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and more

Christianfamily

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EDITORIAL

When God joined the first man and woman in matrimony (Genesis 2:24), He intended for this holy institution not to be broken by man's selfish desires but to stand the test of time on this earth (Matthew 19:6). But what are some of the things that make for a lasting marriage? In this issue we asked this question to Christian couples around the world who have been married for about 50 years or more, and they have given us their best advice for lasting marriages. We pray that their advice will help strengthen your marriage and make it last as intended by the Lord. Other articles in this issue will additionally help strengthen marriage and family relationships.

As this year comes to an end and we pause to make resolutions for a better new year, let us resolve to glorify God with our families.

Paul Holland & Moisés Pinedo

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Helping families become stronger in the Lord

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what our

Homes

should be

Part 3



It should be a place where the Bible is cherished.

The Bible should not be one of those fancy, great big books to be placed on the center table as an ornament or only a book in which to record births and marriages, but it should be placed where it can be used by all the members of the home. At least once a day, one of the parents should take it, open its pages, and read its great truths to the children. A Bible school should be organized in the home. Israel was instructed to make the Lord's commandments known unto their children:

“Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially concerning the day you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said to me, “Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children” (Deuteronomy 4:9-10).

“...and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord (Exodus 10:2).

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth (Deuteronomy 11:18-21).

The Psalmist tells us that it was obligatory upon Israel to instruct the children in the words of Jehovah (see Psalm 78). They were to make these words known, so that the generations to come might know them, even the children that should be born. Timothy had known the Scriptures from his childhood. He had a mother and a grandmother who taught them to him. We should do likewise (cf. Luke 10:37). ■

Adapted from William H. Book, *Sermons for the People* (Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Company, 1918), 141-143.

The fruit of the Spirit and your spouse

Freddie Klein

Marriage

Marriage is the very first institution initiated by God. It was created for man's physical and spiritual benefit. Marriage is for **companionship**. God saw that man was alone, and a helper was created for him (Genesis 2:18). Marriage is for **procreation**. God told man and woman to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28). Finally, God created marriage for **enjoyment** (Proverbs 5:15-19; Genesis 2:24). Marriage brings joy in ways that no other relationship can. Since marriage was instituted by God and is seen as essential to growth and development, Christians must think about this important topic.

God's Will for Marriage

The book of Galatians provides a fertile starting point for a discussion on marriage, specifically the type of marriage God wants for man and woman. In Galatians 5:16, Paul, by inspiration, instructed the Christians to "walk in the Spirit." God tells us that, if we set our minds on spiritual things, our desires will change; they will be replaced by spiritual desires.

Paul goes on to say in the next verse, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (vs. 17). Think of the spiritual implications for a God-honoring marriage from these passages. Spouses who love each other are so focused on loving God and each



other that they are not thinking about gratifying themselves through sinful desires. This is a wonderful blessing.

How to Walk in the Spirit

As a spouse, how do I walk in the Spirit with my spouse? What does this look like in a marriage? Thankfully, God has not left man guessing in this area. Scripture is filled with many teachings and examples of how Christians should walk according to the Spirit with their spouse. We do not even have to leave Galatians 5 to find out what that looks like. Paul tells us that a Christian's walk will be filled with such things as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (vss. 22-23).

On the other hand, when we set our minds on the flesh, we walk according to the flesh, for our actions carry out what is in our hearts. Jesus made this very point in the Sermon on the Mount: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). When we set our minds on the flesh, we focus on self rather than on God. Notice the list found in the midst of this discussion:

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

In this list, we see many issues facing modern marriages today. From outbursts of anger to adultery, and everything in between, many spouses are focused on the flesh rather than on the Spirit—and their fruit shows.

When we choose to walk in the Spirit, our marriages will have particular outcomes; the fruit of the Spirit will be the result. Walking in the Spirit is the cultivating and preparing for the fruit to grow. Just as we tend and prepare the soil of our gardens, so too, we prepare the soil of our lives to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Marriage Takes Two

How should each spouse live if they want the fruit of God to grow? We must walk in the Spirit, which means that we must be setting our minds on spiritual things. As spouses who are devoted to one another and, more importantly, to God, our work is to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24). This whole process takes work on the part of both parties in a marriage. Both must look introspectively at their lives and ask, “Am I truly devoted to the will of God?” Being devoted to God is essential if we desire to be devoted to one another.

Love

If we are walking in the Spirit, what fruit will result? The first on the list is love. Love is a word that is overused and misapplied in our language. Sadly, English has only one word for love, whereas the language of Paul’s day had at least four words to express different kinds and degrees of love.

In Galatians 5, the word for “love” describes a deep and sacrificial love. This kind of love is the same

love with which we love God and others. Jesus stated, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). This love is seen by others, not in flippant acts, but in honest appreciation for others. Love, then, is the genesis of giving ourselves to others.

Again, Jesus stated, “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Love includes more than our feelings because love includes our enemies. This love is a decision, not merely a passing feeling. In fact, many times in marriage we must choose to love in spite of our feelings or our hurt. Love is not something that comes and goes intermittently. True biblical love is consistent and true.

The Current State of Marriage

Now, let us contrast the biblical view of love with what many see today as “love.” The world bases its judgments upon feelings alone. These feelings are temporary at best. This worldly view of love has a strong foothold in the arena of marital relationships. People divorce because they do not feel “in love”; in fact, they never viewed love the way God intended and demonstrated. Genuine biblical love gives to others. Sadly, our society presents a warped view of love.

CONCLUSION

We will build stronger, lasting marriages by walking in the Spirit. When we follow God with all of our hearts, we will see results. The fruit of walking in the Spirit is first and foremost, love. Love is the truest description of God, and thus this virtue describes our walk in Christ. Love must be a cornerstone of our godly marriages; otherwise, they will fail. Moreover, we must have the right view of love. Love is about giving, many times without return, to those around us. Therefore, our spouse should be the top recipient of our sacrificial love.

Since we all desire a world that is filled with more love, then let our marriages be prime examples of love where both parties are walking in the Spirit. ■



RUTH

A Story of Love and Loyalty

Kerri Epling

Few things in life are as difficult as losing a loved one, especially a spouse or child. In Biblical times, this would have had far-reaching consequences for a widow, as property, inheritance, etc. was carried on through the male side of the family. In the book of Ruth, we find a woman who has lost not only her husband, but also her two sons! She is in a foreign land in the middle of a famine, with only her two daughters-in-law beside her; she is helpless and hopeless in many ways.

Our text for this study is the book of Ruth, found in the Old Testament. According to Ruth 1:1, this account takes place “in the days when the judges ruled.” The time of the judges was a chaotic time for Israel, because, as stated in Judges 21:25, in “those days *there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” How might this have affected life and circumstances?

Questions to consider

- According to Ruth 1:1, when does this account take place?
- Why was Naomi’s family in Moab?
- Where was Ruth from originally?
- Where was Naomi from originally?
- Why did Naomi plan to return to Judah?

- What did Naomi request of her daughters-in-law, and why?
- What is significant about Ruth's statement in 1:16-17? What was she leaving behind?
- Ruth 1:20-21 shows Naomi's state of mind at this time. Reflect on this attitude.
- How did Ruth help Naomi?
- How did Boaz respond to Ruth helping Naomi?
- Ruth 2:11 is powerful! Ruth's reputation preceded her, and she and Naomi were blessed. In 2:12, Boaz acknowledges that she has come under God's wings for refuge. Why is this significant? How can our reputations affect things today? (See Matthew 5:16).
- Research the law of the kinsman redeemer. How did this play out in the story of Ruth?
- Naomi's instructions to Ruth at the threshing floor seem strange to us today, but they had a cultural purpose at the time. Do some research on this practice. How did Ruth respond to Naomi's instructions? How did Boaz respond to her actions?
- How did things proceed when Boaz presented the claim to Ruth at the gate of the city?
- Ruth 4:17 states the importance of the descendants of Ruth. Why is she significant in the genealogy of Matthew 1?
- What can this account teach us about loyalty and faithfulness?

Questions for children

- Why was Naomi sad?
- What did Ruth promise her mother-in-law?
- What job did Ruth do to provide for Naomi?
- Whose field did Ruth glean from?
- How did Boaz help Ruth?
- Who was Ruth's great grandson? ■

Suggestions for interaction with children

- Re-enact the story of Ruth gathering grain, uncovering Boaz's feet, and rejoicing when Obed is born.
- Make bread or some other food from barley, since Ruth was gathering at the time of the barley harvest.
- For little ones, let them spell out "Ruth" with beans or grains.
- Make a family tree starting with Ruth and Boaz and going to David (or even to Jesus!).
- Talk about how Ruth let her light shine by being loyal to Naomi and was blessed as a result. Brainstorm ways they can let their lights shine for God and help others.
- Ruth was a good friend to Naomi. Talk about how important it is to have good friends who follow God. Make friendship bracelets to give friends.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at kerripling@gmail.com with email subject of "Christian Family Study."

Advice from *Lasting* Marriages

Steve: Practice the 3 “C’s”: Be committed, courteous, and considerate.

Sandy: Walk away if you must during an argument, but do not stay away. Come back and discuss the problem ASAP—after you calm down! Never be afraid to say, “I’m sorry,” or, “Maybe we cannot agree on this between us, but it’s ok for each of us to have a different opinion.” Then, of course, never go to sleep angry, but leave the problem with God. And say “I love you” often!

Steve and Sandy Atkinson

— 50 years of marriage —

At the beginning of our marriage, we decided that God would be the center of our relationship. As we daily seek to please Him first, we are motivated to be the husband and wife that we should be. Expressing unselfish love to one another has strengthened our marriage for all these years. Love God, and your love for each other will flourish.

Jim and Octavia Roberts

— 47 years of marriage —

When you have a problem, let it cool down before you try to handle it. You may need a “referee” to help work through it; it’s alright to get another person to help. Keep going to church services together; **don’t stop** doing it! On financial things, always consult the other person before buying a higher-priced item. You both should determine what that amount will be, so it doesn’t cause problems in your marriage.

Bob and Fran Smith

— 66 years of marriage —





Fear God; let Him guide your ways. Be one in Christ; pray together, study together, eat together, laugh together, cry together, live life together, have fun together, sleep together. Be a servant to your spouse. In all ways, be honest to each other and show your love to each other. Be kind and tenderhearted to each other. Forgive each other; do not hold a grudge, always remembering that God forgives you.

Mold your life around your mate. Be the best friend you can. Listen to each other and don't feel that you must have the last word. Never go to sleep mad; always say "I'm sorry" for your mistakes. Do all within you to please your spouse. Never aggravate or tease each other. Under no circumstance make fun of your mate in public. At no time talk bad about your spouse to others. Have Christian friends and enjoy time with them.

Trust each other. Complete trust means "no secrets;" hide nothing from each other. Have one bank account. Share everything equally. Never hide money or expenses from each other. Have one email address, if possible. Each of you should know the passwords to all your accounts. Always be transparent in everything you do.

Never allow yourself to draw close to the opposite sex. Run from temptation! Be faithful to your mate. Our motto through the years has been, "Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be." The greatest accomplishment both of you can achieve is to be faithful to God and each other and help your spouse get to heaven. When you said, "I do", you did for life.

Bless the Lord with all your soul and thank God for His mercy and grace.

Dempsey and Charlotte Jordan

— 49 years of marriage —

Submit to your husband's leadership; love your wife. Pray always and be patient. Love cover all faults.

Eduardo and Libia Suárez

— 52 years of marriage —

It seems to us that there are several kinds of “lasting” marriages, probably too many to list. Some of them work under one (or more) of the following reasonings:

1. We have lived together for years and made the best of a bad situation.
2. We fuss and fight all the time, but divorce is a sin, so we stay together.
3. We stay together for the kids.
4. We stay together because we love and cherish each other, and we thank God for every day we have with each other.

Which of these is most appealing to you?

When our Lord wanted to describe His love for the church, He asked us to look at our marriages (Ephesians 5:21-33). What does this tell us about what our marriages ought to be?

We are afraid that many of us have allowed Satan to shortchange us in degrading our marriages into much less than intended by its Creator. Next to our eternal salvation, nothing is more precious to us than our marriage; it is the greatest gift we have besides Christ and His church.

Why would two Christians who love each other, argue, fuss, criticize, be miserable, and even consider breaking their holy bond? Even Christian counselors tell young couples to be ready to have fights. Our young people should not be told that this is normal; it is not!

There are different kinds of love, but we believe that the kind of love that makes marriages do more than last will also make them wonderful. We call this kind of love, “sacrificial reciprocal love.” This means that each is looking for opportunities to prove his or her constant love by giving up something in preference to the other. If both are doing this, how can strife prevail? What a difference this would make in everyday life!

Start each day with a kiss and an “I love you.” End each day the same. Do not waste the precious years God has granted you in marriage.

George and Susie Ellis

— 52 years of marriage —

Place God at the head of your marriage. He helped us build our home (even in the rough times). We are opposites in our personalities, but we’ve worked through the differences. Not having the perfect marriage has helped us grow spiritually. Realizing we are two different people wanting to get to the same place has helped us work together. Honestly, we are still working at it!

Russ and Sue Ridley

— 52 years of marriage —

Learn from misunderstandings and forgive and forget (and don't hold it against the other person). Marriage is a life-commitment, and you are helping each other get to heaven. Have patience with one another. [Lewis and Gwen met at church and they said that God has held them together.]

Lewis and Gwen Kirkpatrick

— 68 years of marriage —

Love is the main thing. Marry a Christian, preferably. [Pam married Andy, who was a non-Christian, and many years later he decided to put Christ on in baptism. Yet, he regrets the “lost years” when he could have been a better influence on their children.] Learn how to appreciate each other more.

Andy and Pam Sales

— 53 years of marriage —



CONFRONTING with *Care*

Cody Melvin

When I was a kid growing up in Texas, it was not unusual to find me running around barefoot. Somewhere along the way I would step on a piece of glass, and being far too busy with whatever activity occupied my mind, I would ignore the pain and continue to play limping around for the next day or so until a callus built over the offending spot.

Often, in society and the church, we ignore issues that confront us. It is often far too easy to sweep them under the rug or to let the issue go because we don't want to be accused of being judgmental, busybodies, or hypocrites. The Scriptures are clear about what the necessary steps are in confronting a brother or sister who is practicing sin. Matthew 18:15-17 reads, "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."

Those words are simple and clear, yet we hesitate to execute them. One must ask, "Why?" Surely, the reason we don't confront our brother or sister in Christ is not that we do not love them! We want them in heaven just as surely as the lost sinner we try to teach the Bible. Maybe the reason we fail to confront is fear. But as we know from the Scripture, we have not been given a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7).

I would like to offer a few tips when addressing another Christian who has sinned. Without question, the person should be confronted with a mixture of love and humility. Galatians 6:1 reminds us, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."

Similarly, in James 5:19-20 we read, "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."

The point of both verses is to approach the Christian in love. Think about the last time you were confronted about something you did incorrectly. If you are like most people, you will attempt to defend your position or action. Realizing that, expect them to defend their actions, sometimes vehemently. They may even attempt to justify their actions with Bible verses; know your scriptures! As hard as it may be, I suggest staying focused on the topic at hand. Don't be surprised if they call into question you, the local church, and even God. Allow them to express themselves, even to be a little mad. Gently bring the discussion back to the sin that they have committed.

Secondly, remember that your goal is to restore the sinner to God. We need to remember, as the parable of the sower shows (Matthew 13:1-23), that the seed doesn't always land on good ground. Just like with non-Christians, it might take more than one conversation, one phone call, or one text for them to realize the depth of their error. A word of caution: this should never be misunderstood as acceptance of their sin. Each time you have the opportunity to talk with them, the sin in question should be the center and purpose of the conversation. We often ignore the command that, if we go through the process as indicated by Matthew 18, the last step will be that the impenitent Christian is to be considered as a "Gentile"—someone alienated from Christian fellowship; this can be especially hard when it involves a family member.

Thirdly, don't allow them to misquote Scripture. Some sinning Christians will twist or take scriptures out of context to attempt to justify their position or

behavior. I have said firmly to several people who have used this tactic, “You know the Scriptures better than that. Do you really think that God would approve of that sin?” If you are not well versed in Scripture, simply respond, “I am pretty sure that is not what God’s Word says, but I will be happy to look that up.”

Lastly, ask if they will pray with you. Expect to be rejected, but the offer of prayer is important. A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish much, James 5:16 says. I have found that the acceptance of the offer of prayer is an effective gauge of their level of desire to repent.

I realize that this is a difficult subject. Confronting someone who is practicing sin is never enjoy-

able, but it is necessary, and we do it because we are a Christian family, we love each, and we want to see each other in heaven. When I was that barefoot kid who stepped on a piece of glass and ignored it for days, my father would call me into the kitchen where I would soak my feet in hot water and Epsom salt. The mixture would draw the glass in my foot near the skin. My father would then take his penknife and dig the glass the rest of the way out of my foot. It was always painful, but because the offense was gone, I could then walk correctly and without pain. When a Christian is restored, there is joy in heaven, and Satan loses again. ■



I have decided to follow JESUS!

Moisés Pinedo

If you attend church services with your family, chances are that you have heard (or even sung) the song, “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.” This is not a children’s song, but children around the world love singing this song. This song expresses the Christian’s commitment to follow Jesus under any circumstances and for the rest of his life.

What about those words?

If you have a hymn book and look for the song, “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus,” you may notice that it is an Indian folk hymn. There is an Indian story attached to the origin of this song. Some of the details may be told in different ways, but here is a popular version.

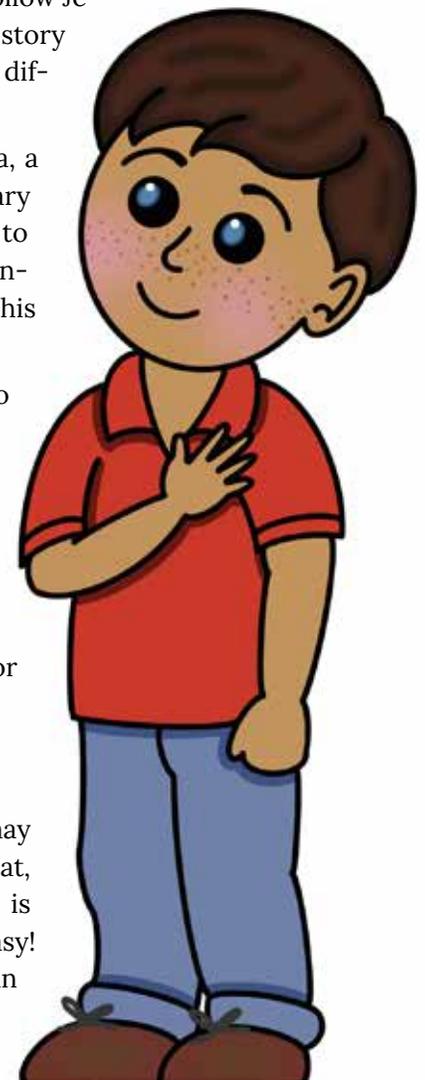
It is said that about a century and a half ago in a village in India, a man and his family were converted to Christianity after a missionary preached the Gospel to them. Soon this man and his family began to share their faith in Jesus, and many others became Christians. This enraged the chief of the village, and he demanded for the man to deny his faith. The man refused, saying, “I have decided to follow Jesus.”

The chief commanded for the man and his family to be put to death, but before dying, the man added that he would not turn back. Sadly, the man and his family lost their lives, but it is said that, with time, his faith caused the chief himself to become a Christian.

We may not know how much of this story is true, but the words of this song have been a great inspiration for the people in India and many others in the world to stand up for the Christian faith. Certainly, it would not have been the first time a person lost his life for deciding to follow Jesus (Acts 7).

What about Christianity?

Living in a country with religious freedom is a great blessing! We may never be threatened to give up our faith in Christ, but the truth is that, whether we talk about India or any other country, following Jesus is still a serious matter. Jesus never said that following Him would be easy! Though Christianity has wonderful spiritual blessings in this life and an amazing reward in heaven, sometimes things are hard for Christians.





In Luke 9, Jesus said that He did not have a comfortable place to sleep or to offer His followers, so those who desired to follow Him were to decide to do it in any circumstances (see verses 57-58). He also said that His followers were to decide to continue to the end, without turning back due to fear or the desire for the things they have left behind (see verses 59-62). There should be “no turning back.”

Jesus taught that following Him is more important than anything in the world—even our own family and life (Luke 14:25-33). We all love our family, and Jesus wants us to love our family (Matthew 22:39), but if our family forbids us to follow Jesus, He still wants us to choose Him before them. Things that help us have a comfortable life are not bad, but if those things hinder us from following Jesus, then we are to leave them behind to please the Lord (Matthew 19:21-23).



What about you and me?

Like the Christian in India, you and I must decide to renounce anything for our love for Jesus, including ourselves (Matthew 16:24). We are to be brave before those who mock Christ and the Bible, and we are to follow Jesus even if no one else does it. Jesus promises that, if we follow Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, He would give us eternal life (Matthew 19:29). We may have a relatively peaceful life on this earth, but if things turn difficult, we are to remember that following Jesus was never meant to be easy; above all, we are to remember that following Him is worth any effort and difficulty.



Illustrations on this spread by Kelsey Pinedo (age 13)

Never quit following Jesus! ■

Following JESUS

Find a friend and play the game of following Jesus in the way to heaven. Use two beans (preferably of different colors) and a dice. Place your beans on the start. Whoever rolls the greater number gets to go first. Roll the dice and play the number of spaces. If you fall on one of the spaces where Jesus is, advance five more spaces; avoid the banana peel, or you will have to go back three spaces!



Online and printed Spanish materials for children at www.ebherencia.org
Contact editorial@ebglobal.org



Q: *Is it licit for a Christian to remarry? If so, in what circumstances?* —SOACHA, COLOMBIA

The Bible presents two circumstances in which anyone may remarry with God's approval: (1) In the case of the death of the spouse, a widow/widower may opt to remain single or marry again (1 Corinthians 7:39). (2) In the case of adultery committed by one spouse, the innocent party may opt to receive his/her spouse again, or to divorce him/her and stay single or marry again (Matthew 19:9). It is important, though, that the spouse opting for the divorce may consider if he/she is really innocent of any involvement in the outcome of the adultery (cf. John 8:7). The goal of the person who wants to please the Lord is not to be free to marry again but to be right before God.

There is no other biblical exception for divorce with God's approval to remarry. Though a person may depart from his/her spouse due to a hostile or negative environment (e.g., abuse, addiction), he/she is to remain unmarried or be reconciled later to his/her spouse (1 Corinthians 7:11). —MP

Q: *What does the Bible say concerning gender diversity?* —MASAYA, NICARAGUA

God created "man" as male and female (Genesis 1:27). In Genesis 5:2, note that "He created them **male** and **female**, and He blessed them and named them **Man**" (NASB1995). "Man" or "mankind" is composed of two genders. The whole Bible is consistent on this point. In Deuteronomy 22:5, God commanded: "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so *are* an abomination to the Lord your God." There is a distinction between men and women, and God

intends for that distinction to be maintained. Homosexuality is clearly condemned (Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Paul writes that it is a perversion for men to leave the natural functions of the woman for another man (Romans 1:26-27). God created men to be men, and He created women to be women. To confuse the two is to pervert the truth of God. —PH

Q: *Having Malachi 2:14-16 in mind, at what extent does God see "fit" for a married couple to stay together when they are hateful to each other, having made of their marriage a "war zone," even when they are believers (though not one of them having committed adultery)?*

—TOLUCA, MEXICO

God expects both believing spouses to obey **all** that He has commanded. The passages which teach Christian virtues apply to spouses as much as to anyone: "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32). In light of God's hatred of divorce, as you have indicated from Malachi 2:14-16, those who have turned their marriage into a "war zone" need to humble their hearts to the teachings of Christ relative to making and keeping peace, and work harder at changing their attitudes toward each other, finding ways to resolve conflicts in a Christ-like spirit and love, as Paul instructs in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. —PH ■

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