

## Endorsements

*"Every young pastor needs a copy of the material on divorce and remarriage.... MAN, I WISH THAT PAPER COULD BE PUBLISHED AND CIRCULATED. IT COULD HELP A LOT OF PASTORS WHO WANT TO BE BIBLICAL IN WHAT THEY DO, AND SAVE A LOT OF HEARTACHE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALREADY HURT ENOUGH."*

Dr. Don Moore (Retired Executive Director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention)

*"This is a must read if divorce has ever touched you in any way. Oh that I could have read it years ago after a marriage that I could not hold together alone. All the humiliation, condemnation and worthless feelings as a Christian vaporized for me after understanding God's true intent on divorce and remarriage."*

Brenda S.

*"As a Pastor, and a divorced person, I read Rev. Winters' words with great interest. He treats the issue with faithful interpretation of the scriptures, as well as consistency to the Graceful nature of God. In a day of multiple divorces, and yet a need for a graceful and healing approach to the issue, this book is a breath of fresh air."*

Susan (Hospice Chaplain and Pastor, California)

*"The Christian community as well as the world has been waiting to hear the truth about divorce and remarriage. The Church has frowned on people who have been through a divorce because of traditions.*

*Pastor Chuck Winters has dispelled these traditions and replaced them with biblical truths. This book is a must read for every person desiring to know the truth about divorce and remarriage.*

*God Bless You"*

Tyronza Conard (Pastor, Remount Church)

*"As a young teen, I was in a Sunday School class studying "The Sermon on the Mount," specifically Matt. 5:31-32. The teacher told us anyone who was divorced and remarried was committing adultery.*

*Years ago, my mom was abandoned by her first husband. She was now married to my dad, an elder in our church and totally committed to God. So, I asked the*

*teacher about my mom and he looked at me and proclaimed in front of my peers that my mom was committing adultery.*

*Needless to say, I was devastated.”*

Mary W.

### **Biblical Misconceptions about Divorce and Remarriage (The Church Shooting Her Wounded)**

It is with a broken heart that I present this study.

There are few issues that have more deeply damaged the lives of God’s people than the often-misinterpreted issue of divorce and remarriage. Bible translations have added to the confusion as they have translated key words differently related to this issue.

Added to that confusion we have often fallen into the grievous translation/interpretation error called **eisegesis**. Eisegesis is when a pastor, translator or teacher of the Bible reads **into** the scriptural text a contemporary understanding of a topic instead of understanding the topic at the time the scripture was being written. The result is that we have many good intentioned pastors and teachers upholding and teaching that which in reality is a practice that God actually hates.

In this study I will demonstrate how we often fail to recognize the dramatic difference in the cultural practices of the Hebrew people regarding marriage and our contemporary practices. Their customs were totally alien to our western world’s way of thinking. I will demonstrate how the Hebrew practice of **putting away** a wife without a **divorcement** was a common custom that God hated in both the Old Testament and the New Testament texts.

Just one illustration of this is in the Hebrew text of Malachi 2:16, for the Hebrew **does not** say that God hates **divorce** but rather says that God hates **putting away**. Do we know the difference? If we wish to understand God’s heart we must understand the difference or we will be guilty of attributing to God something that God does not say.

By failing to recognize this distinction throughout the scriptural texts many teach that it is wrong for a divorced person to remarry, or if they do remarry they are committing

adultery. This is in fact teaching a modern form of the hurtful custom of **putting away** and making the divorced person enslaved to the offender...which is what God hates.

Ultimately, the two issues at stake in this discussion are the very nature and character of God's **Justice** and the **Veracity** of God's Word.

*Isaiah 61:8, "For I, the Lord, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them." (New Living Translation)*<sup>i</sup>

In the debate over our topic, we have often failed to realize the importance of keeping **God's Justice** in the forefront of our thinking. God's Justice is a decisive two-edged sword in this matter. One edge is the handing down of judgments against sin to be sure, but the other edge is the demand of God that an offended party is compensated or protected. The following quote makes this point vividly clear.

*...He (God) cannot be indifferent to good and evil (Habakkuk 1:13). The great prophets, Isaiah, Micah, Amos, Hosea, all insist upon Yahweh's demand for righteousness.  
But this is not the main aspect of God's justice. Theology has been wont to set forth God's justice as the fundamental fact in His nature with which we must reconcile His mercy as best we may, the two being conceived as in conflict. As a matter of fact, the Scriptures most often conceive God's justice, or righteousness, as the action of His mercy. Just as with man justice means the relief of the oppressed and needy, so God's justice is His kingly power engaged on behalf of men, and justice and mercy are constantly joined together. He is "a just God and a Saviour"  
(International Standard Bible Encyclopedia article on **Justice**)<sup>ii</sup>*

In other words, God's Justice in Holy Scripture is more often expressed in relation to His response on behalf of the oppressed than it is a revelation of His judgment against sin.

God's requirement for His people to likewise be just in their dealing with the oppressed party is sobering since over and over their perverting justice toward the weak or offended person or group to a large part, determined God's judgment against His people. For example we see this in Amos.

*Amos 5:7, "You twist justice, making it a bitter pill for the oppressed. You treat the righteous like dirt."  
(New Living Translation)*

It is my position that the issue of divorce and remarriage has been terribly confused by large segments of Christ's Church. This has cast many oppressed souls into greater condemnation, pain and suffering in the very place where they should have experienced God's grace and healing. I am deeply burdened that we have "twisted justice" and fed

many an oppressed person “bitter pills” rather than applying the healing balm of God’s mercy and provision in the face of the onerous offenses of a hard-hearted spouse.

### The Old Testament Witness

Perhaps the best place to start is to allow Jesus to interpret for us why there was the need for God to require a divorce document if a man was going to **put away** his wife or one of his wives. Referring to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 Jesus said:

Matthew 19:8, “...*Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*”

(King James Version, KJV)

It is very difficult for us to put ourselves in the actual historical setting of the Hebrew people when Deuteronomy was given, but we must try so that we will not commit the error of eisegesis and thereby misunderstand the force of this statement.

They had spent four hundred years living in Egypt and learning the ways of the Egyptians before the exodus. One of the first things we see during the exodus is the judgment of God against their gross immorality at the golden calf while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments on the mountaintop. They were obviously familiar with this kind of sexual sin since they relished their ‘religious’ orgy. Also, the men could have multiple wives and were pretty much free to have sex with any woman, other than the wife of another Hebrew man or the daughter of one, and it would not be considered adultery.

*“...The word adultery had a peculiar significance in Jewish law, which recognized polygamy and concubinage as legitimate. Thus a Hebrew might have two or more wives or concubines, and might have intercourse with a slave or bondwoman, even if married, without being guilty of the crime of adultery (Lev 19:20), for adultery, according to Jewish law, was possible only when a man dishonored the “free wife” of a Hebrew” (Leviticus 20:10).*

(International Standard Bible Encyclopedia article on **Divorce** in the Old Testament)

It certainly wasn’t that way for women since they were subject to execution for any consensual sex with any man other than her husband either before or during their marriage. We must attempt to understand the historical context in which the Old Testament law was given in order to begin to understand why God made certain decrees. This is especially true of **divorce**.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 *“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a **certificate of divorce** and puts it in her hand and **sends her out** from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a **certificate of divorce** and puts it in her hand and **sends her out** of his house, or if the latter*

*husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.*  
(New American Standard Updated Version) <sup>iii</sup>

The first thing we must pay careful attention to is two very different words or ideas in these verses. This is not Hebrew poetry or parallelism. As a matter of fact there are three distinct verb actions involved here. First the writing of the **divorce document**, second putting it in her hand, and thirdly **sending her away**. That is not parallelism but sequential action. This is a Hebrew legal requirement being given by God and every word is important. The two key ideas I have highlighted are what we must understand.

*Sends her out (shalach, the Hebrew word that simply means to send away<sup>iv</sup>.)*

Sending a wife out, or as stated in other places as a wife being **put away**, is a very specific cultural practice that God is dealing with here. If for some reason a man got tired of his wife and wanted to reject her, he would simply send her out of his house; in our culture we might say that he had “kicked her out of the house.”

Also, remember that the husband was free to have wives other than the one he had **put away**. Besides the enormous insecurity this must have generated for women, the problem at hand was that the woman was still a married woman, or still the property of the man. As a wife **put away** she would have a very difficult time even surviving if she did not have her original family to go back to. We must remember that in Old Testament times a wife was little more than a piece of property to the husband.

Not only do we see this injustice but to make matters even worse we find an even more evil practice on the part of the hard-hearted men that Moses is dealing with here. Evidently there was the practice of trying to legalize an Old Testament form of wife swapping going on in Israel that they had also learned in Egypt. Although the following quote from the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy 24:1-4 uses the word divorce incorrectly it still gives some idea of what God was dealing with. I will demonstrate why their use of the word **divorce** is not appropriate in the following quote. They should have used the phrase **putting away**.

*“It come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes.”*

*It appears that the practice of divorces was at this early period very prevalent among the Israelites, who had in all probability become familiar with it in Egypt (Lane), where too great facilities, and that on the most frivolous pretexts, have always existed to the dissolution of the nuptial tie. Parties agree to live together as man and wife for a stipulated period-for a month, for a year, or two years-and then separate in the most friendly manner. The usage being too deep-rooted to be soon or easily abolished, was tolerated by Moses<sup>v</sup>.*

Dr. Janet H. Johnson<sup>vi</sup>, noted scholar on ancient Egyptian social issues and professor at the University of Chicago, writes about the social customs in ancient Egypt around the time of the exodus of Israel all the way up to the time of Christ's birth related to divorce and remarriage.

*Divorce and remarriage seem to have been relatively easy and relatively common. There is little convincing evidence for polygamy, except by the king, but extensive evidence for "serial monogamy." Either party could divorce a spouse on any grounds or, basically, without grounds, **without any interest or record on the part of the state. The vocabulary for divorce, like that for marriage, reflected the fact that marriage was, basically, living together; a man "left, abandoned" a woman; a woman "went (away from)" or "left, abandoned" a man.** (Bold emphasis is mine.)*

Notice how she describes the lack of a legal document for divorcing a spouse leaving the door open for people to simply move from one live-in relationship to another. This is what made Deuteronomy 24:1-4 necessary.

As far as historians can tell in all of recorded human history it is in the law God gave to the Hebrew people that civilization had its first requirement for a legal written document of divorcement. Again, it would be difficult to grasp the impact of this dramatic new precept given by God in order to protect a woman from simply being kicked out of a man's house like unwanted property.

Try to imagine living in a world where the idea of **divorce papers** had never been required nor known... and now, suddenly, God gives this new requirement through Moses... a requirement you had never heard of?

The following quote makes reference to this document requirement. Keep in mind that before the Law of Moses there were no documents of Hebrew legislation because there was no written law. Also notice how even into the New Testament period there was still an ability to simply **put away** a wife. Joseph was considering **putting away** his legally espoused wife, Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus, instead of the legal **divorcement** which was always for the purpose of public knowledge.

*It is not positively known when the custom of writing bills of divorcement commenced, but there are references to such documents in the earliest Hebrew legislation. The fact that Joseph had in mind the putting away of his espoused wife, Mary, without the formality of a bill or at least of a public procedure proves that a decree was not regarded as absolutely necessary... (Matthew 1:19).<sup>vii</sup>*

**Divorcement (keriythuwth**, the Hebrew word for the required legal document dissolving a marriage covenant.) God demonstrated his concern for the **put away** wife by requiring her husband to give her a legal bill of **divorcement**. This would enable her to legally remarry. This literally meant the covenant of marriage was abolished and the woman was free to remarry.

The Hebrew word *keriythuwth* (ker-ee-thooth’); means a cutting (of the matrimonial bond), i.e. divorce: And this word comes from the verb: *karath* (kaw-rath’); that means to cut (off, down or asunder); by implication, to destroy or consume. (Strong’s Dictionary)

As you can clearly see from the definition a legal divorcement severed and destroyed the original marriage covenant. Since the marriage covenant no longer existed, the man and woman were no longer husband and wife; therefore, the wife was able to go and become another man’s wife.

One might ask whether this stipulation of a legal divorce document was actually necessary in Bible times. Would Hebrew men actually be so hard-hearted that they would actually kick a wife out to be totally on their own and yet still legally married? And... all the while the man was free to legally have other wives? Does that sound incredible?

The following is a quote dealing with Matthew 19:11-12 about divorce from George Lamsa, a modern day writer who is from the Arab world and very familiar with their practices both today and during Bible times.

*Jesus was not opposed to legal divorce, but he was against those who deserted their wives without any cause. He was also against lax enforcement of the laws on divorce, which were seldom upheld by the religious authorities. Jesus upbraided the Jews who deserted their wives and did not give them divorce papers according to the law of Moses. The Jews, like other Eastern people, took their marriage covenants very lightly. And when they were angry with their wives or did not love them, they deserted them without even bothering to give them divorce papers. According to Jesus, adultery was ground for divorce. As the result of the lax enforcement of this law, many innocent women suffered unjustly and were forced to commit adultery when they married other men, for they were still married to their former husbands, not having been given legal divorce papers. The disciples thought that Jesus’ admonition relative to divorce was too harsh, and therefore hard to comply with. They had been brought up in the Jewish religion, where women were regarded as inferior. This custom was universal at that time, and still prevails in many lands.*<sup>viii</sup>

The following quote is from a Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who lived contemporary to the time of our Lord Jesus here on earth. Josephus also points out the necessity of requiring men to give their wives a legal certificate of divorcement.

*“He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatsoever, (and many such causes happen among men), let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife any more; for by this means she may be at liberty to marry another husband, although before this bill of divorce be given, she is not to be permitted so to do...”*<sup>ix</sup>

An important thing to take note of is that the official divorcement was always in some aspect for the ‘public record’. Part of this was to ensure that the public knew the couple was divorced by a written document. The other reason a divorce was public was to prevent the man from not only simply kicking the wife out but it was also intended to prevent the man from keeping the wife’s dowry. If the man just kicked his wife out of the house, there would have been no legal way for the wife to collect her dowry from the man. This would put her in double jeopardy for now she would not only be an estranged and yet married woman but would also have no means of supporting herself whatsoever.

Now, how is that for a hard heart? The act of simply kicking the wife out was not a “public” act, but typically was an act done in private because who would want to be seen as being such a wicked person? It was exactly because of this evil practice that God in his justice required that a legal divorcement be given to the wife so that she could then be the legal wife of another man.

If God had wanted for there to be no way for a *put away* person to legally remarry then God could have simply not required a legal document to be given saying the marriage was over. If it was God’s intention to make a woman a life-long piece of property enslaved to a hard-hearted spouse God would not have called for a written divorcement.

Following is an example of an ancient Jewish divorce document as given in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia article on *divorce*. The document should speak for itself as the stated purpose for such a document was to release the woman from the marriage enabling her to legally remarry.

“On the \_\_\_\_ day of the week \_\_\_\_ in the month \_\_\_\_ in the year \_\_\_\_ from the beginning of the world, according to the common computation in the province of \_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_ the son of \_\_\_\_ by whatever name I may be known, of the town of \_\_\_\_ with entire consent of mind, and without any constraint, have divorced, dismissed and expelled thee \_\_\_\_ daughter of \_\_\_\_ by whatever name thou art called, of the town who hast been my wife hitherto; But now I have dismissed thee \_\_\_\_ the daughter of \_\_\_\_ by whatever name thou art called, of the town of \_\_\_\_ so as to be free at thy own disposal, to marry whomsoever thou pleasest, without hindrance from anyone, from this day for ever. Thou art therefore free for anyone (who would marry thee). Let this be thy bill of divorce from me, a writing of separation and expulsion, according to the law of Moses and Israel.

Is there ever a time in the Old Testament when the word for *putting away* (*shalach*) can be used in the scriptural text to mean the same thing technically as *divorcement* (*keriythuwth*)? That is a fair question. The answer is yes, 2 times. We see this in *The Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*<sup>\*</sup> in its treatment of the Hebrew word *shalach*. We find this when *shalach* is in the *Pual* form of the verb in item *Id* below as follows:

**שלח *sha<sup>^</sup>lach* Part of Speech: verb**

1) to send, send away, let go, stretch out

- 1a) (Qal)
- 1a1) to send
- 1a2) to stretch out, extend, direct
- 1a3) to send away
- 1a4) to let loose
- 1b) (Niphal) to be sent
- 1c) (Piel)
- 1c1) to send off or away or out or forth, dismiss, give over, cast out
- 1c2) to let go, set free
- 1c3) to shoot forth (of branches)
- 1c4) to let down
- 1c5) to shoot
- Id) (Pual) to be sent off, be put away, be divorced, be impelled***
- 1e) (Hiphil) to send

In the 840 times the verb *shalach* occurs in the Bible it is used in a wide variety of purposes from throwing a spear to sending out an envoy, etc. Concerning divorce specifically in the Hebrew text we find that it is used 2 times in the “Pual” form in Isaiah chapters sixteen and fifty. We find both of these verses to be a form of poetic parallelism unlike in other places.

In Isaiah 16:2, we find that a “*forced from*” (*shalach*) the nest bird is compared to the evidently divorced daughters of Moab fleeing in the face of impending danger from enemy forces. They obviously longed to return to their homes of safety, represented by the “fords of the Arnon” which is the northern river border of the Moabite territory.

Isaiah 16:2

*Like a bird fleeing, **forced from** the nest, the daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon.* (Holman Christian Standard Bible)<sup>xi</sup>

In Isaiah 50:1 we see the “*putting away*” used in a poetic parallel statement at the end of the verse, and relating to the question about the “divorce papers” at the first part of the verse.

Isaiah 50:1

*This is what the LORD says:  
Where is your mother’s **divorce certificate**  
that I used to send her away?  
Or who were My creditors that I sold you to?  
Look, you were sold for your iniquities,  
and your mother was **put away**  
because of your transgressions.* (HCSB)

## Confusion in Modern Translations

Now, we are going to add to our general lack of understanding of ancient Hebrew customs and attitudes toward women. Much of our current confusion over the issue of divorce and remarriage began when the translators of the English Bible began to translate these two very different words in both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament with the one word **divorce**.

Jerome in his Latin Vulgate never did this. This was never done in the Aramaic versions. This was never done in Martin Luther's German translation. For the first 1,500 years of our Bible's translation history all translators kept these 2 words and their meanings distinct. The same was true of the Septuagint's Greek translation of the Old Testament.

For English Bible translators to equate **putting away** with **divorce**, with our modern day understanding of social values that see women as something other than the property of men, has led to tremendous confusion. Let's start with an example of this from the prophet Malachi.

First I will note the King James Version's rendering, and then I will supply the New King James's rendering to illustrate the difference in English translations. You will notice the difference. Also it is worth noting that all the modern translations after the KJV commit the same error as the NKJV.

Malachi 2:16 *For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth **putting away**...*

(KJV)

Malachi 2:16 *For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates **divorce**...*

(NKJV)

Notice what the NKJV translators have done. Instead of translating the Hebrew word for **putting away** they place the word **divorce** in its place, assuming and insinuating the two different words mean the same thing when we have already seen that they do not. Not only is this done in the NKJV, but all the modern translations, other than literal translations such as Young's and Darby's, also follow this pattern in most instances in both the Old and New Testaments.

The Hebrew text of Malachi 2:16 clearly uses the word **shalach** which is the Hebrew word that simply means to **send away**. Yet, the modern English translations all insert the word **divorce** in the verse which is the Hebrew word **keriythuwth**, and the Hebrew word **keriythuwth** is not found in the Hebrew text of the prophet Malachi.

Therefore, what have we seen in Scripture? What God hates is **putting away**, the practice of a man just kicking his wife out of the house. What offends God's righteous justice is when a man forces the woman to whom he is married to now fend for herself without the opportunity of a legal remarriage by being given a divorce.

A wife that was **put away**, without the **written divorcement**, was still the wife of the man who had kicked her out of his house. (Even to the current day of this writing... a wife in Israel cannot divorce her husband for any reason... she can only be divorced by her husband. See appendix #5.)

Despite the same inaccuracy in translating the Hebrew word for **putting away**, the New Living Translation gives some sense of the intense wrong that happens when a wife is simply **sent away**:

Malachi 2:16 *“For I hate divorce!” says the Lord, the God of Israel. “To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.” (NLT)*

Notice how the NLT makes it clear that the wronged person is the wife being **sent away** and not the man, despite the fact the translators use the word **divorce**. I am sure that God doesn’t like divorce, but what we have seen is that God is just when it comes to restoring and compensating the wronged person by an often hateful mankind; therefore we have the requirement of divorce to enable a person to remarry.

Many dear souls have lived under the condemnation of hearing the preacher cry out, “God hates divorce!” And every time they have heard these words they have received the horrid feeling that since they have been divorced then God must also hate them! They have lived with the wretched feeling of forever being second class citizens of God’s Kingdom, and needlessly so.

Dear friends, there truly are many who have been victims of a hard-hearted spouse and God in his mercy and justice has provided divorce for them as a provision for remarriage without condemnation.

### **The New Testament Witness**

Unfortunately, in the New Testament we see the same confusion between the two very different words for **putting away** and **divorce** as well as some tragic exegetical errors concerning the consequences of divorce. Let’s begin with Christ’s teaching in the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew.

Matthew 5:31-32 *“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.” (KJV)*

Matthew 5:31-32 *“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever **divorces** his wife, let him give her a **certificate of divorce**.’ 32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” (NKJV)*

**Please follow this closely for even the KJV at one crucial point in verse 32, confuses the 2 words.**

First notice how in verse 31 the KJV correctly translates the two different words:

“Whosoever shall **put away** his wife, let him give her a writing of **divorcement**...”

To **put away** is the Greek word, *apoluo*; that means to free fully. The Greek word for **divorce** is, **apostasion** meaning something separative, i.e. especially divorce. (Strong’s Dictionary) As you can clearly see, these are two distinct words being used.

Now notice the confusion in the modern translations at the very beginning of verse 31 where the NKJV states, “Whoever **divorces** his wife, let him give her a certificate of **divorce**”. Doesn’t that sound like double talk to you? It is clear in the Greek text that whoever is going to **put away** his wife should give her a **divorcement**. And what did we learn from the Old Testament about the purpose of divorce? It’s sole purpose was to enable a legal remarriage.

Now... please notice how the KJV tragically confuses verse 32.

Amazingly, at the end of the verse, it says that whoever marries a woman who is **divorced** commits adultery. The Greek text actually says that whoever marries a **wife put away** commits adultery. Of course a wife who has simply been put away would be committing adultery if she married another man if there had been no legal ending of the marriage covenant, but, a person who is divorced is not committing adultery when they marry another person.

*Young’s Literal Translation* gives a much better sense of what the verse actually says in the Greek:

Matthew 5:32, “*but I — I say to you, that whoever may put away his wife, save for the matter of whoredom, doth make her to commit adultery; and whoever may marry her who hath been put away doth commit adultery.*” (YLT)

Speaking on this verse Spiros Zodhiates, THD, makes the following observation:

*“In Matt 5:32, our Lord contrasted His attitude with the practice manifested in the Old Testament. The Lord agreed with the Old Testament prescription that a bill of divorcement should be given to the wife, unjustly divorced, enabling her to remarry. But Christ did not leave the matter there.*

*“He castigated the evil of divorcing one’s wife for no valid reason. Giving her a divorce mitigated the evil somewhat only as far as the innocent woman was concerned because that gave her the possibility of remarriage.*

*“The Lord says, why dismiss your wife at all if there is no real reason for it? “But I say unto you.” The Lord here asserts His superiority above the law or anything*

*that was said before. What was said was good and valid; justice should be rendered to a wife unjustly dismissed. He in no way implies that no divorce certificate should be given to her. The Lord does not violate man's free choice to sin, but He does show His interest on behalf of the innocent victim of sin. That same interest of the law He upholds.*

*"...It is best not to put your wife away at all for any reason other than her infidelity, but if you do put her away when she does not deserve it, at least give her a bill of divorcement."<sup>xii</sup>*

Dr. Zodhiates makes the point vividly clear that if a person is going to put away their spouse then a divorce certificate should be given to enable a remarriage. He also makes the point that the same is true for a wife putting away a husband, which had become possible by New Testament times as we will see in Mark 10:12.

*Mark 10:12: ...and if a woman may put away her husband, and is married to another, she committeth adultery. (Young's Literal Translation)*

This verse also has the word adultery in the *passive tense*, which will be explained in Zodhiates' next quote. It should be read like the above verse in Matthew 5:32 as Dr. Zodhiates paraphrased above, as well as Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:11.

Incidentally, not only do all our English translations often confuse the words for **putting away** and **divorce**; they also terribly confuse who the offender is and who the offended party actually is. This is true in Matthew 5:31-32, as well as the other passages in the Gospels where Christ addresses this issue.

Dr. Zodhiates goes on to explain the grammar of these verses and in so doing points out some very disturbing and heart breaking facts. **The following point is very critical to understanding the tragic exegetical error of all English translations of the Greek New Testament.**

In Matthew 5:31-32, the verb for **adultery** (Moichátai, Greek) is actually in the **passive and not the active tense**. In a grammatical way that is totally unfamiliar to the English language Dr. Zodhiates demonstrates how the woman being put away is actually the victim of being seen as adulterous, when the man is actually the licentious party. The woman is the innocent party and because of the evil being perpetrated against her she is made to appear to be an adulterous woman when she is in fact innocent. This is the force of the word **adultery** being in the **passive** tense.

Dr. Zodhiates gives the best we can probably hope to express in the English language a paraphrased exegetical rendering of these two pivotal verses as follows:

*Matthew 5:31- 32: "And it was said, If a licentious person dismisses his own wife, let him give her a bill of divorcement (so she can remarry). But I say unto you that he who (the licentious person who lusts after another woman, married, divorced, or unmarried) dismisses his own wife but for the reason of fornication*

*(sexual infidelity on her part) causes adultery against her (makes her appear as if she were put away because of her sexual infidelity), and he who marries a woman who has been thus dismissed assumes upon himself the stigma of adultery which she has borne from the moment her husband unjustifiably dismissed her without giving her a divorce.* ”<sup>xiii</sup>

The truth of Christ’s words has never been heard to ring more true.

Many millions of dear saints have been unjustly labeled as **adulterers** when they are in fact victims at the hand of erroneous translations, hard-hearted spouses, and errant preaching. Some have attempted to argue that since the passive form of the verb for adultery is used few times, actually six times in the New Testament documents, that the active sense should be used instead. Speaking to that argument Zodhiates says:

*It is inconceivable that anyone should reject the voice of the verb, changing it from passive to active simply because it occurs only six times in the New Testament. Such licenses cannot be taken, especially when proper exegesis makes it mandatory to take the verb in the passive as its form demands. The only license we have is to allow the middle voice sense if the exegesis warrants it since the form of the passive and the middle are the same. Moichátai, therefore, must be translated “is made to suffer adultery.”*<sup>xiv</sup>

We see the same confusion about **putting away, divorce, and adultery** in Matthew 19. First let us look at the NASU rendering then we will look at *Young’s Literal Translation* and once again we will see a glaring example of translating two distinct words as though they are the same.

Matthew 19:7-9: *They said to Him, “ Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?” 8 He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9 “And I say to you, whoever **divorces** his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”* (NASU)

Now look at *Young’s Literal Translation*:

Matt 19:7-9 *They say to him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a roll of divorce, and to put her away?’ 8 He saith to them — ‘Moses for your stiffness of heart did suffer you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it hath not been so. 9’And I say to you, that, whoever may **put away** his wife, if not for whoredom, and may marry another, doth commit adultery; and he who did marry her that hath been **put away**, doth commit adultery.’*

I have put in bold and italic type the difference between the two translations and all of the modern translations follow the same pattern as the NASU. Wouldn’t we conclude that

this brings about great confusion? Jesus then goes on to explain the reality of human nature and the necessity of marriage as follows:

*Matthew 19:10-12: The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." 11 But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it." (New American Standard Update)*

Jesus here acknowledges the reality that the large majority of people are not created by God to live alone, or as eunuchs. In the creation account when God made Adam, God said that it was not good for man to be alone. That has not changed. What makes us think this has changed when someone's spouse is unfaithful or deserts them or abuses them, driving them away? And if it has not, then why do we require the offended person to live alone like a eunuch? That is the same thing as victimizing the victim twice, placing the victim in the position of being twice oppressed, once by their spouse and once by the church. In a biblical context this teaching has in essence forced the offended spouse to remain the property of or a slave to the offender. We will see this later in 1Corinthians. That is not justice.

We have already seen in Malachi 2:16 that **putting away** a spouse is the same as **abuse**, where it speaks of putting away the wife as an act of violence. The picture of covering ones clothing with violence is a biblical picture of the wife being the clothing or a spiritual covering for her husband, and the putting away of the wife is seen as a violent act.

Abuse is actually driving away a spouse. Yet, many a person has been told to stay in an abusive relationship in order to avoid the dreaded stigma of divorce. This is a tragic twisting of God's justice.

Many have been told that if they would get holy enough, or pray enough, or get humble enough, then the abuse would stop. In other words... the abused spouse has been told that the abuse was actually his or her own fault. What a bitter pill many have been given to swallow by many of God's ministers and churches.

*Malachi 2:16: For [I] hate sending away, said Jehovah, God of Israel, And He [who] hath covered violence with his clothing, said Jehovah of Hosts, And ye have been watchful over your spirit, And ye do not deal treacherously.  
(Young's Literal Translation)*

### **The Apostle Paul**

In 1Corinthians chapter 7 we have the fullest treatment on the issue of marriage in the New Testament. Paul writing to the church at Corinth deals with marriage from the standpoint of the very real persecution from the pagan world being a problem for

Christians and for married people in particular. Because of the difficult days they were facing, Paul encourages the people to remain single as long as they can for the Kingdom of God's sake. Then in verses 27 and 28 the Apostle gives a definitive statement about this issue of a remarriage after a divorce. These verses have been remarkably almost totally absent in the discussion about the issue of divorce and remarriage.

1 Corinthians 7:27-28: *Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.* (New American Standard Update)

The Apostle in verse 27 is clearly speaking of the need to try and keep a marriage together. If the marriage fails and the spouse is **released** from his wife, a **divorce**, he is encouraged to remain single because of the difficulties of persecution. Verse 28 then goes on to say that if one does remarry after having been released (divorced) that it is **not a sin!**

I think all would agree that adultery is a sin. Some commentators have attempted to say that this remarriage would be in the event that a person's spouse has died. If that were the case then the context of verse 27 would require that the spouse wanting to be released from the marriage would want their spouse either dead or would have to kill their spouse their self. Both of these options would be a sinful desire. If remarriage after divorce is adultery then Paul's argument is foolish.

In 1Corinthians 7:15, Paul makes the widely varied understood statement about a spouse not being "under bondage" in the case of an unbelieving spouse "departs".

1 Corinthians 7:15, *Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.* (New American Standard Update)

Is the Apostle here saying that the deserted spouse should remain single in order not to risk committing adultery? Is Paul saying that the deserted spouse should simply feel at peace and feel no condemnation because they are deserted, but only if they remain single?

Dr. Robertson in his Word Pictures commentary makes the following statement about this verse explaining that to require a subsequent singleness of the deserted spouse would make the deserted spouse in reality a slave to the deserter:<sup>xv</sup>

*Is not under bondage* (*ou dedoulōtai*). Perfect passive indicative of *douloō*, to enslave, has been enslaved, does not remain a slave. The believing husband or wife is not at liberty to separate, unless the disbeliever or pagan insists on it. Wilful desertion of the unbeliever sets the other free, a case not contemplated in Christ's words in Mat 5:32; Mat 19:9. Luther argued that the Christian partner, thus released, may marry again.

In *Vincent's Word Studies*, Dr. Vincent makes a similar point about this verse.<sup>xvi</sup>

*Is not under bondage*

*A strong word, indicating that Christianity has not made marriage a state of slavery to believers. Compare δέδεται is bound, 1Co 7:39, a milder word. The meaning clearly is that willful desertion on the part of the unbelieving husband or wife sets the other party free. Such cases are not comprehended in Christ's words...Enslavement in the marriage relation between the believer and the unbeliever is contrary to the spirit and intent of this calling.*

Jesus substantiates that remarriage is not living in adultery nor is it scriptural to refer to a remarried person as having "two living spouses" where He speaks to the woman at the well in John chapter 4.

*John 4:17-18: The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." (New American Standard Update)*

Jesus acknowledges that just living with someone does not make that person a spouse when He says that the person she is living with is not her husband. Having sexual encounters does not make two people married. Also Jesus says to her, "*You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.*" (NASU) Please notice that **Jesus does not say** that the woman currently has five husbands. He simply says that she has had five husbands.

If so much of modern day teaching about remarriage being equal to adultery is correct then Jesus should have said, "You currently have five husbands!" Jesus could have said it that way because the Greek language certainly has the ability to phrase Christ's statement that way, but he simply did not say that.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen that due to erroneous exegesis and the confusing of two distinct biblical words in both the Old and New Testaments, many people have been told that if for any reason they are divorced and remarry they will be committing adultery. That is not what the Bible teaches.

People who have been remarried have often been accused of having two living wives or two living husbands; yet again, the Bible does not support this humiliating accusation. Many children who have been born to parents, one or both of who have been divorced, have been told they are bastards. This is clearly not the way God sees it.

Should there be divorce? Not in a perfect world, but then again we do not have that option in this life. Should there be murder, coveting, idolatry, gossip, slander, stealing or any other sin? Of course there should not be any of it, but God does not ignore any of it, and has given His just compensations when such events occur. Divorce is one such reality of God's justice at work.

Is it the church's responsibility to try and stem the swell of divorce by imputing stringent regulations on marriage? Not if it means making scripture say something it doesn't say in order to make us look better to the world. That is the height of hypocrisy and it is despised by the world, and rightly so. We need to accurately teach and live the truth of scripture regardless of the consequences.

Is God a Just God? Yes, in every way. As I have presented in this paper, divorce and remarriage are part of God's Justice. Should there be divorce and remarriage for any and every reason? No, of course not, we should try every way possible to preserve the marriage covenant. Yet, there are scriptural teachings that provide for the person being divorced by a hard-hearted spouse; or the person needing to divorce an immoral, violent, or deserting spouse, with the option of a remarriage without condemnation.

Are we here lowering the standard for marriage today? In no way, but we are much more raising the standard for a scriptural marriage with God at the center in the marriage relationship.

To tell the spouse of an unfaithful partner that they must stay in that "marriage" is to lower God's standard for marriage.

To tell the spouse of a violent and abusive mate that they must stay in that violent relationship is to lower God's standard for marriage.

To tell the spouse of someone who deserts them that they must remain a slave to the deserter is to lower God's standard for marriage.

By the grace of God and by upholding the veracity of the Word of God, let us much more raise the standard for Christian marriage being that of two committed Christians, committed to each other and to our God, until death alone shall part them.

I have purposely kept this thesis as short as possible and pray that this brief study will help to clear up some of the confusion and begin to help heal some of the hurt that has wounded many of God's chosen people.

### **Appendix #1**

#### **On Children of Divorced, Remarried, and Single Parents**

"My dad left home when I was 10. Am I an illegitimate child?"

I love the way Paul addresses Christians at the opening of the letter to the Ephesians emphasizing the 'family' aspect of being a part of God's family. I will highlight a few of the words to help make my point...

Ephesians 1:4-14

*"...for **He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love 5 He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, 6 to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved. ... 10 for the administration) of the days of fulfillment-to bring everything together in the Messiah, both things in heaven and things on earth in Him. 11 In Him we were also made His inheritance, predestined according to the purpose of the One who works out everything in agreement with the decision of His will, 12 so that we who had already put our hope in the Messiah might bring praise to His glory. 13 In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation-in Him when you believed-were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. 14 He is the down payment of our inheritance, for the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory.***

(Holman Christian Standard Bible)

Notice the combining of the legal ideas of being a part of God's family... inheritance, redemption, adopted... and the overriding truth that this was, and we are, a part of God's purposed will... even before the foundation of the world!

I have a hard time regarding some one as illegitimate, or a bastard, that the New Testament teaches that God planned their life before the world was even created.

The idea of being a bastard in the scripture has a rather unique meaning.

Deuteronomy 23:2

*"No one of illegitimate birth may enter the Lord's assembly; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, may enter the Lord's assembly."*

(HCSB)

In the Old Testament a bastard was the offspring of a Jew with a non-Jew, therefore, most of us would be considered bastards by an Old Testament standard.... at best! Jews were forbidden to even speak with bastards or they would be ceremonially unclean.

We see Jesus assaulting this prejudice in John 4 with His encountering the woman at the well. She was a Samaritan, who the Jews disdained as bastards because the Samaritans were in fact crossbreeds of the Jews left behind during the Babylonian captivity and the other tribes left in Palestine. Jesus talked with her, taught her... Jesus drank from her cup. The result... she and most of her village accepted Him as the Messiah.

I think we should be very careful about how we label people that Jesus died for, esp. this label of illegitimate/bastard.

We do find the word used once in the New Testament in Hebrews 12:8:

*"But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." (KJV)*

Here the reference is to a spiritual condition, not a physical condition of birthed circumstances.

In summary, do we believe that God is the author of life? Do we believe that humans are created in the image and likeness of God? Do we believe Ephesians chapter one, that God predestined every Christian before the world was even created?

In Christ's Kingdom there are no bastards. Every child of God is a planned child... a wanted child.

## **Appendix #2**

### **On The Fairer Treatment of Women in the Code of Hammurabi than by the Old Testament Jewish Men.**

The treatment of women in the Hammurabi Code, is far more equitable than even in the Old Testament scriptures. Here are a few examples that I think demonstrate a more equitable treatment of women than the OT customs.... or at the least a more detailed treatment of their rights than we see in the OT scriptures.

This is to demonstrate that as roughly a contemporary of Abraham's time and region in history... and do in fact represent THE cultural norms that Abraham grew up in and lived in until his departure for Palestine... therefore, the exodus Jews had actually degenerated over their 400 years in Egypt to a much more crass and harsh treatment of women. This very reality is a part of what God was dealing with in the requirement for a "divorce" document and its purpose in Deuteronomy 24.

One can visit and read the entire Code of Hammurabi at the following web address:  
<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/CODE.HTM>

*quote:*

from the Code of Hammurabi:

137

If a man wish to separate from a woman who has borne him children, or from his wife who has borne him children: then he shall give that wife her dowry, and a part of the usufruct of field, garden, and property, so that she can rear her children. When she has brought up her children, a portion of all that is given to the children, equal as that of one son, shall be given to her. She may then marry the man of her heart.

138

If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the dowry which she brought from her father's house, and let her go.

139

If there was no purchase price he shall give her one mina of gold as a gift of release.

140

If he be a freed man he shall give her one-third of a mina of gold.

144

If a man take a wife and this woman give her husband a maid-servant, and she bear him children, but this man wishes to take another wife, this shall not be permitted to him; he shall not take a second wife.

145

If a man take a wife, and she bear him no children, and he intend to take another wife: if he take this second wife, and bring her into the house, this second wife shall not be allowed equality with his wife.

148

If a man take a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desire to take a second wife he shall not put away his wife, who has been attacked by disease, but he shall keep her in the house which he has built and support her so long as she lives.

149

If this woman does not wish to remain in her husband's house, then he shall compensate her for the dowry that she brought with her from her father's house, and she may go.

150

If a man give his wife a field, garden, and house and a deed therefor, if then after the death of her husband the sons raise no claim, then the mother may bequeath all to one of her sons whom she prefers, and need leave nothing to his brothers.

Here we see that women could own property, their dowries were required to be sent with them if they were sent away, if they were sick and sent away the husband was still required to maintain them and their children, a man's original wife was granted exclusive position if he brought another woman into his house, if a woman brought no dowry with her into a man's house and he sent her away then he still was required to send her away

with monetary compensation... to name a few of the benefits that I don't see in the OT treatment of women.

### **Appendix #3 Old Testament Restrictions from Divorcement**

It is of interest to note that there are only two times in the Old Testament that men are restricted from the ability to divorce a wife. In both instances it is actually a punishment to the man that he loses the freedom to divorce a wife. In the 1<sup>st</sup> case he was being punished for accusing her of not being a virgin when they were married. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> case he was being punished for raping her as a virgin girl.

So... the false accuser and the rapist are punished in that they can never divorce a woman that they lied about or raped.

Think about this for a minute. How would you like to force your daughter to marry a man that has just raped her as a virgin... with the comforting thought that the rapist could never divorce your daughter because of the rape she had endured? Or how would you like to be married to a man that accuses you of a sexual crime that you could literally be executed for... but if he is proven a liar then his punishment is that he will have to keep you as a wife till one of you dies? (And please remember... he can have other wives.)

*“If a man marries a woman, has sexual relations with her, and comes to hate her, 14 and accuses [her] of shameful conduct, and gives her a bad name, saying, ‘I married this woman and was intimate with her, but I didn’t find [any] evidence of her virginity,’*

*15 the young woman’s father and mother will take the evidence of her virginity and bring [it] to the city elders at the • gate.*

*16 The young woman’s father will say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man as a wife, but he hates her.*

*17 He has accused her of shameful conduct, saying: ‘I didn’t find [any] evidence of your daughter’s virginity, but here is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity.’ They will spread out the cloth before the city elders.*

*18 Then the elders of that city will take the man and punish him.*

*19 They will also fine him 100 silver [shekels] and give [them] to the young woman’s father, because that man gave an Israelite virgin a bad name. **She will remain his wife; he cannot divorce her as long as he lives.**”*

Deuteronomy 22:13-19 (HCSB)

The second time a man was punished by never being able to divorce his wife was if he raped her while she was still a virgin.

*“If a man encounters a young woman, a virgin who is not engaged, takes hold of her and rapes her, and they are discovered,*

*29 the man who raped her must give the young woman’s father 50 silver*

*[shekels], and she must become his wife because he violated her. He cannot divorce her as long as he lives.”*

Deuteronomy 22:28-29 (HCSB)

#### **Appendix #4**

#### **What About Unclean Children In 1Corinthians 7:14?**

The question is often asked about what Paul means by “unclean” children in 1Corinthians 7:14? Does the Apostle mean by this statement that if a husband and wife separate or divorce that their child/children become spiritually unclean or unfit somehow for the Kingdom of God? This is certainly the way a lot of people feel, and even more have been led to believe.

*“Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband, and he is willing to live with her, she must not leave her husband. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the Christian husband.*

*Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.”*

1 Corinthians 7:13-14 (HCSB)

The direct answer to the question is that I don’t believe for 1 second that you could maintain a scripturally based argument for the idea of some sort of imputed, spiritual uncleanness that is somehow transmitted to a child whose parents are separating or divorcing.

First, because to do so would be a violation of the promised New Covenant in Ezekiel 18, and the individual aspect of personal responsibility... as well as guaranteeing that children would not be held guilty for the sins of their parents... and vice versa.

*“The person who sins is the one who will die. A son won’t suffer punishment for the father’s iniquity, and a father won’t suffer punishment for the son’s iniquity. The righteousness of the righteous person will be on him, and the wickedness of the wicked person will be on him.”*

Ezekiel 18:20 (HCSB)

This is in fact one of the hallmark revelations about the New Covenant... personal responsibility as opposed to the judging of family members because of other family member’s sins. And this is especially spelled out in regard to children and parents In Ezekiel 18 if you would read the entire chapter.

Next, if anyone in the New Covenant/Testament really saw and proclaimed the exceeding greatness of the New Testament over the Old Covenant it was the Apostle Paul. Paul fought against the legalistic tendencies that the Jews had of falling back into Old Covenant ceremonial, legalistic rituals, more than any other New Covenant writer. For example, the Apostle states in Galatians:

*“...we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.”*  
Galatians 2:16 (HCSB)

So what are we to make of the ‘unclean’ statement?

Simply put, the Apostle Paul here is trying to have the Gentile believers in Corinth accepted by the Jewish believers, and to do so he is trying to keep them joined through the local synagogue as the place of worship for all believers. His speaking about the children being clean or unclean is therefore a reference to the Jewish ceremonial customs of the synagogue and acceptance there... not about some actual personal spiritual condemnation or guilt.

Would the Apostle actually require non Jewish believers to keep Jewish ritual and legalistic religious customs in order to try and reach the Jews with the gospel as well as the Gentiles? Most certainly he would... and did.

We see this for example in Paul requiring the young pastor Timothy to be circumcised in an effort to have Timothy acceptable to the Jews.

*“Paul wanted Timothy to go with him, so he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, since they all knew that his father was a Greek.”*  
Acts 16:3 (HCSB)

Paul fought tooth and toe nail (so to speak) that circumcision was not essential for salvation. It was circumcision that for the Jew was the very gateway to acceptance into the Jewish ritual and religious worship. It was a constant battle that Paul fought against, yet it is exactly what he had Timothy to do... in order to try and reach the Jews.

Even though God had called the Apostle Paul for the specific purpose of evangelizing the Gentiles, his constant and first efforts were always to go to the local synagogue to try and reach the Jews first... which God did not commission him to do... and he constantly had the Gentile believers try to be acceptable to the Jewish community.

Why did Paul do this? The answer is in Romans chapter 9.

*“I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience is testifying to me with the Holy Spirit— that I have intense sorrow and continual anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from the Messiah for the benefit of my brothers, my countrymen by physical descent.”*  
Romans 9:1-3 (HCSB)

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7:14, is dealing with his ongoing effort to try and make the Gentile believers acceptable to the Jews and to try and have the two blended together in worship at the synagogue.

The reference has nothing to do with any personal spiritual inequity. For Paul to mean that it was some sort of curse upon a child for its parents to divorce would be an overt assault on all that he preached and wrote that the Gospel of Jesus Christ actually set us free from.

## **Appendix #5** ***National Public Radio report on Current Divorce Law in Israel***

### ***All Things Considered***

Under Israel's Divorce Laws, Men Get The Final Word

by Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, April 7, 2010

Israel has a singular system when it comes to matters of family law. For Jews, the religious or rabbinical court is the only one able to grant a divorce. The court rules according to Jewish law — a system that has been in place for thousands of years — and it is run exclusively by Orthodox rabbis.

“If he's incapacitated, if he's abusive, if he committed adultery, it really doesn't matter. If he doesn't say yes, you're stuck.” (Susan Weiss, of the Center for Women's Justice)

According to Jewish law, a man has to agree to grant the divorce of his own free will before the legal separation can proceed. Rights groups say the system unfairly discriminates against women.

Ramit Alon, 40, was living in an Orthodox community with her husband and three children when she decided to leave her marriage.

"I got married 16, almost 17 years ago," Alon says. "We had some problems as a couple, and 4 1/2 years ago, I left. I took my kids and just ran away."

Alon says she was optimistic about what lay ahead. "I thought that after I leave, it will take some months and then I could get divorced and start again, a new life. But it's not over."

### **Stuck In A Marriage**

Weiss says she has seen extreme cases among her organization's clients.

"We had a client whose husband tried to kill himself — he was in a vegetative state. She can't get divorced," Weiss says.

But, she says, even when the husband is "alive and well and you know where he is, but simply refuses to give his wife a divorce, she is stuck."

And that's where Alon finds herself. Her husband does not want to divorce her, and she cannot just decide to go and live with another man and bear his children, because under Jewish law, the children of the new union would be considered bastards.

They would not, for example, be able to legally get married here in the Jewish faith, Alon says.

"I have a new life now, but I can't start all over again," she says. "I can't meet someone and marry him and have kids. If I will have new kids before I have my divorce, they won't be able to marry here."

Weiss says the stigma is carried for generations.

"Very few women want to be in the position where their kids are considered mamzerim or bastards. The stigma is really great and the stigma is so bad that it goes forever," she says. "In other words, this person who's stigmatized — his children are stigmatized; his grandchildren are stigmatized; everyone is stigmatized."

### Race To The Courthouse

Women's groups say these issues underscore the inherent contradiction between religious traditionalism and contemporary civil society in Israel — which was founded as a Jewish state but also a democratic, modern one.

Weiss says nowhere is this more strikingly illustrated than in the so-called race to the courthouse.

"When you get divorced, you have to decide issues of custody, you have to decide issues of marital property, you have to decide issues of visitation rights — all sorts of ... matters that are ancillary to the issue of divorce," she says.

In Israel, there are two courts that have jurisdiction over these matters, the rabbinical court and the civil or family court. When a spouse sues the other for divorce, the court that receives the suit first gets to decide on issues like custody and property. What has developed is a race that can sometimes come down to a matter of minutes.

"If you're a woman, you want to race to the family court, because you want the family court deciding how much child support your husband pays for the kids or if he owes you alimony," Weiss says. "And men usually run to the rabbinic courts because they have a tactical advantage in the rabbinic courts."

## Disputing Women's Complaints

Women's groups say it is a schizophrenic system that doesn't work.

But the head of the rabbinical courts disputes these complaints. In an interview with NPR, Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Dahan says that it is important that Jewish law be the highest in the land.

"You have to understand, when the state of Israel was created, Jews came here from all over the world, and the only thing that could unite them was to create one Jewish legal authority that would combine all the traditions and make everybody into one people," he says.

He denies that religious courts discriminate against women.

"Despite the fact that Jewish law was established thousands of years ago, we try to take those ancient principles and bring them into the modern world," Dahan says.

He notes that the religious courts have jailed some men who have refused to give their wives the get, or bill of divorce.

But that's the exception rather than the rule.

After almost five years, Alon is still waiting for her divorce. She has even sued her husband for damages in an effort to pressure him. The rabbinical court, though, has ruled that an unfair tactic because it means he would not be granting a divorce of his own free will, as Jewish law demands.

"It's really hard surviving this way," Alon says. "Really."

(To see the article online go the following address)

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125673859>

## **Appendix #6 On Step-Parenting**

What about the stigma of being a stepparent?

From a purely biblical sense... and from a purely spiritual sense... God is Himself a stepparent. Consider this statement from Psalm 68:4-6:

*Sing to God! Sing praises to His name. Exalt Him who rides on the clouds - His name is Yahweh-and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless and a champion of widows is God in His holy dwelling. God provides homes for those who are deserted...*

(Holman Christian Standard Bible)

There is no doubt that many stepparents have helped earn the reputation that the title elicits in our emotions... but it need not be so. As a matter of fact... with a little reflection... we would conclude that it should be a very gracious endeavor to take on the role of being a godly stepparent.

When a single parent has become single due to the fault of an offending spouse I believe that all would conclude that the single parent needs help. Not only does the single parent need help, but the child/children also need help. There is little doubt that children do better when they have a godly mother and father in their life.

God is a father to the fatherless and provides homes for those who have been deserted according to our verses above. This is a part of God's Justice and Compassion. Surely God would have the same characteristic in our day... and God uses people.

With the current reality of the vast number of single parent households we need to work hard to overcome the stigma of being a stepparent. We need to realize that God Himself can lead in bringing two people together if for no other reason than for the sake of the children who have been deserted by one of their parents.

*“Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord cares for me.”*  
Psalm 27:10 (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

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<sup>ii</sup> *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, General Editor, Dr. James Orr, The Howard-Severance Company publisher, Copyright 1915.

<sup>iii</sup> *New American Standard Bible Updated Edition*, The Lockman Foundation, Copyright 1995.

<sup>iv</sup> *EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE OF THE BIBLE, Together with DICTIONARIES OF THE HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS Of the Original With References to the English Words*, JAMES STRONG, S.T.D., LL.D. (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.) All definitions will be taken from Strong's Dictionary unless otherwise noted.

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<sup>v</sup> *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, Robert Jamieson, A.R.Fausset, and David Brown Editors, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Copyright 1993, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft.

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<sup>vii</sup> *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* article on *Divorce* in the Old Testament

<sup>viii</sup> *New Testament Light*; George M. Lamsa, HarperSanFrancisco: a Division of HarperCollinsPublishers: page 28, copyright 1968.

<sup>ix</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews, The Life and Work of Flavius Josephus*, Book IV, Ch. VIII, Sec. 23, p. 134; tr. Wm. Whiston; Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, NY

<sup>x</sup> *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, Unabridged*, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2002, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved

<sup>xi</sup> *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, Copyright 2003

<sup>xii</sup> *What About Divorce?*, Spiros Zodhiates, TH.,D, AMG publishers: Chattanooga, TN 37422, pages 77,78 Copyright © 1984, 2000

<sup>xiii</sup> *ibid*, pages 136,137

<sup>xiv</sup> *ibid*, page 130

<sup>xv</sup> *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Archibald Thomas Robertson, "The Epistles of Paul", Volume 5, p.128, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee, Copyright, 1931

<sup>xvi</sup> *VINCENT'S WORD STUDIES, VOL. 3*, by MARVIN R. VINCENT, D.D., Baldwin Professor of Sacred Literature in Union Theological Seminary, New York, Parson's Technology, INC. Hiawatha, Iowa