

Questions/answers on Marriage

by James Blaine Chapman

Marriage is a divine institution that requires a lifelong commitment from both partners, and Christians should strive to make their marriages a success through faith and obedience to God.

Scripture: Matthew 19:3

Topics: "Christian Marriage", "Family Values"

Description

James Blaine Chapman addresses various questions related to marriage, divorce, and Christian living, emphasizing the importance of following biblical principles in relationships. He highlights the significance of leaving parents to cleave to one's spouse, the protection against rash vows, the justification for remarriage after divorce, and the need for full salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to overcome family troubles. Chapman also discusses the importance of mutual respect and courtesy between spouses, the balance between Christian charity and compromise in worldly matters, and the need to consider all biblical teachings on divorce before forming conclusions.

Transcript

QUESTION #222 -- Is it contrary to the Scriptures for a Christian to marry a non-Christian?

ANSWER #222 -- It certainly is. (Read 2 Corinthians 6:14.)

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QUESTION #223 -- The Bible commands a man to leave his father and mother and to cleave unto his wife. But does not this same command apply to the woman, the wife, as well?

ANSWER #223 -- Yes, the commandment applies to the wife just the same as to the husband, and the wife has no more right to cleave to her father and mother after she marries a husband than the husband has to subject his wife to the demands of his paternal home. It is the same for both.

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QUESTION #224 -- Does the thirtieth chapter of Numbers mean that a young woman or wife should obey her father or husband before she obeys the Lord, and does this apply to our day?

ANSWER #224 -- The purpose of the provisions of this chapter was to make as full protection as possible against rash vows, and the arrangement was for the special protection of young women and wives. Vows are of little worth at any time, seeing they are in substance substituting one's own word for the word of the Lord, and they are particularly dangerous very much of the time. They lead to strain and confusion in the individual himself, and also to the committing of greater evils (like Herod who murdered John the Baptist for his oath's sake) in order to keep them. And at no time was it ever anyone's duty to obey any man in preference to obeying God. For God is the only God, and to Him only we owe supreme allegiance.

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QUESTION #225 -- What scripture do you consider justifies remarriage after divorce?

ANSWER #225 -- Matthew 19:3-9.

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QUESTION #226 -- I know a woman who sinned greatly against her husband and family. Now she wants to be a Christian, out is haunted by a feeling that she must confess her wrong and by the fear that such confession will bring great injury and hate. Is she doomed to be lost? What must she do?

ANSWER #226 -- Sin often exacts a tremendous price in remorse and fear. This woman should give her heart to God and trust for His mercy and pardon, and then she will know what and when to do what she must do, and God will help her, and prepare the way for her. She is by no means doomed to be lost, and ought by all means to make her peace with God at once.

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QUESTION #227 -- I have heard husbands and wives admit they are jealous. I have always thought that sanctification eradicates jealousy. But those who hold otherwise quote from the Scriptures that God is a jealous God. What is the truth about this matter?

ANSWER #227 -- Like most words, jealousy requires some modification to express all that is implied in it. Let us start on the upper end of the line: God is a jealous God, so the Scriptures inform us. But what does this mean? It means that God demands to be the sole possessor of our affections, and that He will not share us with any other person or object of worship. To say that we may worship idols and bow down to the false prophet and that God will not care is to misrepresent the God of the Bible. But on the other hand to say that God will take away any person we love or any object we cherish just in order to hold us to Himself is exaggeration. He is jealous only when our love becomes inordinate. Now come to human jealousy: no husband or wife is willing to share the affections of his mate with a third person, and we do not expect him to do so. And when there is evidence of infidelity of one party or the other we do not condemn the innocent one for being hurt and feeling misplaced. But there is a sinful jealousy that exists without cause, and this sort is nonexistent in the Christian whose heart is pure.

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QUESTION #228 -- I heard a preacher preach that people who have been divorced and married again should separate, no matter for what cause they were divorced. Just what can anyone do in a case where they were divorced in their sinful days and before they had light on the matter and are now married again) with children, and all are trying to live the Christian life?

ANSWER #228 -- I think the preacher was speaking as though he were wise beyond what is written, and I advise you to forget what he said. As to what can be done in cases like you mention: another wrong would not make a former wrong right. Trust God for mercy and pardon and for grace to live right and go on as you are--there is nothing else you can do.

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QUESTION #229 -- I Corinthians 7:14 reads as though the children of sanctified parents are born holy, but this cannot really be the meaning.

ANSWER #229 -- No. The meaning is that the marriage described is legal and the children are legitimate.

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QUESTION #230 -- What can Christians do when their married life is unbearably unhappy? Is there anything to do but just "grit one's teeth and bear it," no matter how acute the problem becomes? The persons I have in mind have been married a long time and have several children. For the children's sake if for no other reason, they would not even consider a divorce. Yet they have been very unhappy right from the first of their marriage. They have honestly tried, with all Christian charity, to make a "go" of it, but each year seems more unhappy than the last. The husband has become a nervous wreck whose irritableness and harsh words keep the wife in a constant state of fear and dread. Her health has collapsed as a result of child-bearing and the enforced neglect of poverty until she is not in a fit condition to be a wife at all. Under these conditions what would you do?

ANSWER #230 -- In the first place, I cannot admit all the premises. I believe that even one good sanctified Christian can make a go of a marriage proposition, although of course it is much easier when two co-operate. There are many complications even in the lives of the most fortunate people, but the grace of God makes husbands and wives overcomers, and that almost without regard to complications. The only cure for family trouble that I know of is just the same as the cure for drunkenness and the use of tobacco -- just plain, old-fashioned full salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The trouble is people become selfish and sentimental and want some easy kind of happiness, whereas genuine peace and joy come from abandoning everything to God and burying one's personal preferences in the will and love of God. The people of whom you speak are of course to be pitied in the fullest sense. But that weak pity which would make their trouble anything but sin and their remedy anything but grace would be cruel as well as weak. There is a way for them, and it is the simple way of the cross and the Pentecostal experience.

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QUESTION #231 -- Could we safely infer, by taking the negative view of Matthew 19:6 that some married people are not married in the sight of God?

ANSWER #231 -- No, such an inference is neither correct nor safe, and any attempt to hold and propagate it will add confusion. Marriage has to do with human society, as well as with individual relation, and to hold that people who are divorced and remarried without having had scriptural ground for divorce are not married is an insult to common sense and in the way of an effort to loosen the bands of human society and throw the world into chaos. I always advise divorced people, no matter what the occasion of their divorce, not to remarry. Practically all who do so have trouble with their own conscience later, and I believe, for the sake of Christian influence, they should live as Paul the apostle did. But after they marry,

there is nothing they can do to atone for the mistakes of the past except to do all within their power to make their present marriage a success. And with the exception of a few overzealous reformers here and there, this is the position held by leaders and teachers in the Protestant Church in all ages.

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QUESTION #232 -- I know a married couple who both claim to be Christians. The wife lives a good, humble life, keeps her house clean and sanitary and does all she can to make her home pleasant. But the husband is kind only in the presence of others. In his home he is unbearable. He treats his wife as though she were just a drudge, and shows her no kindness at all. If he does not change the home is going to be broken up. Can't you say something that will help?

ANSWER #232 -- Husbands and wives should both remember that it takes two to make marriage successful, and as Christians they should not forget that the same courtesy that makes them acceptable in business and shop is required of them at home. There may be a lot of silly shallow excuses for boorishness, but the fact is that any one who is truly a Christian can find grace to be just and pleasant, and if he finds it hard to do so, he should make it the subject of prayer. The failure of marriage and home is too serious a matter for any one to allow. Two Christians can make their home a happy home, and for the love of Christ they should do so.

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QUESTION #233 -- How far can a Christian woman go in concession to her unconverted husband as regarding places of worldly amusement?

ANSWER #233 -- I think every person will have to work out this program for himself. To say there is no problem here would be foolish, and the line between Christian charity and hurtful compromise is too narrow for general definition. My mother, for example, would never permit even a deck of cards in the house, although she was not a Christian in my childhood days. But I have heard the story of the drunken husband who brought his evil companions to his home in the night and compelled his wife to get up and prepare a meal. And her patience, so the story goes, won the husband and his companions to the Lord. But strain as I may, I cannot imagine my mother doing anything like that, and yet she impressed her lessons of sobriety and honesty in a way her children could not forget.

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QUESTION #234 -- Please tell me why Matthew 19:9 gives one ground upon which divorce may be secured, while Luke 16:18 does not give any grounds, but seems to forbid it.

ANSWER #234 -- There is no inconsistency here. Luke stops with statement of general prohibition, while Matthew gives, in addition to the general prohibition, the one exception allowed. One must take all the Bible says on any subject before he can justly say what the Bible actually teaches regarding it.

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QUESTION #235 -- If miscegnation or the mixing of races was a sin in the days of Joshua and Ezra, would it still be a sin today to mix the blood of different nations? (Joshua 23:12; Ezra 10:10).

ANSWER #235 -- If by sin you mean an act that brings individual condemnation, then I would have to say no, the mixing of the races is not sin And I base this judgment upon two things:

(1) The emphatic statement that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26); and (2) the implied equality of men on the basis of the universal adaptability of the gospel. The limitations under which the ancient Jews lived in this respect passed, along with the old ceremonies, limitations of diet, etc. This answers all the question you asked, and I suppose I should stop here. But to avoid any possible misunderstanding, I think it should be said that, although legal from the New Testament point of view, miscegnation does not stand up very well (except within pretty circumscribed limits) under the test of expediency. The fact is, marriage, to be successful, has to respect a lot of things, and should ordinarily not be required to bridge any great distances of race, culture, religion or social and financial status between its contracting parties.

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