

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

There are basically seven different chapters in the NT that deal with the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage (MDR) (Matt. 5:31-32; 14:1-12; 19:1-10; Mk. 10:1-12; Lk. 16:18; Rom. 7:1-4; I Cor. 7:9-11; 39). Each of these passages, taken together and in their context, lay down principles that the child of God is to study and apply to one's life. The overriding thought is that there is to be one man for one woman for life (Matt. 19:4-6). Any MDR scenario that may arise from life circumstances will have to be laid along side these seven chapters and judgments made based upon divine principle.

The conclusion; however, is clear regarding who may marry; i.e., those who have never been married, those who put away their spouse for fornication, and those whose spouse dies. The question often arises regarding who may lawfully divorce and remarry. There is only one "*putting away*" that can occur by either one of the mates. Both; however, have the opportunity to do so. If the guilty "*puts away*" their mate there is no counter putting away by the innocent. If the innocent "*puts away*" the guilty, there is no counter putting away. If both put each other away for irreconcilable differences they are both put away and therefore have no rights to another spouse (I Cor. 7:10-11). God recognizes only one putting away and it matters not who does it. The only one with the right of lawful remarriage is the one who "*puts away*" the guilty fornicator. The point being that there must be a "*putting away*" by the innocent for remarriage to be a possibility.

The key to the entire study hinges upon the meaning of "*putting away*" (*apoluon*) or "*depart*" (*chorizo*). *Apoluon* is defined as "to loose from; to set free from, release or relieve from... to be set free from. Generally, to dismiss; to divorce a wife" (LS 102). *Chorizo* is defined as "in a local sense, to separate, part, sever, divide one thing from another" (LS 899). "Divorce" (AG 890). Each use of these words is found in the active voice which indicates "a verb inflection or voice indicating that the subject of the sentence is performing or causing the action expressed by the verb" (AHD 77). Jesus addressed the innocent party doing the "*putting away*" in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. "*Putting away*" was the action done by the innocent. Likewise, Matthew 5:32, 19:9, Mark 10:11-12; and Luke 16:18 deal with the "*putting away*" action of the guilty. Whether innocent or guilty, the action performed was putting away (severing, dividing, separating or divorcing).

The next key is answering the question of what action is taken by the one "*putting away*" that would constitute the other being the 'put away?' Some refer to this as 'procedure.' The procedure of the Mosaic Law was to give a bill of divorcement (Deut. 24); however, Matthew 5:31 proves the two (i.e., putting away and writing of a divorce) to be mutually exclusive terms. What then is the action of "*putting away*?" The word of God is silent on this matter. Clearly the one putting away must do something in some way that lets all know of the dissolution of the marriage. Whether that be bringing the matter before the church, elders, civil law we are not told but action there must be. The spouse who takes that action will be the one putting away and the recipient of said action will be the put away.

Overall, the seven NT passages help us understand the seriousness of marriage. Young and old alike who are searching out a mate should choose their life long partner with wisdom. Once we are put away, even if innocent, we must remain that way for life.