

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Dialogue on Divorce

Scripture: Matthew 5:31-32

Code: 2221

You know, the hard part of this whole thing is that the Bible always presents God's standard and doesn't always deal with every situation that occurs when that standard is violated. Do you understand? So sometimes trying to get all of the data and all of the information about, you know, where is this and what's that and here are my circumstances it becomes -John Murray has written a book called DIVORCE which is a very, very good book, outstanding scholar and he covers every biblical passage and every fine point in all of the arguments, he gets clear to the end of the book he has an appendix to deal with other things and at the end he says, -Now, here are the subjects that are not dealt with in the Bible and he just lists a big long string of them relative to divorce and remarriage because it's very difficult to cover every situation. And again, I think it's important to remind you that if - even if adultery occurs God forgives, you see, and you're right back to that wonderful act of grace. That's the bottom line on everything. God's grace. That's where it all comes back. If you have a question, just step up to a microphone on the side and when I have a minute I'll call on you.

Okay, go ahead.

Question: If you are a believer and you are married to a non-believer,

John - Right.

Q: Who brought the divorce action, if that non believer then repents and you have not remarried and he comes back to you and wants to, you know, resume a relationship and get married again or whatever, are you then obligated to continue seeing that person and perhaps get married again?

John: I think so; I think that would be God's priority for it. I think if - that's a good illustration if the non-believer de-parts then all of a sudden turns around or if he finds the Lord and wants to come back I think that could be the best thing that could happen. I think that even if he wants to come back but hasn't found the Lord yet, that that opportunity ought to be taken too. Because God would rather see that original union and that unbeliever sanctified by your presence than to see a divorce. So in a

situation, people say, "Well, wouldn't that be being unequally yoked?" No, because you never had any grounds for divorce to start with. So you're just putting back together what should have been together all the time. So I think - this is what we counsel people - if you're married to an unbeliever and the unbeliever leaves and then at some point in time wants you back- go back and make that union work. On the other hand, what about this, if you're both un-believers and you divorce and then you get saved what should be your first reaction. Go back and try to win him back, and establish that marriage again. That's a priority, I think. Now you can't always do that. Right? That's not always possible because they may not want you. If they didn't want you when you weren't a Christian and you were on their wave length the odds are they're not going to have a thing to do with you when you become a Christian. And then you have absolutely no basis for communication but at least you need to put forth the effort. Because, you know, I've seen it happen where there has been that situation, two people divorced, one gets saved and goes back and wins the other one to Christ, they're remarried and God blesses it. That's good. Yes?

Question: Adultery is not the only extremely painful ingredient in a marriage, what do you recommend in your counseling where there is child molestation or wife beating or extreme alcoholism or some of those situations that become not just marginal but really intolerable for a wife we'll say?

John: I think 1 Corinthians 7:10 says, very simply--I'll read it to you--that there is an answer to that, and I think perhaps that's what is in view in this text. It says; "If she divorces"--and it doesn't give you any reason here, it just says if she divorces--"let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband but don't let the husband divorce his wife." What it is saying there is there may be a situation without adultery where you divorce, and it may be, and in my mind, it's one of those kind of situations...

You know, I can't counsel a mother who says, "What am I going to do? This man has committed incest with my child and he beats me up and etc. or beats up the children and so forth and so on. Do I just sit there and take it? And the chairs on my head, and the stuff he throws at me, and the cigarette burns on my arm, and battered wives and all this stuff? What do I do?" Well, certainly there is nothing in the Bible that says you just stand around until you are just beaten to a pulp. You know, God has built into the human being a certain sense of self-preservation. Right? And it's normal to separate yourself in that kind of situation. And maybe that's what Paul is thinking about. There may come circumstances where divorce occurs, but if it isn't on biblical grounds, that's it. I mean, you can remain unmarried or be reunited.

But I would say that's only a possibility in that text. I really feel that if we are obedient to the word of God in that kind of a situation, God would give us the grace to endure a lot more severe things than

we think. So, what we do is this; we counsel people this way: if you're in an abusive situation, there's not adultery involved, it's just abusive, cruelty, or something like that--I don't think alcoholism is necessarily in the same category. But where there's beatings, where it affects you or the children, there's nothing to say that you shouldn't step away, get away to preserve your own health, and your own safety, and your own security. You don't need to stay there and just be beaten to a pulp. God's given us a self-defense mechanism. But I don't think that's grounds for divorce biblically. I think you have to hang in there and that's what makes great prayer warriors. People who can turn that kind of a thing into a draw nigh unto God kind of relationship. You know, when all your family has forsaken you the Lord will be your family.

Yes:

Question: I have a question on the marriage vow. I have a friend who - she has all the biblical reasons of remarriage but she feels that the marriage vow that she made not only to her husband but to God, that even though he has broken his vow, his part of it that she is still bound to her vow to God and that she cannot remarry while he is still living. Could you...?

John: Well, I would say to her, I wouldn't make that much of a case out of the marriage vow. You realize that in the Bible there is no marriage vows? That's strictly a human element? Marriage is a covenant of two hearts but the Bible doesn't give a list of vows and whatever service we use in a wedding is something that men have developed. I think that we can say this, that any covenant that is made between two people is only as good as those two people make it. When one violates it it's all over. It's like having a chain with two links both links don't have to break, if one breaks it's gone. So I would say, in a technical sense, if he has violated the marriage vow, then the marriage is violated and she doesn't need to feel that she has some blind allegiance to just a human commitment.

Yes?

Q: My question has to do with a situation in which a divorce has been broken up by a third party. Now the innocent party, and it's a difficult part, how can you have the right Christian attitude toward that third person that's very open for bitterness and resentment?

John: I think that when a third party enters in and breaks up a marriage, bitterness and resentment is a very normal human response.

Q: It carries along with it a guilt that you are also sinning in that respect too.

John: Yes, that's right. It's a very normal human response. And I say that to say this, it can only be overcome in the power of the Spirit. And I think you again come back to the same principle, you know, the reason we get mad when somebody takes what we have is because we are possessive. Because we think we deserve it more than they do in a sense. So it all comes back to pride. Real humility would say - I didn't deserve anything anyway, if the Lord, like Job says - You know, though he slay me I'll trust him, if He takes away everything I have I'll trust Him, what do I deserve anyway? There's a sense of humility involved.

But I think this: I think you have every right to hate the sin. You have every right to despise the sin that did that but you have every obligation to love the sinner. I've seen the most beautiful situations, you know, people will come to me and say, You know, I've even seen people lead that third party to Christ. I've seen that happen many times. Where a third party comes in it's happened with wives, in fact, I've talked recently with somebody along this line. A girl came in, stole her husband away all of a sudden she realized that this girl, you know, she saw her as a soul. She said, what does she know different? You know, right? My husband must have made himself available to her and she's a worldly person, doesn't know the Lord Jesus Christ. It's my responsibility to take Christ to her. She went over and began to give Jesus Christ to this girl and even led her to Christ. You know, that's the magnanimous response, see. That's when you can separate the sin from the sinner and Jesus could always do that and I think that when we are led by the Spirit we can do that. But I think it's very normal for us to have to work through the emotion of anger and commit it to the Lord.

Yes?

Q: There's a lot of remarriage and divorce within the church without leaving the church and I've picked up on your relationship with your elders as a visitor and listening to your tapes, what is your stand as a pastor while observing that within the church as a divorce and are literally remarried within the church without ever leaving the church? Or do you tolerate it?

John: No. You mean, where two people got divorced and then those same two people married two other people in the same church? No. We really wouldn't have any place for that at all. That would be an open defiance of everything we believe the Bible teaches. In fact, we - where someone violates the biblical standards for marriage or for divorce and remarriage, we would enact church discipline.

We would move not because we're trying to crush people but we're trying to get them to act in response to God's will. People think that church discipline is carrying a big club so that you can throw people out of the church. Church discipline isn't to put people out it's to keep them in on God's terms, you see.

I remember a man, just to give you an illustration of this, I remember a man, his wife called me one day and said, "Hey, she said, oh, you'll never believe it my husband is over in an apartment with another woman." And I said, "Why?" "Well, he's going to live with this woman in her apartment and he's a father. And I know him." I said, "What's her name." She said, "Oh, I found out her name." I said, "Give me her name." So I looked up the phone number in the phone book and so I dialed the phone number. And he answered the phone, which isn't too good if you're going to be over there doing that don't answer the phone. But he answered the phone and I said, "What are you doing over there?" And oh, dead silence, just dead silence. And you could hear his heart going hum-ahum-ahum, like this. "I'm just telling you right now that you're going to defile your marriage, you're going to defile the church of Jesus Christ, you're going to dishonor the Lord you claim, you pack up your bags and get home in thirty minutes and I'm going to call to find out." And he said, "I'm going, I'm going." Thirty minutes later he was home. Now to me that's discipline. You know, that's when somebody reaches out to somebody who's about to do something wrong and pulls him back into the standards that God has set. Now that's what we would want to do with somebody who got into that situation.

But where somebody actually carried through with that kind of thing, we have disciplined many people in that kind of a situation. And actually put them out of the church. I can think of several nights driving all over this valley finding people who had done that and trying to deal with them, to draw them back. When they wouldn't come back we just publicly put them out. Because you must do what the Bible says. See? And that's a heartbreak, isn't it? But it has to be done and it keeps the church pure. And it sets a standard too. I remember one of our high school kids coming to me one time after we disciplined somebody for a divorce and said, "Boy, you've really shown me how serious God sees marriage." You see, that's part of it, isn't it? To let those people know that. Good.

Okay?

Q: Yeah, I was just wondering, how should like the members of a family deal with a parent who is a Christian but has now gone through with a divorce and or is just about to, how should the children deal with that parent who is a Christian, how should they relate?

John: That's a good question, John, you know you've got to deal with a person who goes through a violation if they have biblical grounds then they should be supported, if they had not biblical grounds then they must be treated in terms of sin. And of course it says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, "Every brother who walks disorderly", it talks about, and it says "We hear that some walk disorderly", this is just the way it is, he says, "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him that he may be ashamed yet count him not as an enemy but admonish him as a brother." So you have two things, you have a responsibility to admonish, that is to counsel him with a view toward judgment if he continues, to admonish him as a brother but on the other hand you have a responsibility also to turn away from him because he's a sinner until the time comes when true repentance is seen and the fruits of repentance are manifest. So I would say, and I've counselled a lot of families like this where, for example, I've counselled a mother who with tears in her eyes and I've said to her, "You cannot have your son in your home to partake your meals and to be a part of your family because he is living in sin, because of a divorce." And that's tough for a mother, isn't it? But you see, that's where it says, we're not to accompany with them, we're not even to eat a meal with them. Because that's to accept them in a social, affirming context. If you're going to be with them, use it as a time to exhort them and admonish them.

Q: I was going to ask also, how do you balance that with where it says honor your father and your mother, I mean, how can you?

John: Okay. Right, John, the answer to that is you honor them for what they can be honored for and you admonish them for what they must be admonished about. Good.

Yes?

Q: I guess this is kind of a thing, I'm unscrambling an egg but I was just curious - How do you deal with preferably, nonChristians who have slept around a lot before marriage or also if somebody is already married and they found out that, you know, you've slept with somebody before you were married, like biblically?

John: Well, now in the first message that we did, we pointed out that the Bible provided a death penalty for adultery. But something less than that for just sexual promiscuity. Even though both are evil in the sight of God marriage is so much more sanctified than any other human relationship that when somebody violates a marriage because it's the picture of Christ and His church, death was the

consequence. When somebody just committed a sexual sin they weren't married, there was severe punishment, you know, severe consequences, but short of death. In other words, that is not as heinous in the eyes of God because it does not involve the image of Christ and His church. So what I'm saying is this, all sin is forgivable and the standards God sets for marriage are uniquely for marriage. No matter who you marry, they're going to have a past record of sin. Right? It may not have been that sin but it will be some sin. And we're all sinners and God's grace applies at that point. So I - I don't think it's right to live like that. I think all you do -all you do is lose the virtue that makes marriage potentially most meaningful but you can still have a wonderful marriage because God is gracious. So I just - if you confess those things and turn from them then I think God can be gracious and provide for you a meaningful marriage. Unfortunately, one of the problems that people who live like that have is memories and they never forget. And that has a way of wounding any other relationship.

Q: So biblically, then, it would be just kind of considered obnoxious, an obnoxious thing if they - rather than - you know, it's not the same thing as adultery because ...

John: No. Because there was no marriage involved. Right. Okay. Good.

Yes?

Q: In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, John Murray in his book seemsto indicate that there are some exceptions to that rule that God is giving there in that if there were no rounds for divorce in the first marriage then God would not recognize the second marriage and if that second marriage would end for whatever reason there may be or might, depends on the circumstances, a remarriage between the first partners. Would you comment on that? Or ...

John: It's not for me to comment on somebody else's view except that's not the way I interpret it. I see it as simply saying now the Lord doesn't want someone to marry an adulterous. That's somebody who's already been married and is an adulterous. So you wouldn't want to marry someone like that one, two- because they're adulterous. Right? So the situation in that section is that this person has become an adulterous he is defiled, the Hebrew means disqualified. Disqualified as what? As a marriage partner for the first husband. I don't take it any further than that.

I've read John Murray quite carefully several times and I don't want to set myself up as somebody who knows more about it than he does but I just take the view the rather specific and simple view that if there is a marriage dissolved by less than adultery the other marriage consummates whatever

happens, death or divorce they cannot go back to the first partner. Does that answer? Okay.

Q: Thank you.

Q: My older brother is in a situation that something I wouldn't touch with a ten foot pole and maybe you can unscramble this. He claims to be a Christian and my mother and I know that he's not. Okay, just because he says he reads the Bible he claims to be a Christian, just by the fact what he's interpreting Scripture but the situation that he's in - okay, Well, he was married before and had two children. Okay. Left his wife, and supposedly divorced her but we found out later that he didn't. Supposedly remarried this other girl who loves God I mean, she's truly just ... wouldn't claim to be a Christian but she's really close to God and ...

John: At this point he's a polygamist.

Q: Right, but now he's had a child with this other woman, his first wife has moved in with my cousin who they have had a child now and I know he's not a Christian so I had to come to him and I don't know what to tell him - Hey, you've got to come to do this ... I don't know what to tell him, really, before I get to share with him...

John: Yeah, that's kind of a tough one. The first thing you tell him is that he shouldn't be living this way. You know, that's the first thing. Until a person is a Christian you can't expect them to live by God's standard. Okay. The only thing I can think of is that the second marriage is just not a marriage at all. I would say the second marriage is an adulterous union. I don't care what her reasons are, whether she's a Christian or not. Is that a legal marriage?

Q: As far as my mother and I are concerned - No.

John: I mean, did they go through a legal process to get a marriage.

Q: They went to Las Vegas to get married and from what I heard he paid the guy off not to send the papers through.

John: Well, whatever is his legal marriage I would say from the standpoint of that whatever is his legal marriage, this is,

you know, grabbing out of the dark, whatever is the legal marriage is the marriage that he is bound to. And he needs to go back into that marriage. And any other relationship would be adultery.

Q: So, ah...

John: If he's not a Christian, I'll tell you one thing, if he becomes a Christian the Holy Spirit will help him. If he **doesn't become** a Christian I can't help him and nobody can. But it's wonderful how the Holy Spirit can unscramble the worst kind of things once we commit ourselves to live according to His standard.

Q: So in other words, by me letting him go, you know, he doesn't love her, she doesn't love him to begin with...

John: I don't think that's even the issue. The issue is his relationship to Jesus Christ.

Q: Right.

John: Once that's right then the Lord will pull all the other pieces into shape.

Q: And what happens to the kids in between?

John: Well, the Lord will take care of them too. Of course, he'll probably have to do something to take care of them financially and if he's a Christian he can give them the best that he can if he comes to Christ in terms of spiritual direction but you know, that's just one of those things. There are people who go around and proliferate children and the Lord doesn't expect them to marry all those women, they have to leave those children up to God's grace, that's all. That's a hard one. That's fairly common kind of confusion that occurs in our society and, boy, once you have - this is another principle you need to keep in mind, once you have abandoned God's standards the chaos becomes irreparable. The chaos becomes irreparable. You cannot undo what you've done. It can't be done.

There's scars that will never be removed.

Yes?

Q: A Christian met this other person and he came ... started going to church with her and claims that he accepted the Lord. And I don't know whether they were married before or after he claimed to be a Christian and then he went overseas to Viet Nam in the Marines and he came back and told his wife that he had committed adultery. Well, she could forgive adultery but she couldn't forgive or accept the beatings and they've got a little boy now and she's scared, of course, for the sons sake and then she met someone else who's a Christian and the husband didn't even come back to the town because he was afraid he'd want the little boy to go with him and then so she filed for divorce and she met this other Christian and they got together and there was already adultery committed and she was the innocent party but the two Christians got entangled and ...

John: I get you. What I would say is - what I would say is she functioned on the basis of the law not the ideal. In other words, she grabbed the loophole and ran with it when it became convenient. In other words, the technicality of divorce in the past was in the past not in the present. Right? But when she met somebody she liked better than her husband then she reached back and took that ...

Q: No this was before. This was before she had already instigated the divorce before she met this other person.

John: And the divorce was on the basis of ...

Q. Adultery and

John: Well, if she divorced him because of adultery that technically is legitimate. And if it was before she met somebody else who attracted her then she has that right.

Q: What's her position now that she's committed fornication or whatever it was with this other person.

John: Oh. You mean, she committed adultery with this other person before she was divorced from the first one?

Q: Yeah and after but after she had already started proceedings.

John: Well, she's an adulterous. Adultery is when you are still married to somebody and you have sexual relationships with somebody else. If the divorce wasn't final she is an adulterous. She's no more innocent than he is.

Q: That's what I thought.

John: That's right. She's not innocent. That's the whole point that Jesus keeps making. As soon as you start divorcing people all you do is pile up adultery all over the place because people who are used to living in a conjugal relationship cannot just cut that off, you know. Invariably frankly, if they don't commit adultery in the physical world they're going to commit it in their thinking process. So that's - the Lord just knows that it will proliferate and here's a classic illustration. She's going to divorce her husband because adultery, she's going to go to bed with some other guy before the divorce is final, she's as bad as he is. That's, you know, I'll tell you one thing, the guy who's getting her is well - that's not the kind of girl I'd like. Somebody who just wants to condemn somebody for something that they're willing to do themselves. That's not very fair.

Q: What would you say is God's in God's eyes is divorce and remarriage? In other words, is it a legal thing or does God look at the heart and say - you know, like if I say, - Hey, in my heart I feel divorced or I am divorced and, you know, the legal proceedings are going through?

John: No, I think with God it's a legal thing just like marriage. I think the whole concept of the bill of divorcement was that God knew when it came to marriage it had to be ordered by the society in which it occurred so that when you have marriage or divorce or any of those things God always prescribed that it be according to whatever set pattern was in existence. You are not married just because you say - Hey, you and I are married let's sleep together, that does not constitute a marriage. And you are not divorced just because you separate. That is - that's where so many people get into problems today, you know, they want to say Oh, what's a piece of paper among friends and all this stuff? The point is that Romans 13 says, "We are to be subject to the powers that be for they are ordained of God." We are to give honor and respect to the kings and the governors and the standards that are set up within our own society. And those things are instituted by God within our society to give us

direction for the forming of our society and the necessary factors involved. Marriage is duly constituted in our society in a certain standard. Other societies it's different. But according to that standard marriage is duly constituted and divorce is the same thing. That's a good question.

Yes?

Q: A few moments ago you said that it was amazing the power of the Holy Spirit when you elect to live by God's perfect standards and what He could do. In a case where a wife is a believer, the husband probably isn't is having an affair with another woman, does not want a divorce, does not want to come home and the situation is going on well over a year, if the wife who has children and you know, it creates a lot of problems not having a husband to help elects to keep God's perfect standard and not get a divorce, can she count on and ask the Lord to work from the other side and do something so - well, in the world that we live in today, if a husband doesn't have the moral standards to care whether he's divorced or married it really creates a problem unless she can count on the Holy Spirit to do something from the other side?

John: It's a very, very common problem. You're talking about an unfaithful husband, doesn't want to let go of his wife because of security, reputation, you know a place to stay.

Q: No, he's not a home at all. He's living someplace else.

John: I don't mean that he's enjoying it he just knows it's there. It's like a parachute, you're glad it's there you hope you have to never use it.

Q: Right

John: So he's out doing his own thing...I think the promise of God would be that she in her own heart ... she has the technical right to divorcethat guy, she really does. In a sense, you know, 1 Corinthians 5 she could turn him over to Satan so he could learn not to blaspheme but the fact of the matter is God will work on the other end. There's no question about that. And God will work in one of two ways, either God will work in conviction and the man will respond or God will work in conviction he will not respond and conviction will become judgment. But in either case if she's faithful God will, I believe, bless her life. I really believe that. And not only here but in the life to come. So I think we have to count on that. That's living by faith. God bless those women who are faithful enough to hang in there

with somebody like that. They don't have to. And I'm not saying it's more virtuous to do that Always because there may come a time when it's the only thing you can do is to say - That's it. I have grounds, that's all there is I can take.

Q: Well, how do you know when you should let go though?

John: Very individual, that's very personal. And that's something only an individual can know as that person is really sensitive to the Spirit of God. I can never give that kind of counselling, I just say as long as you have the grace and the patience then accept that as God's leading. When you've come to the place where you just - it's gone. Then you can exercise that alternative. And if that's what God directs you to do and you have peace in your heart about doing it, that's your option.

Q: Does the Bible say anything about separation? Could you comment on that?

John: Yes, the Bible says one thing about separation. Just one, one word. And it says that a husband and a wife are never to separate unless it's for prayer. The Bible doesn't talk about People say, "Oh, you know, let's separate for a while it will be good for us." It's never good. You can't accomplish anything when you're not together. So the Bible doesn't say anything about it. Now, as I say, there may be times when you have to separate to protect your own physical body or to take your children and save their necks as it were from an abusive parent. But as far as separation the Bible says in I Corinthians chapter 7 that there is to be no defrauding of one another, physically, no separation except for a season of prayer. And that would be where you were so overwrought with some spiritual need that your life was just totally consumed with that spiritual dimension. But as far as just separating for some reason or other, there's really no such thing in Scripture.

Q: Well, if - the situation I'm thinking of they're both Christians and the wife is giving the ultimatum - either you leave or I leave. The man does not want this but she does. She wants him to leave, she doesn't want to leave but she wants him to leave.

John: Yeah, possession is nine tenths of the law. Get him out so she can keep the house.

Q: Right. And for the sake of the children he thinks that he should leave.

John: Well, of course, the answer to the situation is that she shouldn't be giving ultimatums to start with but the point is they need to resolve -two Christians. Listen, I've said this before, any two Christians Spirit filled could live together. Especially two that once had a basis for marriage, no matter how much water's gone under the bridge because God is in the business of putting things together again. What you have here is not an issue any other than just an issue of are two people really committed to Christ. Are they really walking in the Spirit or not? If they're not, nothing works.

Q: Okay. Is the family member, this is the situation in a family, as a family member, this is kind of similar to what the other guy said, what is my responsibility to that person in the family that chooses not to walk with the Lord?

John: Well, I think loving, confrontive admonition. You know, the Bible only knows one way to solve a problem, I don't care whether you're in the book of Genesis or Revelation, the Bible only knows one way to solve a problem and that's to meet it head on. That's the only thing the Bible ever does. You know, it's just confront the problem. Go to the Lord in prayer and go confront the problem.

Q: Okay, then if they refuse to hear you, if they refuse to listen to your counsel and to your guidance and to biblical standards then do you treat them as if they're not a Christian?

John: No. Then you go get two or three witnesses, Matthew 18.

Q: Okay, but what if they're not in this church, they are Christians but they're in another church. What do you do then?

John: You mean there's no church to put them out of.

Q: No. They are in a church but not this church, do you go to that church?

John: Oh, absolutely. You go to that church. Or get two or three witnesses who know the situation and then tell it to the church. We've done situations like that here where we've had elders from another church and this church and get together and meet with people. Hey, you know, this is all the Lord's church. And one of the problems today in disciplining people is you put them out of this church and they go down the street to the next church which doesn't do that church any good because the

leaven we got rid of is going' to leaven their lump. You know?

Q: Right. If that church chooses not to discipline them, now what do you do in that situation? Do you take it to them and you tell -I'm...

John: That's very difficult, you've done as much as you can do. In effect, you've cleaned out your own situation, you've done what's right before God and you can't do anymore. You know, I face that all the time. Sometimes I follow through a situation and I do all that I can do and I feel that it still isn't resolved but that's all I can do. Then I say, Okay, Lord, I followed all I know to follow and I have to leave it with you. And ultimately that's where you leave anything anyway. But ultimately, sure, just leave it with the Lord.

Q: When you refer to committing adultery if the partner commits adultery you say they have a technical right to divorce that individual?, But that isn't the ideal?

John: That's right.

Q. Okay, would that be sin for that person to divorce that?

John: No.

Q: Well then anything short of the ideal isn't sin?

John: No, that's true, that's right. What I'm saying is that the divorce is not the ideal because sin caused it. Right?

Q: Sin caused the divorce.

John: But it's not the sin of the person who does it on the grounds of adultery. In other words, the ideal is violated in the sin. Whoever sinned. God has an ideal, two people live together, one commits adultery that's the end of the ideal. Now if this person wants to do all she can to reconstruct the ideal again, that option is there. But it wouldn't be sinful to take the technical answer.

Q: I don't understand. The ideal is gone once one has broken the ...

John: Well, at that point in time, sure. The marriage is adulterated. The ideal is violated.

Q: The ideal is violated?

John: Yes. Do you understand that?

Q: Well, not completely.

John: I'll tell you what, just marry one woman and stay with her the rest of your life and you won't have to worry.

Q: That's what I plan on doing. But, the ideal would be to forgive that individual, though.

John: That's right. The ideal again would be to forgive, the person confesses, cleanse their life out, the two come back together and that's great. Sometimes you can't have that ideal back. The partners not willing, won't change the lifestyle, won't turn from the adultery and really you don't have any alternative sometimes.

Q: Okay.

Q: Yes, John, a statement from the elders didn't mention it I don't recall this particular series mentioned, forfeiting the right to remarry. And if you have a situation where both have committed adultery or you just can't unscramble the egg, is there a case where you would say, even though the other spouse remarries that the other one has forfeited the right to remarry?

John: I'm not sure I understand the question.

Q: I'm sorry. Okay, let's say both members committed adultery.

John: So neither has the right to remarry.

Q: Is that what you're saying?

John: That would be true.

Q: Even if the other spouse did.

John: It would just be adding adultery to adultery.

Q: Yeah, right, even if the other spouse is remarried then that one's obviously committing adultery...

John: See, what you're doing in a situation like this is really forcing beyond what the Scripture says. And into the confusion of the milieu of what happens and I'm lost, I don't know. I would say technically speaking, by God's standard if you adulterated one marriage you don't have any right to start up another one.

Q: Okay, in other words, in the statement when you're using adultery and you decide that one party has committed adultery then they have no right to remarry after that regardless of what happens.

John: That's true. Okay. I think we'll call it at that point. Somebody handed me a question - Before we go are there degrees of sin? There will be degrees of sin after we go. But let me tell you what they are. Somebody - they said - what about adultery, stealing, coveting and all this? Basically the Bible only gives us two categories of degrees of sin. And I would draw on Hebrews chapter 10 for this, the Bible says, "How much sorer punishment shall ye be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the blood of the covenant or trodden under foot the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant by which he is sanctified an unholy thing." In other words, the greatest sin is the sin of indifference and turning your back on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and treating it as an unholy thing. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy. Now that tells us that there are degrees of sin. Now as to whether stealing is worse than lying and lying is worse than coveting and coveting is worse than

adultery, the Bible doesn't tell us that. There are those categories of sin, they're all bad, there's only one other category that's worse and that's the category of rejecting the truth of God and turning your back on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That's the most severe of all. But as far as whether lying, stealing, cheating, adultery or whatever are worse than the others the Bible doesn't tell us that they are. Okay?

Thank you for your time tonight. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank You that if we live the way You want us to live, if we're poor in spirit, if we're mourning over sin, if we're meek, if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, if we're merciful, if we're pure in heart, if we're peacemakers, if all of those characteristics are true of our lives there's very little chance that our marriages would fail. So help us, Lord, to know that good marriages begin with right character. Thank You for grace that cleanses the past and frees us to enjoy the blessedness of the present in Jesus name. Amen

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