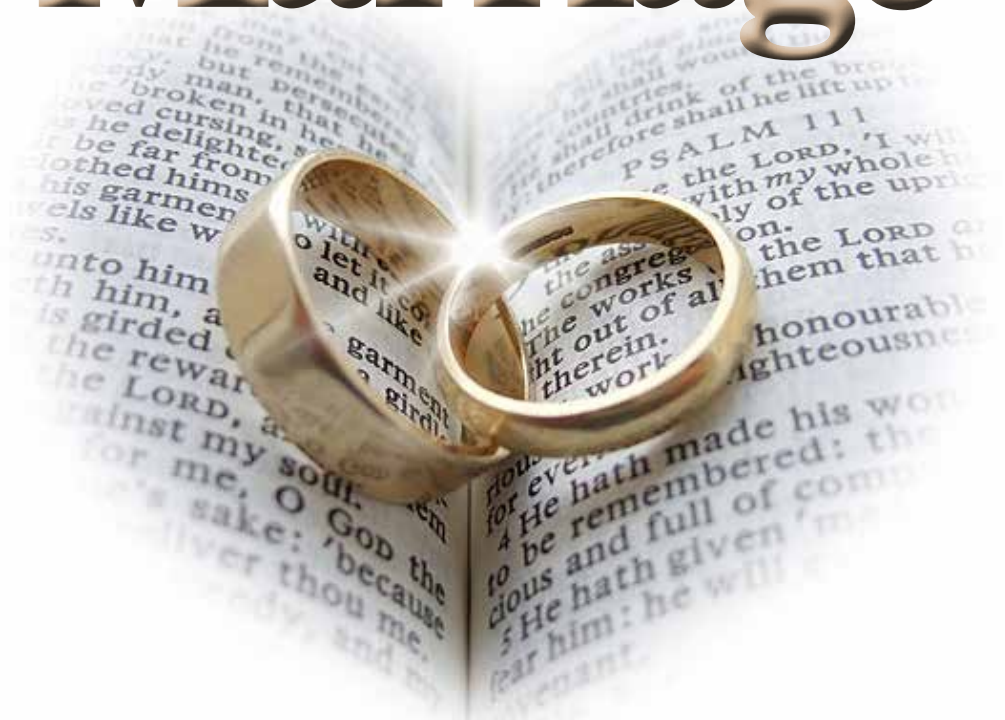


GOD'S ANSWERS TO EVERYMAN'S QUESTIONS

# The Sanctity of Marriage



BY FAITH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH ELDERS

# **God's Answers For Everyman's Questions**

The heart of the righteous studies how to  
answer, but the mouth of the wicked  
pours forth evil.  
Proverbs 15:28 (NKJV)

Personal "bent" / Prejudice –  
Affirming what I "already believe..."

Let us not affirm ourselves! In this series  
we have sought to study and reveal God's  
answers to often-asked questions.

The Elders of Faith Fellowship Church

@Faith Fellowship Church, Clarence NY, 2014

# The Sanctity of Marriage

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# 1. God's View of Marriage



**W**ith tender-hearted recognition of the pain surrounding divorce, the elders of FFC (Faith Fellowship Church) have painstakingly crafted this position statement. Given how serious marriage is as revealed by God in His Word, given how agonizing divorce is for all whom it touches, and given the state of marriage in our culture, we believe this issue deserves intentional, special, and careful consideration.

For years we have noted that the church's divorce statistics are astoundingly similar to the world's divorce statistics.<sup>1</sup> And in the past, we have warned not to "do relationships/marriage" the world's way and expect God's results. Here, we outfit that warning in shoe leather. We strive to be obedient to God's Word, which transforms our lives, as opposed to conforming to culture. Our aim is that God's hand of blessing will protect marriages at FFC and beyond.

The FFC elders desire to biblically approach and deal with the topics of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, along the way confronting, exposing, and identifying unbiblical points of view. In light of all that has been written and said, in light of what the world is doing, we want to make a stand for what the Word of God has to say. It is our prayerful longing that this generation will be able to swim upstream in the river of our culture with a view of marriage as God sees it – with high honor; and with an understanding of marriage as God perceives it – with

great pleasure; and with an equipping for marriage as God teaches it – with covenantal success. To convey the severity of our commitment to success in marriages, in chapter 4 we introduce preliminary requirements for those seeking to be married by a pastor of FFC (FFC pastors are licensed by the state).

Prior to the fall, in a world yet untainted by sin, God described marriage with these beautiful words:

**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. [Genesis 2:24-25 ESV]**

Hear the pure intimacy and vulnerability between a husband and wife. See the uniquely close and lasting relationship that takes priority over child relationships and over parental relationships. This brief manifesto was the creed of life for Adam and Eve, who were clearly described as equal in person-hood and positional standing subject to God (**Genesis 1:26-27**), and clearly defined as different in roles and responsibilities reflective of God (**Genesis 2:15-18, 1 Corinthians 11:3**).

God is unchanging, without shifting shadow (**James 1:17**). Jesus revealed that God's view of marriage ever remained His original statement in **Genesis 2:24-25**, which we shall refer to as God's marriage manifesto. When Jesus was questioned regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage, He immediately turned the questioner's thoughts to God's marriage manifesto. Paul imitated Jesus when he pulled God's marriage manifesto into his teaching on biblical manhood and womanhood (**1 Timothy 2:13-14**).

An unbiblical view of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is not a new problem. Thousands of years ago, God gave the Israelites laws and statutes that would have shaped and reformed them according to His heart for marriage relationships, had they obeyed. Two thousand years ago, when the Pharisees sought to trap Jesus by pointing out their corruptions of God's beautiful laws, Jesus turned their thoughts to God's original marriage manifesto. For His church, God further qualifies the original marriage manifesto, putting flesh to it as a living metaphor of Himself and His church. To help the church understand how important marriage is, God asks, "How much does Christ love the church?" The answer, of course, turns our eyes to sacrificial love to the point of death.

In teachings to the nation Israel, through Hosea, God uses marriage to show His strong love for His people amid adultery and deception, love stronger than earthly pride. In teachings to the New Testament church, in **1 Corinthians 11:3**, God compares the husband/wife relationship to His relationship with Jesus. In **Ephesians 5:22-32**, God compares the marriage relationship to His relationship with the church, which is referred to as His bride in **2 Corinthians 11:2** and **Revelation 21**.

It is the opinion of some that marriage is in trouble. Marriage isn't in trouble, God has ordained it! Man is in trouble. Marriage is near and dear to God's heart. Scripture rings with beautiful seriousness regarding marriage, God's view of marriage. And those who marry must recognize that seriousness, for marriage is a reflection of God – His faithfulness, devotion, sacrifice, holiness, and love.

1 The research has shown and often been cited, that Christians have the same divorce rate as non-Christians. But, recent research reveals that Christians committed to practicing biblical principles have a markedly lower divorce rate. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/september/pastors-that-divorce-rate-stat-you-quoted-was-probably.html>; <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/09/25/factchecker-divorce-rate-among-christians/>





## 2. Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage



Folks have been talking about God’s view of divorce for a long time, often with varying opinions. When Jesus walked on earth there were two prevailing mindsets regarding divorce. The “Bet Hillel” (House of Hillel) followers were quiet, peace-loving men determined to adjust with the times, who granted a husband the right to divorce his wife if he had any serious complaint against her, such as spoiling his dinner. Rather like today’s “no-fault divorce.” The “Bet Shammai” (House of Shammai) followers, however, were more severe and unbending, holding that a man could divorce his wife only on the grounds of adultery. Their view reflected an aversion to divorce in agreement with the prophet Malachi, in **Malachi 2:16**.<sup>1</sup>

As the Pharisees noticed that a large group of fans were following Jesus, they thought they could trap Him into siding with one camp or the other. Perhaps they were certain He would agree with Malachi, and the tide of popular opinion would turn away from Him. Either way, they were probably hoping His choice would put Him into one of their courts, thereby providing an opportunity to present their well-versed arguments against Him.

**And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” [Matthew 19:3 ESV]**

Only there was a problem. Their attempt to goad Jesus into taking sides in their earthly rule-making assumed Jesus had changed from God's original manifesto on marriage. Jesus didn't play into their hand at all. He returned an answer as old as the hills, living, breathing proof that God hadn't wavered on His view of marriage.

**He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [Matthew 19:4-5 ESV]"**

Then, Jesus made it personal. "Not even you," he said, "have the right to separate what God has joined."

**So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." [Matthew 19:6 ESV]"**

Now their ire was up! Can't you hear them stuttering and mumbling, "B,b,but..."

**They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" [Matthew 19:7 ESV]"**

Once again, a problem. They'd been so busy honing their personal agreement with Hillel or Shammai that they missed what actually happened. In their corruptions of God's view of marriage and divorce, they'd taken a quantum leap to assume that Moses commanded. Moses didn't command. So, Jesus corrected them.

**He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." [Matthew 19:8 ESV]"**

This is the victory Jesus Himself would win. Forgiveness can always trump sin. Grace can always dance upon injustice. After emphatically reiterating God's view of marriage, Jesus explains that the only reason anyone would try to justify divorce is because they suffer from a hard (unforgiving/bitter) heart. In doing so, Jesus is clarifying his refutation of the Pharisees' comment that Moses commanded divorce.

And then Jesus affirms what God had permitted through Moses, back in **Deuteronomy 24**.

**And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” [Matthew 19:9 ESV]**

**“When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, [Deuteronomy 24:1 ESV]**

He echoes what God had described through Isaiah and Jeremiah.

**Thus says the LORD: “Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away. [Isaiah 50:1 ESV]**

**She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. [Jeremiah 3:8 ESV]**

Clearly, God had permitted divorce. A certificate of divorce freed a woman to be provided for by her family or another man. Without it, she’d be left out in no-man’s land (no pun intended), in a culture where a woman’s options for covering her basic needs did not include career, job, alimony, or government assistance. If a man were to put her out without divorce, she was stranded.

“Permitted” is quite a different word than “commanded.” And indeed, in **Malachi 2**, God declares His hatred not only towards divorce, but also for the consequences imparted on everyone it touches, particularly children. God wants godly offspring. Divorce wreaks unspeakable havoc, forcing children to endure the agony of custody tensions and courtroom controversies. Through the process of divorce, children will witness a model of selfishness and unfaithfulness. Many times they will find themselves as a pawn in a tug-of-war between embittered parents.

**And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."**  
[Malachi 2:13-16 ESV]

God's view of divorce is clearly addressed to the New Testament church by Paul in **1 Corinthians 7**. Paul addresses two categories of people: two married believers, and a believer married to an unbeliever. First, the two Christians:

**To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord** [he says, "not I, but the Lord" because he is echoing Jesus' words in Matthew 19]): **the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.** [1 Corinthians 7:10-11 ESV]

Clearly, two Christians should not divorce. Incompatibility is never a reason for divorce. However, it can be noted that in the case where one spouse lives in unconfessed adultery or ongoing desertion, the next verse seems to become applicable.

Second, the Christian married to an unbeliever:

**To the rest I say (I, not the Lord)** [Paul says, "I, not the Lord" because this is revelation from the Holy Spirit that Jesus did not verbalize] **that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy**

**because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?** [1 Corinthians 7:12-16 ESV]

So, while it's tempting to state in cut-and-dried Shammai philosophy that adultery provides a spouse automatic permission to divorce, that wasn't God's intention. We will agree with Jesus in promoting forgiveness first. Perhaps there is a chance that the believer's forgiveness will bring the adulterous spouse to salvation. And if the adulterous spouse repents, obedience would call for forgiveness - **Luke 17:1-10**. If the adulterous spouse does not repent, an attitude of forgiveness will be taken in the heart of the Christian, a readiness to forgive anything [**Matthew 6:14-15, Mark 11:25**].

We strongly believe that couples should not enter marriage lightheartedly, because they have been blinded by love. Marriage is a decision of cosmic importance, leading to a covenantal life change with serious, life-long ramifications. Paul's teaching on the importance of living sanctified lives echoes Ezra's teaching that changed the lives of the Israelites.

**And Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have broken faith and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. Now then make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives." Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do as you have said. But the people are many, and it is a time of heavy rain; we cannot stand in the open. Nor is this a task for one day or for two, for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. Let our officials stand for the whole assembly. Let all in our cities who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times, and with them the elders and judges of every city, until the fierce wrath of our God over this matter is turned away from us."** [Ezra 10:10-14 ESV]

In addressing the Corinthian church, Paul made it clear that just as in Ezra's day, marriage is bigger than you. In Ezra's day, unsaved spouses

had led a nation away from obedience, and that had to change. In Paul's day, for the church, the principle remained, but the fleshing out must be correctly understood. We see in **1 Corinthians 7: 14 and 16** that the purpose for marriage is for the sanctification of the spouse and the children. The ultimate aim of marriage is not that the Christian forces the unbeliever to stay but that the Christian lives with such grace that the spouse and children come to Christ.

**But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? [1Corinthians 7:12-16 ESV]**

In this consideration of God's view of divorce, notice how Peter implies that there is value in avoiding divorce, that there are ways to win the disobedient spouse to the Lord. His use of the word "likewise" reveals that even a marriage of suffering/reviling has value in that it is compared to Christ's experience, and provides an opportunity to imitate Christ as He suffered.

**For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ... When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly ... Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. [1Peter 2:21-3:2 ESV]**

And finally, we return once more to **Matthew 19:10-12**. After Jesus confronted the Pharisees with His strong stance against divorce, the disciples pondered as to whether not to marry would be better than to divorce. Jesus said we're not all called to the same marital status. We need to be content in any state to which He's called us.

1 Information on the teachings of Hillel and Shammai can be found in the Talmud, explained on various websites such as <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3190-bet-hillel-and-bet-shammai>; <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/D/divorce-in-the-old-testament.html>; <http://www.answers.com/topic/bet-shammai-and-bet-hillel#ixzz20jI2gGpg>; [http://halakhah.com/gittin/gittin\\_90.html](http://halakhah.com/gittin/gittin_90.html)

# 3. Practical Answers Based On God's Views



**Question 1:** Since both Jesus and Paul stated that it was better to be single, how does that impact Christian marriages?

Truly, life has a greater purpose than marriage. God created man to glorify and enjoy Him. For Jesus and Paul, and for many who treasure Christ above all, marriage may not be the best way to glorify God. Those who are married are encumbered with giving of themselves to a one-flesh relationship that requires time and sacrifice. Those who remain unmarried are better able to devote more hours of the day to God's service (**1 Corinthians 7:7-8**).

However, those who are married have great purpose in God's design. Marriage provides a wife the opportunity to hold the Gospel high by how she loves her husband/children and keeps the home (**Titus 2:4**); to show a watching world the church's submission to Christ (**Ephesians 5:22-24**); and to show angels how respect looks (**1 Corinthians 11:10, Proverbs 31:23**). In marriage, a husband is given the chance to paint a picture of Christ's sacrificial love for the church (**Ephesians 5:25-32**). Married couples are to imitate the relationship of the Father and Son (**1 Corinthians 11:3**). Married couples protect each other from temptation by faithful sex within the marriage (**1 Corinthians 7:2**). If the elders of FFC do not see a couple

prepared to meet the above purposes for marriage, wisdom would counsel the couple not to marry.

We've not yet met a couple, prior to marriage, who thinks they'll be part of the 50% who divorce. And no pastor has a crystal ball that sees into the future to know whether a couple would fulfill God's purpose for the marriage. However, Jesus advises us to watch fruit. Does a couple fulfill the roles God has designed for them as stated in **Ephesians 5:22-32**? Are they prepared to leave and cleave? Do they evidence the resolving of issues harmoniously? Will they exhibit the characteristics of love even if the spouse does not? Do they allow the Bible to destruct sky-scrapers of opinion that have built up in their minds? Do they submit to authority? Do they honor their parents? Do they confess and repent of sin? Are they faithful in other covenant relationships, such as the relationship with God's people, the local church? At FFC, these and other issues are dealt with in pre-marital counseling, and also in post-marital sessions that will take place a year or so after the wedding.

**Question 2:** What if a CBSer (couple or person) leave FFC to attend another church? Upon departure (from FFC), a divorce is pursued. They then return to FFC and cite biblical reason for the divorce. Now this couple, or individual, desires to start dating and possibly remarry.

This divorced person had not walked through the problems leading up to the divorce under the guidance of the elders. Nor had he or she permitted the church to hold him or her accountable to pursue reconciliation. Therefore, it would be impossible for the elders to understand whether there truly was desertion, or whether there was a pushing away from a biblical response. FFC would be responsible to due diligence in investigating any divorce that has taken place outside the realm of FFC, where the person's divorce experience didn't happen under the guidance of an FFC elder.



**Question 3:** What if a person who was under the authority of the church as a member (or CBSer) chose to leave the church before being disciplined for unfaithfulness?

Once a person places themselves under the authority of the church, claiming to be a believer, the Bible teaches that if they will not repent of sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, or swindling, they are to be “put away from among yourselves” and “do not even eat with such a person” (**1 Corinthians 5:11-13**).

**Question 4:** What if a believer wants to be married to an unbeliever?

At FFC, we will never knowingly marry an unbeliever to a believer. The example of **Ezra 9 and 10** and the clear commands of **1 Corinthians 6:14-18** speak to this issue. At FFC we will only marry two believers who are members in good standing of a biblical local church. The reason for this requirement is because we believe God would want every marriage to have the blessing of accountability. For example, if one or both spouses would fall to unfaithfulness, church discipline could call the sinner to repentance.

**Question 5:** What if a believer divorces a spouse because they “fell out of love,” were “clearly incompatible,” were “always fighting,” and/or because divorce would be better “for the children’s sake”?

This is a biblically problematic situation on at least two levels. First of all, a believer shouldn’t be the one pursuing a divorce, not even for adultery (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**). To do so would remove the opportunity to be a sanctifying agent in his or her life. Secondly, God hates divorce because it stains all involved with violence, including the children. Rather, for the sake of the children, the believer should seek to learn how a soft answer turns away wrath.

This reply must, however, include a sad addition. If the unfaithful spouse, for whatever reason, leaves, the believer is not bound (**1 Corinthians 7:15**). Indeed, the believer must

let the spouse go. The goal is peace without bitterness, which defiles many (**1 Corinthians 7:15, Hebrews 12:14-15**). This heart of forgiveness may lead to the salvation of the unfaithful spouse (**1 Corinthians 7:16**).

So, “for the children’s sake,” the believer should never initiate divorce. A wife will respect and submit to her husband with a quiet and gentle spirit (**1 Peter 3:1-4**). A husband will seek to understand and honor his wife (**1 Peter 3:7**). And “for the children’s sake” the believer will graciously and forgivingly let the departing spouse leave (**1 Corinthians 7:15**).

Two believers who divorce are to remain unmarried (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**). Their only biblical recourse would be reconciliation.

**Question 6:** What if a spouse is unfaithful and has pursued/finalized the divorce?

Keep in mind that we’re to forgive as Christ forgives (consider Hosea with his unfaithful wife Gomer). However, if the deserting spouse has refused reconciliation and finalized the divorce, this seems to be where Christ permits divorce.

**Question 7:** What is the biblical response when one partner of the couple seeking remarriage has been divorced, but is convinced that he or she had no fault in the divorce, and is able to clearly cite the sin of the spouse from whom they are divorced?

All divorce is the result of sin, and the divorced person who says they are not part of the sin of divorce has not faced the reality of the Gospel.

Unless an individual is confessing personal sin, they will only bring pride into the new marriage.

This point could be made after many of the questions – as in Paul’s day, there are situations where it would be wisest to stay as they are (**1 Corinthians 7:17 and 20**).

**Question 8:** A spouse is physically beating the other. The abused spouse comes seeking divorce.

Anytime there is demonstrated and evidenced physical abuse, there could never be a justification or cause for such a response. Abuse is not a question of right or wrong. It's only wrong. Neither could either spouse ever be justified in retaliating abuse with abuse.

Thus, in cases of physical abuse, the initial counsel is to separate and come for individual biblical counseling. It is illegal for the physically abused spouse to merely remain silent in allowing the abuse.

The abused spouse must obey God's Word in **Romans 13:1-5**, and also **1 Corinthians 7:12-17**. While removal from the situation with a heart of forgiveness and willingness to see the abuser repent may be necessary, the elders of FFC have never counseled or advised someone to pursue divorce, which is different from permitting divorce. In adherence to Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 19:6**, we would always counsel the attitude of forgiveness that trumps a hard heart.

**Question 9:** A husband has left his wife and is pulling the rug out from under her financially. Is this wife just to "let him go" because she is called to peace in **1 Corinthians 7:15**?

In **Deuteronomy 24:1** and **Exodus 21:7-11**, God permitted divorce for the breaking of marriage vows, including neglect and abuse. In **Romans 13:1-5**, God provides the government as a vehicle to provide protection. Throughout the entire process, though, the wife's heart must be growing in the forgiveness demanded of her, and a gentle and quiet spirit. Her aim is that he be saved. She would do well to seek the counsel of the elders, as well as the counsel of a biblical counselor.

**Question 10:** If a spouse divorces, marries another from whom there is separation whether by divorce or death, can the spouse go back and remarry the first spouse?

No. Once there has been divorce and remarriage to another, there is no return to the first spouse. **Deuteronomy 24:1-4** makes this very clear. Once there has been divorce, there has been an end to the relationship. However, this does not remove the possibility of reconciliation if there is not remarriage.

**And if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance. [Deuteronomy 24:2-4 ESV]**

**Question 11:** A couple wants to be married while remaining under the financial support of one or both sets of parents.

Marrying this couple would be at the discretion of the FFC pastors and elders, after consideration of how **Genesis 2:24** describes the first condition for marriage as "leave and cleave." A man is still an adolescent while financially dependent on his parents. He is mature enough for marriage when he can hold an adult job and be able to bring his expenses under his own income. If he were to marry, he and his wife would be able to bring their combined expenses under their combined income (**Proverbs 31:10-31**). Many a wife has helped her husband through school, but it was as his helper and not his protector. Parents, however, are not a man's helper. Before a man is married, he must be mature enough to accept and live by the concept of leaving and cleaving.

In order to honor the sanctity of marriage, before an FFC pastor agrees to marry a couple, both the couple and both sets of parents must agree to the FFC pre-engagement guidelines as set out in Chapter Four.

**Question 12:** A couple wants to be married without the blessing of both sets of parents.

This question would require careful investigation. It would be a very different situation if the couple were defiant or rebellious toward the parents' desires, than if the parents were upset because their children want a Christian wedding.

# 4. Therefore, Before Scheduling A Wedding At FFC...



**T**o help promote and protect Christian marriages, for a couple seeking to be married at Faith Fellowship Church (FFC), or by a pastor of FFC, the elders of FFC ask the following:

1. The groom contacts the pastor whom he desires to perform the marriage.
  - Both he and his fiancée are to be members in good standing of a biblical church.
2. The pastor notifies the administrative director of the Faith Fellowship Biblical Counseling Center, who arranges a meeting that may include:
  - The pastor who will perform the wedding.
  - The couple desiring to be married.
  - Both of their parents, if they are involved in the wedding/reception.
  - The family care elder, for spiritual accountability.
  - The family care deacon and his wife, who may call on the

care group to help in such ways as perhaps a rehearsal dinner.

- The FFC Event Coordinator.
  - Also, if one of the couple belongs to another church, that pastor is invited.
3. During the meeting, statements from the FFC Wedding Planner are reviewed to ensure that the couple (and parents if applicable), are in agreement with and willing to follow the policies of the FFC Wedding Planner.
  4. After the meeting, taking into consideration everything reviewed in this booklet, the pastor will determine whether he deems it wise to schedule dates for pre-marital sessions and a date for the wedding, or whether to inform the couple of elements they need to work on prior to scheduling a wedding date.
  5. If either of the couple has been divorced, in addition to the above-mentioned meeting, because the pastor's first responsibility is obedience to God and His Word, he will seek to determine whether the reasons for the divorce were biblical. This may include conversation with all parties involved, including former spouses and counselors.

Since the goal of the engagement is to prepare for the wedding, we do not deem it wise for the engagement period to surpass twelve months.

At any point in the pre-marital counseling process, if the pastor believes the marriage would not be in agreement with God's view of marriage, he will advise accordingly.

