

Will Baptism Purify An Unholy Marriage?

Unfortunately we live in a society that does not hold the bond of marriage as a lifetime commitment. Instead, society encourages people to divorce because it is easier and less painful than trying to work out the relationship. Thinking like this has caused the divorce rate to skyrocket and has influenced people to reinterpret what the Word of God teaches on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. It is easy for people to accept the will of God until it directly affects them or one of their loved ones. For example, let's say that a mother's daughter gets married and then gets divorced because they could not get along. The daughter is very young and has her whole life in front of her. She wants to get married again and have kids, but she cannot unless she wants to turn from God and live in adultery. There are only two ways a person can be remarried and be right with God and they are found in following verses.

Matthew 19:9 *"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."*

Romans 7:2 *For the woman who has a husband is bound by the*

law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ³ So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Even though the Word of God clearly states that a person can only remarry if their mate has cheated on them or they have died, the mother or daughter in our scenario will be inclined to invent a new way around the will of God to satisfy their own wants and desires. This is exactly what many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are doing in the church today. I have observed many creative ways people have tried to twist these easy to understand passages in the attempt to justify an unlawful remarriage.

Some think that they can purify an unholy marriage by being baptized. They come to this conclusion because they think baptism will wash away all their sins and make them a new creature allowing them to start over anew. Is this true? Will baptism purify an unholy marriage?

The key to answering this question is found in the basic principles of becoming a Christian. We must hear the Word (Rom. 10:14-17), believe

(Jn. 8:24), repent (Lk. 13:3), confess (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). A person cannot have the remission of sins unless he has obeyed all these steps. For instance, if a person did not believe, then it would be pointless for him to repent, confess or be baptized. If a person is not willing to confess Jesus as Lord, then he will remain lost (Mat. 10:32-33). Similarly, if a person refuses to repent, he would simply be getting wet at his baptism and would still be hopelessly lost in his sins.

Repentance is the key to answering our question. True repentance is not merely feeling sorry for what we have done, instead it involves changing what we are currently doing and we must conform to the will of God (2 Cor. 7:10; Mat. 21:28-29). For example, if a man steals a car and then he feels sorry about it, but he continues to keep the car, he has not repented. Now if this man feels sorry for what he did and he takes the car back to the owner and asks him for forgiveness, this is true repentance. Let's examine one more example. A homosexual couple attends a gospel meeting and they are ready to become children of God. They are excited and they are ready to be baptized, but they think it is acceptable to remain in their homosexual lifestyle. Can they become children of God if they

refuse to repent of their homosexuality? Will baptism purify their sinful relationship? Most Christians would boldly say, "No, they cannot become a Christian until they turn away from their sinful relationship." It is easier for people to see this principle when it is applied to a thief or to homosexuality, but the same principle applies to those who try to justify their adulterous marriage through baptism.

Jesus and Paul make it clear that if a person remarries for any other reason than sexual immorality or the death of your mate, you are in an adulterous relationship (Mat. 19:9; Rom. 7:2-3). The sin of adultery is no different from the sin of the thief or the sin of the homosexual couple. If a person is living in an unholy marriage, the only way that they can become a Christian is by turning away from their adulterous marriage. If a person is already a Christian and they have allowed themselves to enter an adulterous marriage, the only way they can be forgiven for their sin is to end their marriage. So, baptism will not purify an unholy marriage. You must repent by ending your unlawful marriage and remain single for the rest of your life. Some will find this difficult to accept, but we must look beyond our own emotions and compassion and faithfully accept the perfect will of God. Notice what the Lord tells Isaiah:

Isaiah 55:8 " For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. ⁹ "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Anytime we try to change the Word of God to fit our wishes, it is because we have a lack of faith and trust in God. We would all do good to take the advice of the following verses:

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. ⁸ It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.

Marriage is wonderful institution given by God (Gen. 2:18-24), and He does not want it to be broken (Mat. 19:6) because it is a lifetime commitment (Rom. 7:1-4). When a husband and a wife live their lives based on the Word of God, they will have a beautiful marriage (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-2,7; 1 Cor. 7:3-5; Titus 2:4). We need to make sure that we choose the right person for marriage without rushing into it. Just as we struggle in our

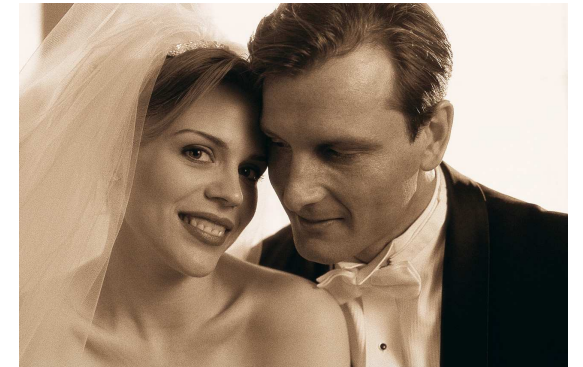
relationship with God, we will struggle in our relationship with our mate. We have to learn that marriage is a give and take relationship, and we must be willing to compromise.

In conclusion, no matter how many creative ways we try to get around the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, we cannot change what the Word of God clearly states. Unless your mate cheats on you or dies, you have no right to remarry unless you choose to live your life in adultery and are willing to face the consequences (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Joshua 24:15 "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

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