

3. **BECAUSE** even IF the "exception clause" of Matthew 19:9, does grant you permission to divorce— **it most definitely does not command you to divorce!**

4. **However, you/we are commanded to walk in the steps of Jesus.**

You/we are commanded to forgive and love even as God for Christ's sake forgives and loves us! If HE will stop being redemptive to you, if He will give up all efforts to get you safely home to heaven— then, yes... love your earthly spouse as He loves you!

**That is our command— to love as He loves! (Eph. 5:25; 4:32) Glory to God, the reality is that HIS LOVE never stops!** *He never 'divorces' any who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb! GO FORTH, loving as He loves!*

**Sometimes, I hear confessions like these:** *"I just don't have any love for my spouse." "God has not given me love for my spouse!" "God has given me love for this 'POTENTIAL' spouse!"*

**RESPONSE: All of those statements are full of SELF and a denial of clear Biblical truth:**

You PROMISED GOD, others, and your spouse that you would love your

spouse until death! To every real Christian, GOD HAS GIVEN His Holy Spirit and He THEREFORE COMMANDS you/I/us to love our spouse! **For me to CLAIM that God has not GIVEN me love for my spouse is a giant SLANDER AGAINST GOD!** You/I/we should be on our face before God, repenting of GRIEVING AND QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT! You and I will stand before God and each have to give an account. The only thing that really matters here is this— **Am I in line with God's Holy Word? Will my position stand in the Day of Judgment?**

**LET'S REMEMBER:** GOD was not up in heaven having an emotional *falling in love fit* over us! We were His enemies. We deserved hell. YET: He so loved He did something! HE SENT HIS SON! **Love is something sacrificial you do for the best interest of the other person.**

**GO HOME AND LOVE YOUR SPOUSE! KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE VOWS!**

**You/I/we are most definitely called to be redemptive toward offenders,** to invest in them even as God invested in you/me/us when we were still lost sinners.

**Remain in your present marriage** and/or as much as possible seek reconciliation and be a channel for God's unconditional, sacrificial, forgiving love— which He delights to pour out on **the unlovable, the undeserving, and the unresponsive.** *Besides, your marriage vow before God was "...till death do us part!"*

**LOCAL CONGREGATION RAMIFICATIONS:**

We rejoice that at Southside we have sweet fellowship and labor with precious ones who have divorce in their background. Some of those with divorce and/or remarriage in their background teach classes, minister in Outreach activities, minister through music; and such ones,(who are

men), preach from the pulpit, etc. NONE of these dear saints are in any sense 'second-class saints!'

\*\* **Nevertheless**, at Southside we do see a Biblical ministry limitation—namely, that divorced men do not serve as pastors/elders or as deacons—(1 Tim. 3:1-15; Titus 1:5-9).

**FINAL NOTE:** Yes, in our sin-filled world, there are times when for sheer safety of life and limb of the wife and children— there may need to be a time of protective separation. Even so, all the more is the need for the REDEMPTIVE VISION of Jesus for the sin enslaved! **MOREOVER**, many 'wars' in families will fade from or never get to red zones of physical danger if the following Scriptures are heeded: 1 Peter 2:19-21; 3:1-6; Romans 12:14-21. LET US GO FORTH MODELING COMMITMENT TO HOLY AND SACRED MARRIAGE!

Grace and Blessings!

James Bell [www.southsidegallatin.org](http://www.southsidegallatin.org)

## **SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:**

**MONDAYS:** Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

**TUESDAYS:** Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing

Home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM.

**WEDNESDAYS:** ☐ 6:30pm— Children Ministry/activities; ☐ 6:30pm— Youth Activities and Bible Study— (For both of these... enter via double doors by gym)

☐ 6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE... Come in side entrance, iron steps... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

**LADIES BIBLE STUDY**— Studies in the Gospel of Luke! ... NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, *May 9, 2017* @ 11:00am; Cindy Bell teaching. [Front door open at 10:45 till 11:05am; or come in Iron Steps side entrance!]

MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! {*STUDYING the Epistle of First John*} AT THE back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru awning, walk forward, coffee & biscuits WAITING!

Sunday Services For May 7, 14, 21, 28

Sunday, May 7— 9:30am - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service // NOON MEAL

1pm Early Afternoon Service

**Sunday, May 14—** 9:30am - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service [MOTHER'S DAY... No Meal]

\*\*\* **Mother's day and on Father's day— Let us give** Gideon Bibles in memory of Moms or Dads **and/or** in appreciation for them; **and/or** let us give extra special OFFERINGS for one or more of our Missionaries— **especially on behalf of Odell and Beth.**

**Sunday, May 21—** 9:30am - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service // NO MEAL

HOME GROUPS MEET... generally at 5pm

**Sunday, May 28—** 9:30am - Sunday School

10:45am - Worship Service // NOON MEAL

5:30pm - 7:30pm FAITHFUL MEN'S

MONTHLY FELLOWSHIP/STUDY/EQUIPPING