

Review (51): "It's a Wonderful Life": Checklist for Personal Analysis: Circumstances that Allow for Remarriage: Death, Adultery, Desertion, Gimmicks

1- circumstances that allow for remarriage.

- 1) Physical Death. This is not a separation or divorce on the human level but divine termination of the corporation. And when God ends the physical life of a married person, that death frees the surviving spouse for remarriage.

Romans 7:2 - For the wife under the authority of her husband has been bound to her husband by law while he is living but if the husband has died she has been released by the law from her first husband.

1 Corinthians 7:39 - A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

- 2) Adultery. The willful violation of the marriage contract by either of the parties, through sexual intercourse with a third party. [*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "adultery."]

There is a question among theologians as to whether Jesus even allowed for remarriage of the innocent spouse in a divorce prompted by adultery. The exegesis of Matthew 19:1-9 seems to make it clear that He did allow for remarriage but it is confirmed by means of isagogics.

"Isagogic" is the English transliteration of the Greek word **εἰσαγωγή** / **eisagoge** / and means "introduction." Its plural form in the English refers to introductory studies in theology. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines "isagogics" as follows:

That department of theology that is introductory to exegesis, and is concerned with the literary and external history of the books of the Bible.

The principle behind isagogics is that the Bible must be interpreted in the time in which it was written. This requires the theologian to consider the historical context of the passage he is about to exegete.

"Exegesis" is the English transliteration of the Greek word **ἐξήγησις** / **exegesis** / and it means "interpreter." The word comes from Greek antiquity. The exegete was the one whose duty it was to interpret the religious and ceremonial laws, the signs in the heavens, and the oracles. In modern usage it refers to the explanation or exposition of a sentence, word, or passage, especially the interpretation of Scripture or a Scriptural passage. Today it refers to that branch of theological learning that deals with the interpretation of the Scriptures.

The principle behind exegesis is that the Bible must be interpreted by means of grammatical and etymological analysis of every word from its original languages.

Isagogics helps to establish the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious Zeitgeist of the passage being considered and thus helps answer the question, "What did the words about to be exegeted mean to the people who used and heard them in the context?"

From both isagogics and exegesis come the development of Categories, the classification of biblical doctrine according to its subject matter.

These three disciplines taken together result in the type of teaching that is typical from this pulpit. It is identified by the acrostic ICE: *I* for isagogics, *C* for Categories, and *E* for exegesis.

With this in mind we need to stress the context of the Matthew 19:1-9 passage from the standpoint of isagogics. Here then is that analysis:

1. The word used in context for “divorce” is the aorist active infinitive of the verb:
ἀπολύω / *apoluo* / - to set free; to divorce.
2. So you can see this in your English Bibles I will give you the occurrences of **ἀπολύω** in each verse of our passage, Matthew 19:3,7-9:
 - a. **KJV:** v. 3: “to put away”; v. 7: “to put her away”; v. 8: “to put away”; v. 9: “put away.”
 - b. **NIV:** v. 3: “to divorce”; v. 7: “send her away”; v. 8: “to divorce”; v. 9: “divorces.”
 - c. **NASV:** v. 3: “to divorce”; v. 7: “send her away”; v. 8: “to divorce”; v. 9: “divorces.”
3. In the first century A.D. this word for divorce was understood to mean both separation and right to remarry on the part of the innocent spouse.
4. The passage that is emphasized by the Pharisees is Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where remarriage is permitted.
5. The Pharisees also understood the word to include the idea of remarriage granted to the innocent party.
6. Since Jesus did not go to the effort to introduce and explain a new and different understanding of **ἀπολύω / *apoluo* /** which would deny an innocent spouse the right to remarry, then we cannot assume such a denial was intended or implied.

Therefore we may include adultery as the second reason for divorce that grants the right to remarry.

- 3) **Desertion:** The abandonment without consent or legal justification of a person and the associated obligations and duties. Abandonment suggests that the thing or person left may be helpless without protection. Desertion implies that the object left may be weakened but not destroyed by one’s absence.

1 Corinthians 7:15 - But if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the Christian husband or wife is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us in the sphere of tranquility.

1. The word “leave” is the present middle indicative of the verb **χωρίζω / *chorizo* /** and means to separate oneself in marital affairs. It can refer to divorce or desertion.

present: Aoristic; in the Greek language the indicative mood cannot express the idea of a present fact without reference to progress. The aorist indicative is used to convey this idea with reference to past time. Thus, the aoristic present sets forth an event as now occurring, that is, punctiliar action in present time. The unbelieving spouse is leaving. He or she may or may not file for divorce but either way, the unbelieving partner just up and leaves.

middle: The unbelieving spouse takes the initiative in the action of the verb.

indicative: A statement of fact. Desertion is what actually occurs as the result of the first class condition “but if the unbelieving one leaves (and he or she does).”

2. What follows next is the same verb but this time the present middle imperative, “let him leave.” The imperative mood is a commandment to let the unbelieving partner go through desertion or divorce.

3. There are two reasons the unbelieving spouse would choose to leave, (1) because he is unable to remain married to a spouse who is part of a spiritual life for which he has no attraction or interest, or (2) the believing spouse has become so hard to live with through coercion, intimidation, or legalism that the unbelieving spouse concludes he cannot remain in that environment.
4. Regardless, the believer spouse has become the innocent party in an unbiblical divorce. Why unbiblical?
5. Because when a divorce occurs there is always a guilty party and an innocent party. The innocent party may ask for a divorce because of adultery or because of desertion. If the guilty party asks for a divorce for reasons other than these it results in what we call divorce gimmicks.
6. In the case of desertion the innocent party is not divorced but is simply abandoned without his or her consent. This can result in detrimental impact on the innocent party. If a man, he must work to provide for the children but has no way of caring for them. If a woman, she must care for the children but in order to do so she must begin work.
7. If the unbelieving partner chooses to leave, the believing partner is advised to let that person go.
8. If the guilty party obtains no divorce then the act is considered to be desertion. The term used in English law is “abandonment” and is defined as follows by:

Black, Henry Campbell. *Black's Law Dictionary*. Rev. 4th ed. St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1968; p.11:

The act of a husband or a wife who leaves his or her consort willfully, and with an intention of causing perpetual separation.

Abandonment as cause for divorce must be willful and intentional without intention of returning and without consent of the spouse abandoned.

Abandonment justifying divorce is a voluntary, unjustified, and final separation of one of the married parties from the other.

9. Therefore, English law agrees with Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:15 that the innocent party may file for divorce and remarry. Paul's word is the perfect passive indicative of the verb **δουλόω / *doulōō*** / which means to be totally bound to another.
 10. However, with it is the negative particle **οὐ / *ou*** / meaning the innocent party is no longer held to the marriage bond and thus is free to remarry.
- 4) Divorce Gimmicks: This is anything used to obtain a divorce that does not fall under reason two and three above: adultery and desertion. Many Israelites used the concept of “uncleanness” to drum up reasons to divorce their wives.

Deuteronomy 24:1 - “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it comes to pass that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found in her a matter of shame, then he writes her a certificate of divorce and he places it in her hands, and he sends her out of the house.

1. “A matter of shame” is translated in the KJV with the phrase “has found some uncleanness in her.” The NIV has “he finds something indecent about her” and the NASV is similar with “he has found some indecency in her.”

2. The Hebrew word found here is **'erwa / err-VAH /** and means “nakedness” or a “matter of shame.”
3. Nakedness became a matter of human shame after the Fall of Adam and Ishah. Prior to then, as is stated in:

Genesis 2:25 - The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

4. This is still true but only in the environment of marriage. Modesty is a virtue and nakedness is shameful but not between right man and right woman. In fact, this becomes a verification of the doctrine when after marriage the husband and wife are “both naked and are not ashamed.”
5. However, after the Fall but before salvation, Adam and Ishah were ashamed of their nakedness.

Genesis 3:7 - Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

v 8 - And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

v 9 - Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

v 10 - And he said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”

6. Thus subsequent to the Fall nakedness is looked on as the symbol of human shame and is no longer acceptable outside the boundaries of marriage.
7. Therefore, in Deuteronomy 24:1, the Hebrew word **'erwa / err-VAH /**, translated “uncleanness” or “indecent,” is literally “nakedness.” But it refers to the “matter of shame” associated with that nakedness, namely, the act of adultery.