

Tom's Pen

Marriage Is For How Long?

by Tom Wacaster

Sociologists are telling us that an alarming number of people are growing weary with the traditional concept of family, marriage, and the home. Commitment and acceptance of responsibility have almost become taboo when it comes to taking marriage vows. A number of years ago a Hollywood jewelry store advertised, "We Rent Wedding Rings." In the mid 80's a representative in the Maryland state legislature advocated a three year marriage contract with the option of renewal. The reason for the proposed legislation was that "the idea of 'til death do us part' is frightening and often unrealistic." Or, on a more humorous note, someone ran the following ad in a west Texas newspaper's personal column: "Recently divorced man misses married feelings. Wanted: Cold, picky woman with big spending habits to meet once monthly so that I can be reminded of present good fortune."

The reason for the western world's rapid abandonment of marriage as a life long commitment is due to the fact that she long ago rejected the inspired word of God as the infallible guide in matters pertaining to the family and marriage. Consequently we have seen a rapid increase in the divorce rate in the last three or four decades. I can distinctly remember the great concern, not only among preachers, but sociologists, when, in the early 1960's, records indicated that one marriage in five were ending in divorce. Now we are witnessing a divorce rate of one in three, and in some areas, one in two. For those of us who respect the teachings of God on this matter, marriage is still a life long commitment, in which we are taught that one man is to marry one woman, and that matrimony is for life. The only exceptions to this are (1) fornication on the part of one's spouse, and (2) the death of one's spouse. Take a close look at Matthew 19:1-10. Unfortunately there are some among us who are seeking to find some sort of "loop hole" in the plain teaching of Jesus, and come up with some "other reason" for putting away one's spouse. Since the mid 60's we have seen an increase in false teaching on the subject of marriage and divorce. Books, lectures, seminars, and sermons, all of which teach that man can actually put away their spouse for ANY reason, marry again, and remain in the marriage relationship without any fear of reprisal from the Almighty, continue to fill the shelves of our bookstores and flow from the pulpits of our land.

Meanwhile, the error contained can only pollute the minds of those who would find an easy way out and/or justification for the mess they have gotten themselves into. Unfortunately we have leaders in God's church who are more anxious to increase the number on the roll than to bring men to repentance. They are quick to baptize couples whom they know full well have been married and divorced for unscriptural reasons, without teaching them the truth on the subject. It seems that the policy for the 21st century is, "Don't ask; don't tell." But there is another problem that we now face. There

are some who, while holding fast to the true doctrine, do not apply the truth to the given situation. I even had one man tell me, "I know what Matthew 19:1-9 teaches; but it is not practical in this culture." My, my! How dare we acknowledge a truth, and then excuse ourselves from the application of that truth by suggesting that God has given us a law that is not practical. Keep this in mind: toleration of the practice of error is no different than the proclamation of that error. One says it by words, the other by his action. In either case we are filling the church with fornicators.

A North Dakota judge once said to a young couple, "According to the laws of this state I must declare you free from the bonds of marriage, but I remind you that probably on the books of Almighty God you are still husband and wife." Unfortunately, some of our own brethren have not recognized the truth expressed by this civil magistrate. Marriage is for life. And while some may receive a grant of divorcement from a civil court, that does not mean they have been granted lawful separation in the sight of their God. "So they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6).