

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Topical Bulletin, October 2017

There is very much confusion and differing opinions these days about what is right and what is wrong in regards to marriage, divorce, adultery and fornication. Hence in this month's ILC Topical Bulletin the question to be considered is: ***What does God say about marriage, divorce, adultery, and fornication?***

Before proceeding with Biblically-based answers to the aforementioned multi-faceted question, definitions for the terms involved will be provided from Noah Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, which is preferable to any of the modern dictionaries when defining moral terms because Noah Webster considered "education useless without the Bible" and therefore utilized God's written Word as a key to the meaning of words. Webster frequently referred to Biblical Hebrew and Greek words, and he also referenced Latin, French, Spanish, German, and Italian since many English words have their origin from those languages. Hence, consider the following word-definitions carefully, for they are reproduced as they appear in the 1828 dictionary and include Biblical references where Noah Webster provided them. [Note: all underlining is for emphasis as pertains to the subject matter of this topical bulletin and is mine. (m.e.l.)]

MAR'RIAGE, n. L. *mas, maris.*

The act of uniting a man and woman for life; wedlock; the legal union of a man and woman for life. Marriage is a contract both civil and religious, by which the parties engage to live together in mutual affection and fidelity, till death shall separate them. Marriage was instituted by God himself for the purpose of preventing the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, for promoting domestic felicity, and for securing the maintenance and education of children.

Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled. Heb.13.

1. *A feast made on the occasion of a marriage.*

The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king, who made a marriage for his son. Matt.22.

2. *In a scriptural sense, the union between Christ and his church by the covenant of grace. Rev.19.*

DIVORCE, n. L. *see Divert.*

1. *A legal dissolution of the bonds of matrimony, or the separation of husband and wife by a judicial sentence. This is properly called a divorce, and called technically, divorce a vinculo matrimonii.*

2. *The separation of a married woman from the bed and board of her husband, a mensa et thoro.*

3. *Separation; disunion of things closely united.*

4. *The sentence or writing by which marriage is dissolved.*

5. *The cause of any penal separation.*

The long divorce of steel falls on me.

ADUL'TERY, n. L. *adulterium*. See *Adulterate*.

1. Violation of the marriage bed; a crime, or a civil injury, which introduces, or may introduce, into a family, a spurious offspring.

By the laws of Connecticut, the sexual intercourse of any man, with a married woman, is the crime of adultery in both: such intercourse of a married man, with an unmarried woman, is fornication in both, and adultery of the man, within the meaning of the law respecting divorce; but not a felonious adultery in either, or the crime of adultery at common law, or by statute. This latter offense is, in England, proceeded with only in the ecclesiastical courts.

In common usage, adultery means the unfaithfulness of any married person to the marriage bed. In England, Parliament grant absolute divorces for infidelity to the marriage bed in either party; and the spiritual courts divorce a mensa et thoro.

2. In a scriptural sense, all manner of lewdness or unchastity, as in the seventh commandment. [sixth commandment as we Lutherans number them. (m.e.l.)]

3. *In scripture, idolatry, or apostasy from the true God. Jer. 3.*

4. *In old laws, the fine and penalty imposed for the offense of adultery.*

5. *In ecclesiastical affairs, the intrusion of a person into a bishopric, during the life of the bishop.*

6. *Among ancient naturalists, the grafting of trees was called adultery, being considered as an unnatural union.*

FORNICA'TION, n. L. *fornicatio*.

1. The incontinence or lewdness of unmarried persons, male or female; also, the criminal conversation of a married man with an unmarried woman.

2. *Adultery. Matt. 5.*

3. *Incest. 1 Cor. 5.*

4. *Idolatry; a forsaking of the true God, and worshipping of idols. 2 Chron. 21. Rev. 19.*

Now we will look at each subject in the light of the Holy Bible, for “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV)

MARRIAGE: the lifelong union of one man and one woman unto one flesh, instituted by God Himself.

¹⁸And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.* ¹⁹And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. ²⁰And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. ²¹And

the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;²² And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.²³ And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.²⁴ Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:18-24 KJV)

COMMENT: Observe that the words “man” and “wife” are singular, which is the case in the original Hebrew as well as in our English Bible. Hence, polygamy was never God’s design for marriage. Additionally, marriage as instituted by God is only to be between one man and one woman, not between two men or two women; hence, so-called same-sex marriages are a perversion of holy wedlock and are quite unholy. Furthermore, couples simply shacking-up without being married are obviously sinning against God’s design for man and woman.

“⁶But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.⁷ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;⁸ And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.⁹ What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Mark 10:6-9 KJV) “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” (Proverbs 18:22 KJV)

COMMENT: Note again that marriage as instituted by God is to be only between one man and one woman, is to be a lifelong union, and is the closest bond between two people. Additionally, the Lord looks favorably upon those who marry.

¹Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*² Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.³ Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.⁴ The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.⁵ Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-5 KJV) “Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward.” (Psalm 127:3 KJV) “Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” (Hebrews 13:4 KJV)

COMMENT: The term “whoremongers” as found in Hebrews 13:4 is translated from the Greek root word πορνός (pornos) and means: 1) a man who prostitutes his body to another’s lust for hire 2) a male prostitute 3) a man who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse, a fornicator. [Definition is from the abridged Thayer’s Greek/English Lexicon] Thus, the only place sexual relations are to take place between a man and a woman is within the bonds of matrimony for mutual kindness and satisfaction as well as procreation. Any sexual relations outside of marriage constitute what is known as adultery or fornication. Again, note that couples simply shacking-up without being married are obviously sinning against God’s will and design.

“¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple

of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16 KJV) “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3 KJV)

COMMENT: The two preceding Scripture passages are relevant to the subject of marriage because they emphasize the fact that it is God’s desire that a believer marry a believer— a Christian man should marry a Christian woman; a Christian woman should marry a Christian man. Indeed, the married couple should preferably share the same faith in order that harmony be promoted and preserved in their wedded life together.

“²²Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ²⁴Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” (Ephesians 5:22-28 KJV) “¹But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: ²That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. ³The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; ⁴That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” (Titus 2:1-5 KJV) “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7 KJV)

COMMENT: Observe that God-pleasing marriage includes mutual love and respect of the husband to his wife and the wife to her husband, and their willingness to fulfill their God-appointed duties in their marriage— despite what the wicked world says and practices to the contrary.

DIVORCE: The public written legal declaration that the marriage tie has been broken; the civil disunion of the married couple.

“³¹It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: ³²But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” (Matthew 5:31-32 KJV) “³The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? ⁴And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, ⁵And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? ⁶Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ⁷They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? ⁸He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth

adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” (Matthew 19:3-9 KJV)

“¹Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? ²For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. ³So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” (Romans 7:1-3 KJV) “¹⁰And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: ¹¹But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife. ¹²But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. ¹³And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. ¹⁵But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.” (1 Corinthians 7:10-15 KJV)

COMMENT: The expression “writing of divorcement” (in the passages from Matthew’s Gospel) is a translation of the Greek word ἀποστασιον (apostasion) which is closely related to the English word “apostasy” which means to desert; to abandon a belief or principal. Likewise, in a divorce the husband and wife abandon one another. Thus, in accord with the Scriptures quoted above, GOD’S RULE IS: NO DIVORCE! However, a marriage is dissolved by the death of the husband or the wife, and the remaining living party is free to remarry. Furthermore, there are two exceptions to God’s rule of NO DIVORCE: (1) divorce is permitted – but not required, as reconciliation is preferred – if husband or wife is guilty of fornication or adultery; and, (2) divorce is permitted if one maliciously deserts one’s spouse. Malicious desertion is actually spitefully and physically deserting one’s spouse with no intention of ever returning. It is not malicious desertion when a husband or a wife relocates temporarily for job purposes because of dire financial circumstances, or is in military service, or seeks counseling because of an alcohol problem or some other problem and must be away for a time. It is sinful when marriage is treated lightly and divorce is sought and welcomed at the first sign of any disagreement or difficulty between husband and wife— as is frequently the case these days.

ADULTERY and FORNICATION: closely related terms as used in Holy Scripture, for *adultery* in a specific sense means *unfaithfulness in marriage*, and in a general sense means *any impurity or unchastity*; while *fornication* means *any illicit sexual behavior in thoughts, words, or deeds by married or unmarried persons— including not only heterosexual intercourse between unmarried people, but also pedophilia, homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality*. Interestingly, the Greek word most often translated *fornication* is πορνεία (porneia) from which comes the English word ‘pornography’.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Exodus 20:14 KJV) “²⁷Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28 KJV) “¹⁹For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” (Matthew 15:19-20 KJV) “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that

which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” (Ephesians 4:29 KJV) “³But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; ⁴Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” (Ephesians 5:3-5 KJV) “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” (1 Corinthians 6:18 KJV)

COMMENT: It is obvious from the foregoing Bible passages that God forbids not only the actual deeds of adultery and fornication, but also all lustful sexual thoughts and perverse speech— including dirty jokes, filthy pornographic books, magazines, movies, and web-sites.

If we are honest we must all admit that we need to daily and sincerely repent of our sins of thought, word, and deed; for, “⁵God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:5-10 KJV)

Let us regularly pray to the Lord for strength to do His will in living a chaste and decent life in word and deed, including every married person loving and honoring his or her spouse. Indeed, let us strive to live a holy life that we may show our thanks to God for the redemption we have in Christ Jesus our Savior. Yes, with the help of God, let us, “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” (1 Peter 2:11 KJV) “³For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: ⁴That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 KJV)

God’s blessings in Christ,
Pastor Mark Latsch