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obsolete.

Dear Friend,

You asked about the subject of Divorce and Re-marriage.

A fundamental teaching of the Worldwide Church of God is that marriage is a Divine institution ordained by God. Marriage symbolizes both the God-plane relationship of the Family of God and the relationship between Christ and the Church. The sanctity and seriousness of marriage must continuously be stressed.

The following points succinctly summarize the present Church teaching on divorce and remarriage.

The Church accepts new converts in whatever marital state they enter the Church--I Corinthians 7:20-24. Acts of adultery and other sins which may have dissolved a prior marriage are forgiven (along with all other past sins) at baptism--Acts 2:38; 3:19; Romans 3:25. A previously divorced person who has entered fellowship is free to remarry within the Church (I Cor. 7:27, 28, 39).

So far as the Church is concerned, there are only three scriptural reasons why Church members may divorce each other--with subsequent rights of remarriage.

a) Fraud: ^{is not different to (b) Christ defines Fraud as Fornication} This amounts to an annulment, though divorce is usually required to terminate the marriage. The marriage covenant was made under false pretense. One party later finds that he or she has been defrauded and decides to take action. (Deut. 22:13-21--The spirit of this scripture may be applied to other acts of fraud besides the pretext of virginity.)

b) Porneia: This is the well-known "exception clause" stated by Christ. The term includes all illicit sexual activity (before or after marriage) including fornication, adultery, harlotry, homosexuality, etc. The offending party becomes "defiled" in the eyes of the offended party (Deut. 24:4; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:9, etc).

c) Desertion: If one member of a marriage is-- or becomes--an "unbeliever," and deserts his or her mate--not being "pleased to dwell with her/him"--the offended party is freed from obligation. He or she may formalize the separation and any subsequent divorce (I Cor. 7:15).

While the Church allows its members to divorce and remarry under the above biblical conditions, it does not recommend it. God says He hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). Rather than encouraging divorce the Church insists that every possible effort be made to reconcile the offended parties. Forgiveness is an intrinsic part of the Christian character (Matt. 6:14-15). The Church lends its counselling services to aid in achieving such reconciliations.

It is the responsibility of the God-ordained ministry of the Church of God to give sober and considered advice--based on biblical teachings, principles and examples; seeking God's discernment and understanding--to those who seek counsel on matters of marriage, divorce and remarriage.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT