

So what should the fellowship involved have done?

And what is God's remedy?

Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Well its been a few weeks now since I emailed asking for prayer over the plans of my so-called Christian sister to add to her collection of husbands and other partners.

The saddest thing in it was that Michael and I had shared with her and her second husband on spiritual matters only a couple or more years ago . The last husband was seeking the Lord and even going along to meetings. He recognised that he needed spiritual help. My sister also recognised that as a baptised woman she should be submitting to him out of reverence for the Lord. The four of us even all read Scripture out aloud together on marriage. (That may be why I was not even invited to the latest marriage either - a very heavy conscience!)

Any way apparently she did not submit to him, so got him continually grossly upset, aggravating the things he was seeking help over, and then cited that as grounds for leaving him, which later turned into grounds with her family and friends for a worldly divorce and yet another marriage. (Amazingly I have never been told of any actual spiritual grounds for any of her divorces.)

Then she went with a friend to a 'Christian' group. Michael and I recognised the name we were told as being the same as one we walked out of nearly three years ago, when had I watched as the associate pastor had produced a puppet and started using the puppet to comment from the front of the meeting, lewdly on the physical aspects of certain woman present in the building. (It was explained to me on the phone unrepentedly later that the group were trying to meet unsaved people at the level they were on.)

Unrelated to Michael and my visit, at a later meeting of that same group my sister sees a man who she likes the look of. He turns out to

have been divorced, as well, many years before. He has started to go to that group, as he is trying to find the Lord. The group not holding to God's standards, does not protect the man from my sister's antics. She passes her self off in what ever way to them, and they feeling sorry for her or whatever about her last marriage, agree to marry her to the man, who no one could assure me they had yet even got through to baptism! Apparently the marriage was seen as being of higher importance than God's ways or even his personal salvation.

Sad thing is that all of my family would be claiming to be Christians! Every single involved person.

My elderly mother even said that she had prayed much about it all and felt ok in her heart, and that she didn't want to know what the Bible had to say! Even though what was happening went right against her church upbringing.

I have not heard a word from any of them since the event went ahead, nothing at all. Which may be just as well, as Scripture tells me to not even eat or associate with immoral people who call themselves Christians. 1 Corinthians 5:9-12 finishing with "12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?"

I am not talking about spiritually ignorant relatives or other worldly people here. In this case they are all presenting themselves as Christians. I can not show favouritism just because the people involved are related to me in a worldly way, even my own mother!

A really hard call but one that is real with Jesus.

Matthew 10:32-39

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. 34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-

in-law against her mother-in-law— 36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' {Micah 7:6} 37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

It has been a sobering experience for me to see yet again how our love for God must be stronger than even for our natural family. Something that many of God's children are going to face more and more as these days become more wicked.

We must all make sure that we keep our love for God stronger than our love for the world and what is in it. Especially where our lives intersect with backslidden or what Scripture calls so-called Christians. We must have our shields of faith up and be fully ready for duty.

We serve the living God and not according to the standards of this immoral dishonest world, but according to the righteousness found in Christ, in the Holiness of God, by the Spirit of God.

It seems to me that what people are calling love in New Zealand is often no more than lust thinly overlaid with deep sentimental feelings.

To confuse this with the love that the Bible speaks of is to do God a great disservice. The more common New Zealand version of love is what would have been called Eros in biblical times. It is where we get the word erotic from in English.

The words in the Bible that speak of Christian love are philadelphia and agape. The first describes brotherly love, and the second life sacrificing love. The other main kind of love spoken of in biblical times was sterios, family love, and Jesus deals with that in the Matthew 10 Scripture quoted above.

So what should the fellowship involved have done?

What should my sister and her man friend have been counselled?

First the fellowship and the people involved ought have followed the directions and teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles even as recorded in Scripture.

Even though I have been doing missionary work for over twenty years, the group in question made no effort to contact me, even given that my earthly father is dead now and I am the only male member of the family alive. They apparently didn't even counsel the proposed groom to do so.

In Scripture Paul's direction is simple, if the man had no marriage partner when he was coming to the Lord, Paul says do not seek one, remain as you are (single) as per 1Cor 7:17, 20 and 24.

My sister? If she was returning to the Lord at the time she went to the group and met the man, she should have been told that as she had chosen to separate from two of her previous husbands and many partners, she was to remain single (or return to her husband - who ever that may be deemed to be), and along with my other "Christian" sister, look after her elderly mother who is a widow.

1 Timothy 5:16 "If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need."

Quite simple really.

There are many arguments put up in western culture to side step these the ways of the Lord. However none of the people who have made up clever arguments like "having a new start in life when coming to the Lord", have more wisdom than God.

The idea of having a new start in life when coming to the Lord does not hold water when it is applied to areas of life that God makes clear and objective statements about.

For example God wants people to pay their bills.

Does coming to Christ and being baptised, and God's forgiveness, and so a brand new start in life, get you off your unpaid electricity bill?

Obviously not in the normal run of things.

Neither does becoming a Christian, or rededicating a life to Christ, white out the rest of New Testament Scripture on God's requirements for morality and marriage.

Worldly license does not equal God's permission

Consider the situation of a person finding a beautiful dog alone on a beech. You wait with it until sunset and then when no one turns up to take care of it, you take the dog home. You keep it and feed it, taking it to the vet. And over time not seeing any ads in the local paper or on store windows from the owners looking for the dog, you eventually register the dog with the local town council where you live. You now have a dog license.

Does that mean that you own the dog? Does paying for and owning a dog license morally mean that you own the dog that the license is for?

Not at all. If the real owner turns up, and shows that there is say an electronic chip in the dog that proves them to be the owner, your license might mean absolutely nothing at all.

Abortion is another good example of this. A woman can get a certificate from worldly authorities saying that she may have an abortion.

Does that make the abortion correct. In no way. And it does not stop her, and the medical staff and all who are involved, of being guilty of murder before God.

You buy a car paying good money for it. You even have the registration papers. Then suddenly some one appears and says 'that car is mine', and they can prove it; or a bank comes along and says that the car was never available

for sale as there was money owing on it. Morally the car is not yours, and in many lands even the law will say that you do not own that car even though you paid for it in good faith.

The church has never been commissioned by God in Scripture to carry out wedding ceremonies. It was something that the Romans passed on to the Roman Catholic Church to do in the days of the Empire. If modern churches do do marriage ceremonies, they are required by righteousness to be very very careful and sure that they are doing the right thing.

Or else even though it is being done by a church group, the ceremony may have no standing at all before God. Its just the same as baptising a person or baby who does not believe. God will not honour anything that is not according to His own word and of real personal faith.

The absolute basics of marriage are timeless and found well exemplified in the lives of Isaac and Jacob in the Old Testament. Here are some of the main points.

1. First both parties must be available for marriage according to God's righteous standards.
2. Second they are made to be committed to each other for life or until one or the other dies.
3. Thirdly the marriage must be physically consummated (hence Isaac took his bride "into his mother's tent". In many cultures witnesses even verify that the bride is a virgin, and that the husband has personally consummated the marriage.) In Jacob's case in the given context a tricked consummation made for a marriage!
(25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?"²⁶ Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. ²⁷ Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.").
4. Fourth we may note that it is a family and public matter that a marriage is established, it is not a private thing just

between the couple concerned.

5. Fifthly we may note that there is no requirement for a 'priest' or 'minister' to be involved.

Noting point three above, if before you became a Christian you have slept around and promised any one that you are going to marry them and had sex and been seen as a couple, you may be construed as married in some circumstances. Otherwise it is all immorality to be repented of.

You may even sometimes before God be responsible for the welfare (even if you can not live together) of more than one wife and children. This may shock sensuous hedonistic westerners, but is all very real before God.

A person coming to the Lord who is living with someone may already in God's sight be married to the person. Paul writes:

1Corinthians 7:12 “To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

17 ¶ Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.”

Sanctify here means purifies the relationship, not “saves” the partner.

Scripture appears to only give three grounds for

possible consideration of re-marriage.

- a. Death of one marriage partner.
- b. Gross sexual misconduct may allow a man to divorce his wife, though for Christians where genuine repentance is taking place, forgiveness may be the order of the day.
- c. Where both partners are unsaved and one is rejected by the other for becoming a believer Paul has this to say:

1Corinthians 7:15 “But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.”

Otherwise we are directed:

1Corinthians 7:10 ¶ To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

Current fallen culture in New Zealand and many western countries only now seems to actually require that the couple want to be married. And that has been the case with the ceremony that my sister went through.

Owning a dog license does not make you the owner of the dog.

Having a certificate for an abortion does not make an abortion right.

Car registration papers do not always make you the owner of a car.

Having a government issued divorce declaration does not automatically mean that God approves of the divorce nor possibly release the person to righteously marry again.

Having a worldly marriage license does not make a marriage.

So neither in God's eyes does a ceremony by itself, even in a "Christian" setting, necessarily make a marriage. It might only be condoning immorality, to the churches judgement by God.

Jesus says,

Mt 5:32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

That is why Paul writes to us that even if "marriage" is gone through with, the whole thing may still be unlawful and sinful before God:

Romans 7:3 So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

And

1Corinthians 7:39 ¶ A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

The whole thing is to be viewed from the Lord's perspective not our wants or convenience

Putting it Right - Remedy

So you may see from the above why people who love Jesus are quitting what God considers immoral relationships and either living singly or even seeking to be reuniting with their original marriage partner. Providing for the children to be properly cared for. (Ezra 10:3-4)

The way of holiness is designed to please God, and in His love keep us from sin. Sin leads to the Judgement of God and the second death. And people must be very careful to not be condemned by what they give approval to or go along with.

God never said that it would be easy, but those who preserve, even through long suffering and endure hardship because of believing in God, are promised a rich reward and welcome by God, for pursuing Him through faith in His Son

the Lord Jesus Christ.

When someone comes to Christ they are given a brand new life, but the blood of Christ does not automatically dissolve established responsibilities, duties of care and general requirements of God. Indeed sometimes repentance actually requires that the person live out or pick up again responsibilities they have shirked, as a living fruit of their repentance.

People should not wrongly apply the Scripture 'If any one be in Christ, all things have become new . .' etc. and like Scripture to situations that are out of context of the parts of the Bible that those verses come from.

If someone had stolen before they came to Christ, should they keep their ill gotten gain if it is still in their possession, or should they give it back to the owners? Even if they risk prosecution?

Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? (Romans 6:1)

The answer in all of this is plain and obvious for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purposes! (Romans 8:28)

1 Peter 3:1 ¶ Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

<http://PaulANorman.com>