

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

By Maurice Barnett

"But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife." (I Corinthians 7:10-11, ASV)

On any subject, there are two very real dangers we must avoid. *First*, we cannot interpret scripture to approve the acts of people when *God does not allow* such acts. We cannot set aside scripture just to make things easier for people to do whatever they want. *Second*, we must not interpret scripture so as to insert rules that are not found there. We are not law makers but law followers. Both courses are equally wrong, going beyond the word of God.

Some people claim verse eleven allows one to leave a spouse for any reason, such as "I just don't want to be married any longer." They assume that it's all right as long as they "remain unmarried." No, this passage is not a loophole to evade marital duties (I Corinthians 7:2-3). Profligate shirking of responsibilities for personal and selfish reasons is not authorized here nor anywhere else in the Bible.

Some have even tried to use this passage for the "waiting game." They think that this passage allows them to leave their spouse for any reason. The process is: One can craftily leave his spouse without getting a civil dissolution of the marriage contract at the court house. He waits, perhaps for years, for the spouse to weaken and sin. *Then* a civil dissolution of the contract is obtained "*because of fornication*" He can then marry another without sin for he has now "put away" his spouse for fornication. Another version of the same thing is to get the dissolution of the civil contract, and then wait for the

other party to commit fornication, perhaps twenty years later. He then can mentally say, "I am now putting you away for fornication," which frees him to remarry without sin. No, that abuses Matthew 19:9; their definition of "put away" is in error. "Put away" refers to the physical breakup of the relationship. The cause for the physical breakup must be for fornication. This means the fornication must precede the physical breakup of the relationship, the putting away, not some mental repudiation occurring twenty years afterward. I Corinthians 7:10-11 certainly doesn't authorize anything like that; to the contrary.

Others interpret verse 10 ("depart not") in such a way as to deny verse 11. It is thus insisted that no one can "depart" under any circumstance except fornication.

Yet, others claim that non-Christians are not obligated to obey what Jesus said in Matthew 19:3-12 on marriage, divorce and remarriage; they say that such marriage laws apply only to Christians. They interpret I Corinthians 7:10-15 in a way that they think will prove their conclusion. Or, they will agree that Matthew 19:9 applies, but insist I Corinthians 7:15 is another exception that allows the Christian to marry another. Though we will touch on some areas of this issue, the purpose of this article is focused primarily on verses 10-11.

Basic Rules, And Exceptions

We all know that God gives us specific rules that apply in all circumstances. He, also, may give some exception, or exceptions, to such rules. However, *God is the only one* who can make the exceptions and *any exceptions must be specified in His word*. We don't have the authority, ourselves, to make any exceptions to

God's laws, though some have always *tried* to do so. Let's look at some instances of exceptions to laws that God put in His word.

(1) The Old Testament required that no work be done on the Sabbath, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, Exodus 16:29, 35:3. Implying servile work and business, the law said that the Jews *were to work and labor* for six days. The Sabbath was a rest from such labors. (One man was stoned to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath, Numbers 15:32-36.) *Within* the Law of Moses, there are two exceptions to the basic rule that the Jews overlooked. The first exception relates to sacrifices offered in the temple on the Sabbath, Numbers 28:9-10. Referring to this, Jesus said in Matthew 12:5 that the priests *profane the Sabbath* and are guiltless. The God that gave the Sabbath law also gave the law of sacrifices. God had the right to make any exception that set aside the basic rule. The second exception relates to the law of circumcision in Leviticus 12:3. All male babies were to be circumcised on the eighth day, even if that day was the Sabbath. Jesus referred to this in John 7:22-23, that "the law of Moses be not broken." One law modified the other.

(2) I Peter 2:13 tells us to "be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Along with other like passages, we understand this is universal in nature, the basic law. However, this rule is set aside when there is a conflict with what God wants us to do, Acts 4:19-20.

(3) Luke 16:18 states the basic law that whoever puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery. There is one exception given, fornication, which will allow the remarriage of the *innocent* party without sin, Matthew 19:9. The exception sets aside the basic rule. However, an unbeliever leaving a Christian, I Corinthians 7:15, is not another exception to Matthew 19:9. (See my booklet, *Alien Sinner And The Law of Christ*.)

The basic law in I Corinthians 7:10-11 is: "I give charge ... the wife depart not from her husband ... and

the husband leave not his wife." This expresses a *command*, as suggested by the word "charge" (*paragello*) and other terms. However, "let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband" also contains commands. Both "let her remain" and "be reconciled" are *imperatives*. The first is a present imperative and the latter an aorist imperative. She is commanded as much to remain unmarried as she is to be reconciled; and she is commanded as much to remain unmarried as she is not to depart in the first place.

Some have questioned this by saying that verse 11 *couldn't* contain an *exception* to law and and yet *be law at the same time*. There are two things amiss with that objection. First, any *exception* to the basic law of "depart not" isn't in verse 11; it only identifies that there *is* an exception. Second, it expresses a misunderstanding of *contingency legislation*, a common form in the Bible. Such laws come into effect *only* if a particular course is taken. Otherwise, they are not activated. It is "if ... then" legislation, found in verse 11 and other passages in I Corinthians 7.

The Parenthesis

A parenthesis is "a qualifying or explanatory word, phrase, clause, sentence, or other sequence of forms which interrupts the syntactic construction without otherwise affecting it, having often a characteristic intonation, and shown in writing by commas, parentheses, or dashes," *American College Dictionary*. The syntactic construction of verses 10-11 is: "But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband ... and that the husband leave not his wife." The parenthesis appears between "depart" (*choristhenai*) and "leave" (*aphienai*), two infinitives acting as indirect commands. The parenthesis is an aside, an interruption, an explanation of something involved in the main line of thought.

The parenthesis says: "but should she depart, let her remain unmar-

ried, or else be reconciled to her husband." "Or else" comes from a disjunctive conjunction, a particle that means *or, or else*. For example, Matthew 6:24 says: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, *or else* he will hold to one, and despise the other." Thayer says it means "to distinguish things or thoughts which either mutually exclude each other, or one of which can take the place of the other," p. 275. Clearly, there is an either /or choice given in the parenthesis.

"Let her remain," is from a single word in Greek, *meno*. The word means to remain, to stay where you are, to abide, to remain in the state in which you find yourself, *Bauer Greek Lexicon*, pp. 503-504. Other authorities agree with this. The *grammatical form* of the word, *meno*, in "Let her remain" is *meneto*, third person, singular, present imperative. Besides the definition of the word *meno*, the *present imperative* shows it is a command to do something constantly, to continue to do it. The grammatical form joins perfectly with the definition of the word. To support that understanding further, let's look at some other passages that use the *same form* of *meno*, (*meneto*) as in I Corinthians 7:11.

I Corinthians 7:20 says, "Let each man *abide* in that calling wherein he was called." It's evident that the man is expected to remain in that calling. Verse 24 says, "Brethren, *let* each man, wherein he was called, therein *abide* with God." It is "Let each man *abide*," in both passages, just like "let her remain" in verse 11, (*meneto*). Hebrews 13:1 says, "Let love of the brethren *continue*." I John 2:24 says, "let that *abide* in you which ye heard from the beginning." These passages are very clear in their meaning.

Likewise, *meneto* in I Corinthians 7:11 tells the woman *to abide, continue to live* in an unmarried condition, *or else* be reconciled to her husband. Here is the point, so please take note: whatever the circumstances of why she departed and became "unmar-

ried," she does not sin in the "departing" of this context.

Others have said that "let her remain unmarried" means unmarried *only* in regard to *men other than the husband*. They say that she cannot remain unmarried to her husband but rather must be reconciled to the husband to be saved. In that event, we would have to reword the parenthesis to say "she must not marry another man but rather must return to the husband." Compare that with "let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband." Those two versions are not even close to one another.

Some have tried to establish a parallel between I Corinthians 7:10-11 and I John 2:1. The latter verse says, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." This "parallel" is supposed to go this way: It is always wrong to sin; we are commanded not to sin. But, if any man does sin, he must return to God or be lost. Likewise, Paul commands the woman not to depart from her husband and she will sin if she departs. So, her only recourse to escape sin is to be reconciled to her husband.

I agree that no one can remain in sin. However, to claim that I John 2:1 parallels I Corinthians 7:10-11 is so obviously false that I'm surprised at the attempt to use it. The passages are not parallel in either grammatical form or instruction. To make it parallel, we would have to rewrite I John 2:1 to read, "don't sin, but if any man does sin, let him remain in sin, or else be reconciled to God." However, there is no either/or, no term like *meno*, nor the present imperative in I John 2:1.

Let's just assume for the sake of argument that I John 2:1 is a sinful condition that exactly parallels I Corinthians 7:10-11. In that event, the woman who does depart is *always in a sinful condition regardless of circumstances* as long as she remains apart! One writer said, "Neither passage

both prohibits and permits at the **same time!**" Yet, *the very ones who say this* tell us that if the husband *won't* take her back, *then* she is to remain unmarried, apparently without sin. Now, I John 2:1, in keeping with other scriptures, teaches that a person who is in sin is eternally lost unless he returns to God. If that is a "parallel" to I Corinthians 7:10-11, the woman who leaves her husband remains in sin as long as the separation **lasts, regardless of whether he will take her back or not!** Again, we would have to reword the passage: "If she departs she must quickly be reconciled to her husband in order to escape sin, but if he won't take her back, *then* she is to remain unmarried and is sinless in doing so." Now, try to make *that* a parallel to I John 2:1!

I Corinthians 7:5 says: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency." The word "defraud" is a present, active imperative in this sentence and with the negative (*me*) creates a prohibition *command*, "defraud not." It is as much a command as "depart not" in verse 10. So, why would it not be **in all circumstances sinful for a person** to "defraud" his mate? Since it is a command, would not the person be in sin as long as he was not "together" with his spouse and fulfilling all **marital duties? Why not make this passage a parallel with I John 2:1? You see,** Paul commanded not to defraud your mate. If you do, you are in sin and will be lost unless you "reconcile" with the mate and resume your duties; this is "parallel" to the "parallel" some make with I John 2:1. Well, the reason it is not sinful under all circumstances to "defraud" your mate is because of the exception given. The exception temporarily sets aside the command. The passage both prohibits and permits at the same time.

In the same way, to say that I Corinthians 7:10-11 "does not prohibit

and permit at the same time" is to say it contrary to even a casual reading of the passages. Even those who claim it doesn't prohibit and permit at the same time wind up saying that it does!

Depart And Leave

The terms for "depart," *chorizo*, and "leave," *aphiemi*, are used as synonyms in I Corinthians 7. According to verse 12, if the unbeliever is "content to dwell" with him, the believer is "not to leave" her, (*aphiemi*). The same is true about the believing woman in verse 13, "let her not leave," (*aphiemi*), the unbelieving husband. However, the instruction in verse 15 is that if the unbeliever "departs," (*chorizo*), "let him depart," (*chorizo*).

In verse 10, the wife is not to "depart," (*chorizo*), from the husband. In verse 11, she "departs," (*chorizo*), etc. — the husband is not to "leave," (*aphiemi*), his wife. So, she's not to depart (*chorizo*), and he's not to leave (*aphiemi*). It's evident that *chorizo* and *aphiemi* are used as synonyms.

Both terms, primarily, mean just to separate oneself, to leave, depart, etc. **However, whatever the words (*chorizo*, *aphiemi*) mean,** (just a separation and/or a dissolution of the civil contract at the court house), the question is "how does verse 11 fit into the picture?"

"Not I, but the Lord" ... "I say, not the Lord"

The Corinthians had sent to Paul some questions on several subjects: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote," verse 1. It's apparent from the whole Corinthian letter that the church was confused and divided on a number of items. Many things Paul had taught them when he was there now had been discarded, twisted, or had simply become matters of confusion and division (see 11:2,23).

Answering one of their questions, verse 10, Paul says "I give charge, **yea not I, but the Lord.**" **The reader is** thus referred to something specific Jesus had already said.

In Matthew 19:3-12, Jesus presents God's law that had been in effect since the creation of man. *Because He made them male and female "from the beginning,"* God said that a man will leave father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two will become one flesh. The rules governing marriage are found in the sex distinction of male and female, *rooted in the whole human race, not just a part of it.* The "cleaving" and becoming "one flesh" refer to the *physical relationship* established. Jesus adds: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," (*chorizo*). The Jews' question, in verse 3, was about "putting away," referring to the *physical* separation of the man and wife. Though man *does have* the ability to divide (*chorizo*) that physical relationship, Jesus said *don't do it.* Later, when Paul said that the wife was not to depart (*chorizo*) from the husband, he was referring to what Jesus Himself had said, Matthew 19:6. *Keep this point in mind!* Paul was not pointing back to Matthew 19:9 but rather to the statement of Matthew 19:6!

The Corinthians had written Paul *specific* questions about how to handle the *relationship* when one is a believer and the other an unbeliever, I Corinthians 7:12-16. Paul begins his comments in verse 12 with "I say, not the Lord." This means that, while on earth, Jesus did not say anything *specifically* about all of the problems of a believer /unbeliever relationship. But, neither did the Lord say anything specifically about the unmarried and widows, as Paul does in verses 8-9. Paul introduces those verses with "But I say," as he does in verse 12. In verse 25, he says: "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give my judgment..." In answering the question of the Corinthians, Paul says that not only did Jesus not say anything about this, but he had no revelation by the Holy Spirit about it either. The answer to the question involved a matter of judgment about what was most expedient, so Paul gave them his best opinion and iden-

tifies it as such.

Because of the statement "But I say, not the Lord," some have immediately concluded that the believer/unbeliever marriage is not under the same rules as a marriage of two believers and so none of Matthew 19 applies. However, *that's a mistake the Corinthians also made!* They obviously thought that just because their spouse was an unbeliever that they could, or should, leave them. Paul said in both verses, 12 and 13, "don't leave!" *That's just what he said in verses 10-11, which is what Jesus said in Matthew 19:6.* From that standpoint, the instructions are the same. The marriage laws of leaving and cleaving and not putting asunder, that are set from the beginning, apply to the believer and unbeliever alike whether they recognize it or not. Some of what Paul says about the believer/unbeliever relationship is not found in what Jesus said, but *some of it is!*

An unbeliever might not want to stay with a believer because of the believer's faith. The unbeliever would not feel obligated to follow the teachings of Jesus as the Christian would. Paul said don't leave if the unbeliever is "content to dwell" with you. The word "content" is from *suneudokeo* which Thayer, page 604, says means "to be pleased together with, to approve together (with others) ... to be pleased at the same time with, consent, agree to." It refers to a joint agreement (*sun*) between the believer and the unbeliever that they will maintain an amicable and amiable relationship. (In this sense, there is a similarity to the mutual consent and approval of verse 5. The believer could "defraud" the unbeliever with the unbeliever's approval in order to engage in spiritual activity, and then be together with him again.) The ideal amiability of this "agreement" is also seen in verse 14. First, the unbeliever is "sanctified" in the believer. Second, if the believer leaves because she thought there was something wrong with being married to an unbeliever, it would, in ef-

fect, be charging that her children are "unclean."

Paul says that if the unbeliever is content to dwell with the believer, the Christian is not to leave. *That implies* that if the unbeliever is not content to dwell with the Christian, then the Christian *can* leave. (It may be that, though not agreeing on an amiable relationship with the believer, the unbeliever decides to stay in the house to try to destroy the Christians' faith, or generally make things miserable for the believer.) If the believer departs, *at that point* verse 11 comes into effect. That means she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to the husband. The believer and unbeliever are married, are they not? That's just what verses 10-11 are talking about: those who are married. The difference is that verses 12-13 deal with married people where one is an unbeliever. So, the Christian is told not to depart in verses 12-13 *just like* he is told not to depart in verses 10-11. (On the other hand, it's useless to tell unbelievers not to depart because if they cared anything about what God said they wouldn't be unbelievers.)

Let's carry that one step further. If the Christian can leave the unbeliever in order to retain her faith and full service to God, but must remain unmarried, why should we conclude that if the *unbeliever leaves* because of the faith of the Christian, then the Christian can marry someone else? (For a full discussion of I Corinthians 7:15, see my booklet, before mentioned.)

Exception For Verse 11

We know that Jesus said something directly relating to I Corinthians 7:10. Now the question is: Did *the Lord say anything* that directly relates to verse 11 as well? The answer is, yes!

Luke 18:29-30: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in

this time, and in the world to come eternal life." The word "left" in this passage is *aphiemi*, as in I Corinthians 7:11 which says the husband is not to leave (*aphiemi*) his wife. Jesus said that if a man "left" his wife for the Kingdom of God's sake, he would receive blessings in this life and eternal life to come. Why is it that Paul commands that a husband is not to leave his wife, but Jesus said that if he does he will be blessed? Is there a contradiction? No!

Jesus had chosen his apostles and personally called each of them to follow Him. To obey that call, they had to abandon things and relationships. Luke 18:28 records, "And Peter said, Lo, we have left (*aphiemi*) our own, and followed thee." That prompted the response of Jesus in verses 29-30. They had to do whatever was necessary to obey what Jesus commanded. If it meant leaving everything they had and dropping all relationships, then that's what had to be done. Paul had that attitude, Philippians 3:7-8. Keep in mind that the apostles had a *specific* call by the Lord for a *specific* work. However, the *principle* remains the same for all disciples.

In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus deals with excuses of others than the apostles when He said to them, "Follow me." One wanted to first go bury his father. Jesus said "Leave (*aphiemi*) the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God." Another wanted to "bid farewell to them that are at my house." Jesus considered a person like that as not "fit for the kingdom of God." That reminds us of Luke 18:28-30. If one "leaves" everything, including "wife" for *"the kingdom of God's sake,"* he will be blessed. If there is anything or anyone standing in our way of doing what God commands us to do, then we must abandon it, or them, as Jesus insisted.

I Corinthians 7:5 shows the same principle: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not be-

cause of your incontinency." This views a couple who mutually agree to temporarily set aside marital duties for spiritual reasons. If we can understand such a setting aside of marital duties in verse 5, we can also see it in verse 11 and Luke 18. Verse 11 deals with a more serious aspect of the same thing when it is necessary to unilaterally leave a spouse and remain apart for spiritual reasons.

The basic law is that one is not to leave his spouse whether he is married to a believer *or* unbeliever. However, the *exception* to that basic law is that God comes before a wife or husband *just like* any other relationship. Any departure *must be* "for the kingdom of God's sake." Mark 10:29-30, a parallel passage, says "for my sake and for the gospel's sake." Jesus said that some make themselves *eunuchs* "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," Matthew 19:12.

We all have lamented when some person allowed a parent, son or daughter, wife or husband, or another relative to stop them from obeying the gospel. We have pointed out to them that Matthew 10:34-38 says we are to love Him more than we do father, mother, children, etc., that *we must put Him first above all relationships*. It's said again in Luke 14:26: "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Is anyone ready to say that *relationships come first in our lives and God must take second place*? Apparently, there are some who do think that way. Objection is made to the position I have presented here, saying something like: "Are we to abandon our parents for the kingdom of heaven's sake? Are we to abandon our children for the kingdom of heaven's sake?" The wording and thrust of the questions show that the objector means by "abandon" what Webster defines as: "a yielding to natural impulses ... carefree ease or freedom often with disregard for consequenc-

es." Implied in such emotionally charged wording is the vision of three small children, all under five years old, being "abandoned" to some terrible fate by a parent intent on "serving God." My, how hard-hearted and shameful! (We have faced this same approach for decades, though worded as a charge that "you people believe in abandoning poor starving orphans!") I know of no possible situation in serving God that would require kicking a three year old out into the street to fend for himself, nor turning out one's poor old mother with nothing but her rocking chair "for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

However, there may come to pass some situation in regard to *any* relationship that requires a separation in order to serve God, as in the above passages. Peter says they had left all to follow Jesus. Whatever was contained in "all," Peter says they had left it. Jesus then follows that confession of Peter by saying that anyone who "leaves" any relationship or material things for His sake, the gospel's sake, the kingdom of heaven's sake will be blessed in this life and the one to come. Jesus understood that there might be some circumstance when it would be necessary to leave even "children," or "parents" for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Did Jesus speak truth, or not? Someone may not like that, but he will have to argue with the Lord about it.

Let's look at I Corinthians 7:12-14. It's obvious that the conflict between the believer and unbeliever in these passages is because of the believer's faith, as seen in the following points. (1) The Corinthians had written questions to Paul about such a relationship and whether they should remain with an unbelieving spouse. (2) The repeated point about believer/unbeliever. (3) The unbeliever being "sanctified" in the believer emphasizes the spiritual atmosphere furnished by the believer. The believer is told to remain with the unbeliever. They are rightly married with all attendant responsibilities; it is as much

an acceptable marriage as if they were two believers. If the Christian left *just because* the spouse was an unbeliever, it would violate her responsibilities to the other, and would, in effect, declare the relationship unlawful and the children illegitimate.

However, Paul presents another contingency statement here. It is "If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her." This implies that if she is not content to dwell with him, that he can leave. The point of conflict between them is the faith of the believer. The unbeliever is not willing to live with that and is, in effect, driving the believer away. Any separation is because of spiritual matters.

Conflict resulting from marriage is a common subject in I Corinthians 7. Even in verse 11, the word "reconcile" (*katallasso*) implies some kind of conflict that prompted the departing. (This contrasts with the union and agreement between the two in the *temporary* "separation" of verse 5.) In verses 12-13, if the unbeliever is "content to dwell" with the believer, then the believer is "not to leave." However, in verse fifteen, the believer is told that "if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart," adding that "God hath called us in peace."

There will always be tension and stress in any relationship. That's quite normal. We can't approve of two people who are constantly bickering because both are contentious and *neither* is trying to follow God's will. We are looking at a situation where one of the parties is wanting to, trying to, serve God and is, in some way, being kept from it by the other person. Conflict that keeps us from serving God must be resolved in favor of God!

Proverbs 21:19 gives the wisdom that "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Or, verse nine, "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling
(See I CORINTHIANS 7, page 20)

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 woman in a wide house." However, in the Lord's instruction, the only way besides fornication that one can leave his spouse is when that spouse stands in the way of his or her mate serving God. We cannot forsake God to please our mates. If, *in order to serve God*, anyone must separate from the husband or wife, then it is exactly what he should do! *That is what I Corinthians 7:11 is about, based on what the Lord said in Luke 18:29-30, and other passages.*

In *that* circumstance, if one decides to separate from the spouse, he or she must continually live unmarried, or be reconciled to the spouse whether the spouse is a believer or an unbeliever. Those are the *only* options open at that point, even for the noble reason of leaving in order to serve God; the scripture is specific on that point.

Granted, there are God-given responsibilities that go with being married. Fulfilling family responsibilities takes time and energy. Any married person must take some time and energy away from things that could otherwise have been done for the Lord. God expects and insists on that; His word instructs us in it. Paul said in I Corinthians 7:32ff that he who is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, how he may serve the Lord; he who is married is careful about how he may please his spouse. That is not to say that only an unmarried person can serve God. One can be married, fulfill all family responsibilities and still serve God. This is true even if one is married to an unbeliever, I Peter 3:1ff. But, to do that fully, both parties must cooperate, as in I Corinthians 7:5.

A husband or wife might not give the other all the attention she/he wants. One may find personal habits of a spouse distasteful. A spouse might drink, smoke, snore, or eat garlic every day. There may be other items of negligence. Hundreds of things qualify as irritants in a rela-

tionship. Yet, those are^ things that can either be lived with or changed in time. None of these things authorize a person even to leave a spouse, much less allow them to marry someone else. It strengthens the scripture teaching that the *only way* a person can leave a spouse and marry another is *if that spouse has been put away because of fornication*, Matthew 19:9.

The attempt to use I Corinthians 7:10-11 to leave a spouse simply because one "doesn't want to be married any longer," is error. Neither does it authorize the "waiting game."

There may be other ways that some spouse might act to stand in the way of the other's serving God. It may come from mental or emotional, as well as physical, abuse that destroys spirituality. Whatever the reason might be for either spouse's decision to leave, it is to be decided on their own judgment that they *cannot* serve God and stay in that household any longer. Of course, some will try to use even this as a loophole to get out of a relationship when there is no justification for their doing so. They will be accountable to God for such a move. *God will know if their motive is wrong.* Their faithfulness in service to God after leaving will show the sincerity of their motive. If their claim is a sham, *everyone* will soon know it as well.

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Is Divorce (Not For Fornication) O.K., As Long As There Is No Remarriage?

By Patrick T. Donahue

This article is a reply to some of the content of Maurice Barnett's article "I Corinthians 7:10-11" in the February 1993 issue of *The Gospel Anchor*. Although I agree with much of the article (like the parts about Bales' doctrine, and about the "mental divorce" position), the point that I take issue with is that I Cor. 7:10-11 allows one to "depart" from their spouse for a reason other than fornication, as long as they don't remarry. In discussing some false understanding of I Cor. 7:10-11, Barnett says, "Others interpret verse 10 ('depart not') in such a way as to deny verse 11. It is thus insisted that no one can 'depart' under any circumstance except fornication." Since I am one of those "that insist that no one can 'depart' under any circumstance except fornication," I intend to explain why I believe so, especially in view of Barnett's arguments to the contrary.

Contingency Legislation, Not An Exception

The passage under consideration, I Cor. 7:10-11, reads as follows: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." Barnett correctly points out that I Cor. 7:11 expresses "contingency legislation," but then incorrectly says that it "identifies that there is an exception" (to verse 10). Contingency legislation is not the same as expressing an exception. Contingency legislation ("if... then" legislation) gives instructions about what

to do if something occurs, but does not necessarily give approval to that something that has occurred. And this is how I Cor. 7:10-11 is parallel to I Jn. 2:1. The two passages are not parallel in every respect (no one ever claimed that I Jn. 2:1 gives two options as I Cor. 7:11 does), but they are parallel in that both passages follow a command with contingency legislation: what do I do if I violate the command stated previous? Neither passage gives an exception to the command expressed; contingency legislation does not imply exception. But even if the I Jn. 2:1 illustration were not parallel, the principle is still true (an illustration doesn't prove anyway, it only illustrates). Contingency legislation does not condone action that the instruction is contingent upon. Verse 11 then does, not provide an exception to verse 10, it only provides contingency legislation. The only exception to verse 10 is found in Mt. 5:32; it is wrong to separate/divorce from your spouse for any reason other than fornication, even if you don't remarry.

Galatians 5:15 and James 3:14

"Here is the point, so please take note: whatever the circumstance of why she departed and became 'unmarried,' she" does "sin in the 'departing' of this context" (unless the departing was for fornication). Saying that I Cor. 7:11 shows that it is not a sin for you to depart as long as you don't remarry, is about like saying that it would not be a sin for you to "bite and devour one another," as long as you "take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal.

5:15). It would be about like saying that it would not be a sin for you to "have bitter envying and strife in your hearts," as long as you "glory not, and lie not against the truth" (James 3:14).

Two Options, But Are They Equal?

Some say that it is wrong to leave, but that if you do, I Cor. 7:11 shows that it is o.k. to remain apart. Besides flying in the face of what repentance means, this understanding is not born out by verse 11. Just because I Cor. 7:11 gives two options about what to do if someone departs (sins), it does not mean that these two options are on equal footing in all respects. Let me give you a parallel verse that illustrates this true principle (that two options are not necessarily "equal"). The parallel is Rev. 3:15: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." I raise the question, "did the Laodiceans have the 'option' to be cold?" If not, why not (since two options are given)? The truth is, God wants a person to be hot, but if he won't be hot, he would rather him be cold than lukewarm. Now this verse is not parallel in every respect (for example, it is a sin to be cold, but not a sin to remain unmarried if your spouse won't take you back), but it is parallel in that both passages give two options where one is preferable over the other.

But let me repeat, even if this verse were not parallel to I Cor. 7:11, it wouldn't make the principle untrue. The principle is true that two options can be given, with one being preferred over the other. In our passage, verse 11 could mean that the person who departed is to be reconciled if possible, but if reconciliation is not possible (suppose their spouse won't take them back), then they are to remain unmarried, they are not to commit the *additional* sin of adultery in remarriage. The fact that verse 11 *could* mean this, means that verse 11 cannot be used as *proof* that either divorce, or a refusal to return, is not

sin. As a matter of fact, not only could verse 11 mean this, but it *must* mean this considering what verse 10 says! Barnett argues that if I Jn. 2:1 is parallel to I Cor. 7:10-11, "the woman who does depart is always in a sinful condition regardless of circumstances as long as she remains apart!" First of all, remember that no one said that I Jn. 2:1 is parallel to I Cor. 7:10-11 in every respect, but only in the respect that shows that I Cor. 7:11 is contingency legislation (and not an exception), and therefore does not allow divorce. Secondly, one reason that we know that a woman is not in sin if she tries to go back to her spouse (but is refused by him) is because that is what Paul is saying by the phrase remain unmarried": remain unmarried if you cant be reconciled (any other explanation for verse 11 would contradict verse 10).

Is I Corinthians 7:5 Parallel?

Barnett argues that I Cor. 7:5 ("Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time...") is parallel to I Cor. 7:10-11, thereby showing that verse 11 is providing an exception to verse 10. But they are not parallel in the very respect Barnett is stating that they are! I Cor. 7:5 does give an exception (notice the word "except" is even used); but it does not say what to do if you do defraud (contingency legislation). I Cor. 7:11, on the other hand, does not give an exception to the general rule given in verse 10; instead it tells what to do if the instruction found in verse 10 is not followed (contingency legislation).

Does I Corinthians 7:12-13 Allow Departing?

Then Barnett says that because "Paul says that if the unbeliever is content to dwell with the believer, the Christian is not to leave" (from verses 12-13), that "implies that if the unbeliever is not content to dwell with the Christian, then the Christian can leave." But verses 12-13 don't imply what Barnett says they do. The

"if" construction does not necessarily imply that it is o.k. to leave a spouse who is "not agreeing on an amiable relationship." Notice a parallel passage, I Cor. 7:28, "... and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned." According to Barnett's reasoning, this verse would imply that "if a virgin does not marry she hath sinned." Notice also Matthew 11:14, "And, if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." According to Barnett's reasoning, this verse would imply that "if ye will not receive it, this is not Elias, which was for to come." Notice also that in I Cor. 7:12 we have a conclusion based upon two conditions: (1) "If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and" (2) if "she be pleased to dwell with him." If it is valid to take the converse of the conclusion if the second condition is not met (but the first is met), why would it not be valid to take the converse of the conclusion if the first condition is not met (but the second is met). Therefore, by Barnett's reasoning this verse would also teach that "If any brother hath a wife that *does* believe, and she *is* pleased to dwell with him," "then the Christian can leave."

When I Cor. 7:12-13 talks about the unbeliever being pleased to dwell with the believer, it is the same as saying that they *do* dwell with them. If the unbeliever does not depart (verse 15), then they are pleased with the believer unamiably. The converse of verses 12 and 13 is found in verse 15. "If they are not pleased to dwell with you (verse 12), then *let them depart* (verse 15) (not ... then leave them yourself, or put them away). Let's let the Bible interpret itself!

Does Luke 18:29-30 Allow For Departing?

The last of Barnett's arguments that I would like to deal with is from Lk. 18:29-30 which reads, "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time,

and in the world to come life everlasting." Barnett teaches that this verse allows for a cause for divorce ("for the kingdom of God's sake" — who knows what this could include) in addition to the cause of fornication. But I would ask Barnett, "have you ever mentioned this passage (along with others) when asked where the Bible ever tells a man to leave his wife (in the case of what you consider an unscriptural marriage)? The point is that this passage does not prove another cause for divorce, it could just be talking about a man leaving his wife because they were in an unscriptural marriage (indeed, in the light of other passages, it *would* have this case under consideration, but not Barnett's case).

Matthew 19:3-9

Although the main purpose of this article was to deal with Barnett's arguments, I would like to make a couple of affirmative arguments against his position. Contrary to popular belief, Mt. 19:3-9 does not only condemn divorce *and* remarriage; it also condemns divorce all by itself. The initial question raised by the Pharisees in verse 3 pertains to divorce and not necessarily also to remarriage. And Jesus answers the question of verse 3 ("Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?") with a resounding *no* ("what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder") in verse 6. Jesus then gives an additional thought ("And") in verse 9, when he states that if you divorce for a reason other than fornication, and you remarry, you commit adultery. Obviously, Jesus provides the general rule that divorce is wrong in verse 6, and then gives the only exception to that general rule in verse 9.

Matthew 5:32

If this is not clear to you, the argument can be made even stronger from Mt. 5:32, because this verse does not mention the remarriage of the person doing the divorcing (as Mt. 19:9 does). Mt. 5:32 reads, "But 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." This verse teaches the rule that it is wrong for a man to divorce his wife (not mentioning the remarriage of the man), and gives the only exception to the rule, fornication. Put another way, if a man divorces his wife (unless it is for fornication), he sins by putting her into an undeserved position of temptation ("causeth her to commit adultery"), regardless of whether or not that man remarries. Anybody that can see that because Mt. 19:9 gives the one and only cause for "divorce and remar-

riage" by using the word "except," and therefore rules out James Bales' interpretation of I Cor. 7:15, ought to be able to see that because Mt. 5:32 gives the one and only cause for divorce period by using the word "saving" (in the sense of "except"), and therefore rules out Barnett's interpretation of I Cor. 7:11, I Cor. 7:12-13, and Lk. 18:29-30.

Yes, God "hateth putting away" (Mai. 2:16), even if no remarriage follows. God expects husbands to "dwell" with their wives according to knowledge. The Lord commands, "Let not the wife depart from her husband" (1 Cor. 7:10).

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Reply To Pat Donahue

By Maurice Barnett

In my article in the *Gospel Anchor* of February 1993, I reasoned that I Corinthians 7:10-11 refers to a man or woman who departs from a marriage **relationship** because it is necessary to do so in order to serve God. The one who leaves for that reason must remain celibate or return to the husband or wife. This would happen only because of an extreme conflict within a marriage relationship. Our issue at this point is not exactly where the line of staying or leaving is to be drawn, which might be different for each case, but whether there is a line other than fornication.

The lengthy title of Donahue's article, "*Is Divorce (Not For Fornication) O.K., As Long As There Is No Remarriage?*" implies that I believe something that I do not. I have never believed that anyone can leave a spouse for just any reason as long as he/she doesn't remarry; quite the contrary. One of the reasons I wrote the article was to refute that very idea.

Donahue's Position

Pat Donahue, a frequent writer

for *Faith and Facts* and *With All Boldness* magazines, strongly disagrees with my article, saying: "... I am one of those 'that insist that no one can depart under any circumstance except fornication/. . . ." His position does **not** accept any possible circumstance that will allow a Christian to depart from a spouse for any reason other than fornication, even though they don't remarry. If that is the case, regardless of the circumstance, a marriage relationship takes precedence over everything else required by God; the marriage comes first. Let's be clear about it. It won't matter how extreme the provocation. The very worst case, short of fornication, will have to be accepted by Donahue. All obedience to God must take second place to maintaining a relationship with, perhaps, some sadistic, ungodly reprobate who has the God-given right, solely because they are married, to keep a child of God from serving the Lord. God has given that sadistic, ungodly reprobate more power over the Christian than He Himself retains. No matter what a husband may do to his wife that

keeps her from serving the Lord, she is obligated by the will of God to stay in that situation or go to hell, according to Donahue's position.

God Comes First

The Scriptures teach that there is no relationship greater than our relationship with the Lord. Any choice between serving God or some other person must be decided in favor of God. Jesus said:

"Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:34-37)

The gospel both unites and divides. The term "variance" (*dikadzo*) means, according to Vine, page 1195, "to cut apart, divide in two," as also represented by the sword. The noun "foe" (*ekthros*) means an enemy, someone hostile and hateful (Vine, page 360). Since one's enemy may be in his own household, that may include one's husband or wife and so the marriage relationship is cut apart. The only reason for it happening is over one or the other serving the Lord.

Jesus said, in regard to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem:

"But ye shall be delivered up even by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." (Luke 21:16)

This includes all relationships. It shows **what having a hateful and hostile enemy** in one's family may involve. This extreme type of situation is perhaps more understandable in the Jewish and pagan climate of the first century than now. The Christian might have had a spouse who was her enemy in the home, who persecuted her, and might even deliver her up to death for her faith, unless she recanted. She could have left him and prolonged her life, faith

and service to God, but Donahue insists that, *just because they were married*, she would have to stay with him and take whatever he did to her, even if he has her put to death! She could only leave because of fornication.

It is in this area of hostility in a marriage that I Corinthians 7 deals with several possible problems and what he/she is to do. The spouse may be hostile and hateful against the truth and the husband or wife who wants to follow it. In such circumstances, a person may have to decide that a break in contact with the husband or wife and other family members is necessary in order to live as the Lord wants. Jesus says:

"If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26)

Clearly, Jesus puts all family members, including husband and wife, in the same category. All family relationships must take second place to the Lord. We must love Him more than we love any other.

Vine, under the term "hate," says: "of relative preference for one thing over another, by way of expressing either aversion from, or disregard for, the claims of one person or thing relatively to those of another." The husband must have a preference for the Lord over the wife. Or, put another way, he must have a *disregard* for any claims of the wife over those of the Lord. This could not be possible if God insists that there be a distinct preference for the wife and her demands over any other requirement of the Lord. Why would Jesus say what He did in the above passages unless there will be times when one must choose to serve Him rather than submitting to the demands of one's spouse? Is not this a modification, exception, regarding the rules of marital responsibilities?

The same is true in the other relationships listed. How does one love a father and mother *more than* Jesus if not by submitting to their wishes

and demands rather than the Lord's? Though He has charged us with a binding requirement to honor our father and mother, the Lord still comes first.

I Peter 2:13-16 teaches:

"Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God."

It is *the will of God* that we be good citizens, obedient to *every ordinance of civil authority*, obeying the supreme authority and all of his lower representatives. This is universal in its statement and *God commands it*. However, we also understand that God is still supreme over civil authority. Does Donahue think that in order to obey God we must obey civil authority even when that civil authority demands we do something that violates other commands of God? Surely not! That would place civil authority above God. Circumstances change the basic rule. Acts 4:19 and 5:29 say:

"Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye. . ."

"We must obey God rather than men."

As long as there is no conflict between what God wants us to do and what civil authority demands, then I Peter 2:13 applies. If civil authority demands of us other than what God tells us, then God must always come first. This same principle is true of *any relationship, even marriage* — God always comes first (Matthew 6:33). This has always been so with God.

The Old Testament states that He is a jealous God; He will not allow anyone to supplant him. At one time in Israel's history, the God who "hates putting away" required them to put away the wives they had taken from the people of the land, and their children with them, Ezra 10. No relationship was ever to be placed above

what God wanted.

Matthew 10:34-37 and Luke 14:26 emphasize the proper attitude we must have in putting the Lord first above all others. Jesus focuses on the application:

"And Peter said, Lo, we have left our own, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life." (Luke 18:28-30)

First, the word "left" means to leave something or someone, to depart, go away from, sever contact in some way. Matthew 19:27 records Peter saying, "we have left all to follow thee." In Luke 18, it clearly means there is a break in the relationships listed. The "leaving" is the same for the wife as it is for the brethren, parents or children.

Second, the reason for leaving is "the kingdom of God's sake." The meaning of this phrase is explained by what Peter said: "we have left our own, and followed thee." Leaving for "the kingdom of God's sake" is the same as leaving to "follow Jesus."

I agree, and have always taught, that there *are* relationships that we *must maintain* in order to follow Jesus because He has rules concerning those relationships, such as honoring father and mother, caring for one's own, and fulfilling marriage responsibilities. However, in Luke 18, Jesus is talking about circumstances that may arise in those relationships, including marriage, that require the relationships be broken *in order to follow Him*. I am not saying that the causes for leaving, in Luke 18, are *limited to* antagonism in a relationship. Peter said that they had left all to follow Jesus. For Peter, that would mean leaving his wife. We have no reason to believe that he left under bitter rejection; we just don't know the circumstances. We know that they were together again at a later time. I assume it would have been the circumstance as stated in I

Corinthians 7:5. Neither would there have been antagonism by one's house or lands that would drive a person to leave. There are several things that might cause a person to leave any of these relationships, one of which is antagonism and persecution against the person who is trying to do right.

Donahue asks if I have ever used Luke 18 to show that a person must leave another because of an unscriptural marriage. No, I never have. *That* would misuse the passage. Luke 18 is about relationships that are basically lawful to begin with, not unlawful ones. The passage is talking about "his" house, "his" parents, "his" brethren, "his" children and "his" wife. Take the case of Herod. He had married *his brother's wife* (Mark 6:18). If the application of Luke 18 is referring to leaving an unscriptural marriage, Herod could only be called on to leave his *brother's* wife (not *his* wife) for the kingdom of God's sake. The man's relationship with his wife, in Luke 18, is no more "unscriptural" than his relationship with parents or children. Other things have caused the leaving.

Neither is Luke 18 *specifying* that the man leave his wife because she is guilty of fornication. Other passages deal with that. Such a position here would limit "for the kingdom of God's sake" to only divorcing for fornication; it would limit "following Jesus" to only divorcing for fornication.

No doubt Donahue can think of several things that might cause a break in one's relationship with parents, or children, or brethren "for the kingdom of God's sake." I'm sure he understands that if parents, children, brethren, or any other relationships are keeping a person from serving God, a man can, even must, break the relationship; he must "leave" them. God comes first when looking at parents, children, brethren, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, etc. It should be the same for those who are married.

Contingencies

I Corinthians 7:10-11, ASV, is as follows:

"But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife."

There is no doubt that verse 10 commands that the wife is not to depart from her husband. The issue centers around the statement in parenthesis. The parenthesis, verse 11, is worded as a conditional clause, a contingency. Certain things may be true, or happen, depending on (conditioned on, contingent on) something else happening. It is primarily "if ... then" in form. Here is a simple example: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." This is a conditional statement, a contingency. Being His disciple is conditioned on abiding in His word. "If ye abide in my word" is the condition, the requirement to make the rest of it true. "Then ye are my disciples indeed" is the consequence, or result.

In I Corinthians 7:11, "should she depart" is the condition, the requirement that makes the rest of the clause true. Based on that condition, the result is "let her remain^ unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband." To put it into a strict "if ... then" wording, it would say: "if she depart, then let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband." The condition begins with "if" and the consequence, which is based on the condition, begins with "then."

It should be clear that whatever the cause for the wife departing, verse 11, it had to be because of some severe conflict in the marriage relationship. Her departing is certainly not because of an unscriptural marriage nor fornication on the part of her husband. This verse does not identify what that cause may be; it only indicates there is one, as seen by the consequence "let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled." *Whatever that cause*, it provides a modi-

fication, an exception, to the basic rule of "don't depart," just like there is a modification to the basic rule of "don't defraud" in verse 5. The first part of this article identifies the cause, the condition on which is based "let her remain or else be reconciled."

Donahue's paragraph title, "Contingency Legislation, Not An Exception," denies that conditional clauses may contain exceptions. He says, "Contingency legislation. . . gives instructions about what to do if something occurs, but does NOT necessarily give approval to that something that has occurred." To the contrary, *it certainly might* give approval to what will, or has, occurred! It depends on what is being said. His "NOT necessarily" shows that *he knows* it might be otherwise. He closes the paragraph with "contingency legislation does not imply exception." But, of course it might and we will see that he creates such contingencies himself!

He thinks there is something inherent in contingency legislation that will not allow an exception. He says, "Contingency legislation does not condone action that the instruction is contingent upon. Verse 11 then does not provide an exception to verse 10, it only provides contingency legislation."

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary lists, as a meaning for "Contingent," something "dependent for effect on or liable to modification by something that may or may not occur." Did you get that? It says that something may, in some way, be *modified by a contingent statement*. When you modify something, you change it. It depends on what the *conditions* and the *results* are as set forth in the statements. Let's look at some passages.

"But I say to the unmarried and to widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they have not continency, let them marry. . ." (I Corinthians 7:8-9)

A basic rule is set forth, but a conditional statement makes an exception which is approved. Is that difficult to see?

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek

not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But shouldest thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned." (I Corinthians 7:27-28)

The contingency of verse 28, begins just as verse 11 does, with the Greek *ean de kai*. It surely looks like an exception to the basic rule to me. And notice that it is *approved*). There are numerous other instances of this.

Donahue says: "In our passage, verse 11 could mean that the person who departed is to be reconciled if possible, but if reconciliation is not possible (suppose their spouse won't take them back), then they are to remain unmarried. . ." He adds, "As a matter of fact, not only could verse 11 mean this, but it *must* mean this considering what verse 10 says!" You can't get any more definite than that.

However, Donahue has perverted the passage, badly. He takes a *consequence* of the one stated condition and makes *two more conditions* out of it. In *his* version of the passage, the consequence — "let her remain unmarried" is not conditioned just on "should she depart." Rather, he has it conditioned on her departing *plus* being required to reconcile, and if the husband won't take her back, *then let her remain unmarried*. At that point, he says she can remain unmarried without sin. His version of the passage is, and notice his statement above, "but should she depart, she must be reconciled to the husband, but if he won't take her back, then she is to remain unmarried." He now has three conditions, instead of one, has added another "if" to the passage and taken the conjunction "or else" out of it completely! Compare his statement with what Paul actually says! And, here it is: "but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband."

The "or else" is from a Greek particle (*ei*). It is a disjunctive conjunction that means just "or else." Thayer, page 275, says it means: "to distinguish things or thoughts which either mutually exclude each other, or

one of which can take the place of the other." Bauer's Lexicon, page 342, says: "opposites, which are mutually exclusive." He then lists I Corinthians 7:11 as having that meaning.

Remaining unmarried is not the *same thing* as being reconciled; they are opposites. But, they are tied together with the conjunction that means they are "opposites, which are *mutually exclusive*." Websters' Dictionary says that "mutual" refers to something shared on a basis of equality, or "given and received in equal amount." In addition to I Corinthians 7:11, Bauer gives some other examples of opposites, which are mutually exclusive. Luke 2:24 says that the offering of the law in that instance was "A pair of turtledoves, *or* two young pigeons." Matthew 21:25 poses the question about John's baptism, "whence was it? from heaven *or* from men?" *In this same way*, the conjunction is used in I Corinthians 7:11 — "let her remain unmarried, *or else* be reconciled to her husband." The two actions of our passage are equal as far as *choices* are concerned, a person may do *either one or the other*. They are equal consequences of the condition "should she depart."

"Let her remain," as I have covered before, is translated from *meneto*, a present imperative from *meno*. It is a command to do something constantly, to continue to do it, as is seen by the meaning of the word as well as the present tense. This same form, *meneto*, is found in only a few other places, two of them in this chapter, verses 20 and 24, Hebrews 13:1 and I John 2:24. Each of these places show approved conduct. It should further be evident that *since it is a command, it is therefore approved!* It is as much a command as is "be reconciled," an aorist imperative. The one is as much approved as the other. Being approved, it must state some modification of the basic rule! And, when you *modify* something, you make a change in the basic rule!

Donahue agrees with this on "let her remain unmarried," *as long as she*

meets the conditions he has set up. (Of course, as we have seen, he sets up more conditions than Paul does). Let's be clear about it: He insists that no one can leave a spouse, except for fornication, without sinning and thus being lost, verse 10. Yet, when he gets through with his conditions, she can be separated and continue to live that way without sin. It looks to me like an approved exception to the basic rule *even in his scenario!* Donahue has contradictory positions.

And "Parallels"

Donahue wants to use I John 2:1, but realizes the weakness of doing so. He first says, "And this is how I Cor. 7:10-11 is parallel to I Jn. 2:1. The two passages are not parallel in every respect... but they are parallel in that both passages follow a command with contingency legislation... But even if the I Jn 2:1 illustration were not parallel, the principle is still true (an illustration doesn't prove anyway, it only illustrates)." First he says it is, then it isn't and then it is, although it doesn't prove anything. My!

Contrary to what Donahue says, there *are* some people who want to make the two passages a complete parallel, which is what I was replying to in my article. Donahue also says, "no one ever claimed that I Jn 2:1 gives two options as I Cor 7:11 does." Of course, I didn't say that anyone did. I showed that in order for them to be parallel in the way they were being used that it would be necessary to have two options in I John 2:1.

(Donahue says more than once that I Corinthians 7:11 contains "two options." Yet, he really doesn't believe that. Remember, his position is that reconciliation *must* take place if possible. In the position he takes, *there is no choice*. If the husband won't take her back, it is *only then* that she is commanded to remain unmarried, which isn't a choice, either. When we talk about two options, we don't mean the choice of remaining unmarried or not remaining unmarried.

The two options of the passage are *either remaining unmarried or else being reconciled to the husband*. Donahue has removed the "either this, or else that" situation of the passage. He can't rightly make arguments on the basis that there are two options).

Donahue confuses *parallel* with *likeness*. The two passages are alike in one way, but they are not parallel. He says that both passages are commands followed by a contingency statement and "what do I do if I violate the command stated previous?" What he doesn't understand is that it all depends on what the contingency statement says. Let's look at the passages:

"...The wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband." (I Corinthians 7:10-11)

"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (I John 2:1)

Look at the differences. It doesn't take a Solomon to see them: Different structure, content and purpose. It depends on what is being said.

He thinks that a command, followed by a contingency, means the contingency can never indicate an exception. In I Corinthians 7:27-28, as we noted above, the word "seek" (*dzetei*) is a *present imperative* and obviously in the form of a command. Paul says don't seek a wife, but if you marry you haven't sinned There is a command followed by a contingency statement containing an approved exception! Let's look at another one:

"If any man speaketh in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three, and that in turn; and let one interpret: but if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God." (I Corinthians 14:27-28)

Here are a series of commands. They are followed by a contingency statement that makes an exception to the commands just given. It all depends on what is being said and Donahue's parallel/illustration doesn't

mean anything.

We may (and rightly so, seeing that it is exactly what we do in explaining scripture truth) word our own command followed by a contingency that shows approved exceptions. Note: "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake (I Peter 2:13), but if some civil law conflicts with God's law, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)." I don't know about brother Donahue, but that's the way I have always preached this. We even do this in explaining Matthew 19:9. "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery, but if he puts her away for fornication and marries another he does not commit adultery." This shouldn't be difficult to understand.

As we have just seen, Donahue also makes up *his own* contingency situations, even on I Corinthians 7:10-11. He tells us that if the woman does depart, she must try to be reconciled with the husband, but if he won't take her back, *then* she is to remain unmarried and is without sin in doing so. So, it may be worded, "The wife is not to depart from her husband, (but if she departs, she must try to reconcile, and if her husband won't take her back, then she is to remain unmarried)." Looks to me like he's formulated a command followed by a contingency with an allowed exception, wouldn't you say?

He next tries to make parallels with Galatians 5:15 and James 3:14 along with my point on I Corinthians 7:11. He clearly shows he is confusing *grammatical form* with *substance*. He thinks that because there is a command followed by a contingency statement that all such "forms" are parallel and are treated alike so that *form determines substance*. These are rules brother Donahue has made up and are not according to facts. One must consider what is being said as well as the grammatical form. Indeed, it's interesting that Moule, in his book *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*, page 152, singles out Galatians 5:15 and James 3:14 for

special notice with a paragraph:

"There are two instances in the N.T. of conditional clauses which are perfectly correct in grammatical form, but which are logically inconsequent, as it would seem: Gal. v.15 ... Jas. Hi. 14 ... In both instances the Imperative clause remains valid whether or not the condition in the protasis is fulfilled."

Note that these two passages are in a class alone, according to Moule, and so have no bearing on the point at issue as parallels to I Corinthians 7:11.

Then he tries another "parallel," this time with Revelation 3:15. He says, "Let me give you a parallel verse that illustrates this true principle (that two options are not necessarily 'equal')." He says that both Revelation 3:15 and I Corinthians 7:11 are "parallel in that both passages give two options where one is preferable over the other." Of course, he follows in the next paragraph saying, "But let me repeat, even if this verse were not parallel to I Corinthians 7:11, it wouldn't make the principle untrue." He also says, "Now this verse is not parallel in every respect. . ." There's a lot of this in his article — It's parallel, but it's not fully parallel, and even if it isn't parallel the principle is still true. Well, let's see. Revelation 3:15-16 say:

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

His interpretation is: "I raise the question, 'did the Laodiceans have the option to be cold?' If not, why not! (since two options are given)? The truth is, God wants a person to be hot, but if he won't be hot, he would rather him be cold than lukewarm." I will just grant his basic interpretation of the passage for the moment. There are three temperatures of liquid here: hot, lukewarm, cold. First, that makes three to choose from, not two. Second, the temperatures are extreme, but the choices are equal; one can choose which he will be. But, *notice what is said!* First, Revelation 3:15-16 does not contain

a conditional sentence. There is no contingency statement there, so it is not parallel with I Corinthians 7:11 in form. Second, the subject matter is not the same, so it isn't parallel there. Third, in the Revelation passage, *Jesus Himself states the preference of hot or cold over lukewarm*, The Lord is telling us what choice He prefers. There is no parallel there either because where in I Corinthians 7:11 does Paul state a preference for being reconciled *over* remaining unmarried? Where? Not only does Paul not state a preference of choices, he includes the conjunction (or else) that makes them equal as choices, either one or the other, *mutually exclusive*. What is it that Donahue said? He said the two passages are parallel because "both passages give two options where one is preferable over the other." That's bold assertion, and *nothing more*. And, he still doesn't believe there are two options in verse 11.

On I Corinthians 7:5, I showed that there is a command, "defraud not," which is to be obeyed. However, there is an exception given. Donahue, and others, argue vigorously that there can't be an exception to the command "depart not" in verse 10 *because it is a command*. I showed that in verse 5, commands may have modifications and/or exceptions.

I Corinthians 7:12-13

Donahue again confuses form with substance. The *form* of conditional sentences is one thing, the *meaning and intent* of what is said in the sentence and its context is another. There is a wide range of expressions available with conditional sentences. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*, page 148, says:

"The general formula 'Given certain conditions, certain results follow,' which underlies Conditional Sentences, has to include a wide and flexible range of phrase in order to express the range of contingencies in varying conditions ... Simplifying in order to analyze, the following types may be broadly distin-

guished: 1. Past or present conditions, possible or actual. 2. Recurrent or future conditions, whether real or hypothetical. 3. Past or present conditions, only hypothetical."

Donahue replies to my point on I Corinthians 7:12-13 by such reference as Matthew 11:14 — "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come/ According to Barnett's reasoning, this verse would imply that 'if ye will not receive it, this is not Elias, which was for to come/' What Donahue is saying is that we can't reverse a conditional clause to get an opposite understanding. What he says may be true in some instances; it depends on what is being said. But, let's see how his reasoning works on some other conditional sentences, and there are many more.

John 7:17 says: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching⁷ Is it not also true that if a man does not will to do his will that he will not know of the teaching?"

John 8:31 says: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples/ Can it be said that if they did not abide in His word, they would not truly be his disciples?"

John 8:51 says: "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death/ If someone didn't keep His word would he see death or not? The answer to those questions should be obvious.

There are even conditional clauses that have more than one condition, such as Romans 10:9 — "because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." If you *really* want to see multiple conditions, look at Colossians 1:23! But, what does that prove? Donahue tries to make something out of "dual conditions," but it means nothing and I don't care to waste the time and space to wade through it. Certainly, let the Bible interpret itself, but make sure you have all of the Bible and your facts are straight.

The structural form of conditional sentences is important in that some

condition is given that relates to the result or consequence. I point out again, however, it is not the form of a conditional sentence that forces an interpretation, but rather what is being said. Donahue hedges on the point because he says, "The 'if' construction does not necessarily imply that it is o.k. to leave a spouse who is not agreeing on an amiable relationship." Notice the "not necessarily." Of course, that implies that even he recognizes that it could!

Further, no conditional sentence actually exists in Donahue's interpretation; the "if" means nothing. Paul says, verse 12:

"If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her."

Donahue's position is that it doesn't matter whether she is content to dwell with him or not, he's stuck; the only way out is if the unbeliever does the departing, vs. 15. Verse 12 should then have said: "Are you married to an unbeliever, then you're unconditionally stuck with her, no ifs, ands or buts about it."

The meaning of I Corinthians 7:12-13 should be obvious. The passages are talking about *the Christian's faith and service to God in the face of possible opposition from a husband or wife*, especially one who is an unbeliever. (Of course, as we all have seen in our modern time, a believer can become an unbeliever of the most ungodly and reprobate kind). The word "content" in verse 12 is from *suneudokeo*. It is a compound with the prefix *sun* that indicates an agreement with. Thayer, page 604, says it means, "*to be pleased together with, to approve together* (with others) ... *to be pleased at the same time with, consent, agree to.*" It refers to the unbeliever being agreeably disposed toward allowing the believer's faith and activities in service to God; she is not going to cause him any trouble over being a Christian. *It is not* talking about their just getting along well in their marriage, laughing together, hugging one another, having a pleasant and happy (See REPLY, page 18)

Reply

continued from page 17:

relationship. That's not what the *amiability* is about.

My question is still valid. What if the unbeliever is *everything but agreeable* to the husband's faith and service to God and tries in every way to destroy it? She may certainly be agreeable to live in the house, she is "pleased" to do that, but in every way she can, she keeps him from serving God. That is the point where other passages come into effect, as we have shown.

Matthew 19:3-9 and 5:32

In my original article and some in this one, I showed that rules may be modified by other passages. I demonstrated that by looking at the Sabbath command and obedience to civil authority. If God does the modifying, then that's the way it is.

Matthew 19:3-9 and 5:32 are talking about the right of a person to divorce *and* remarry. Only one reason will allow that: fornication. Our major discussion has been over modification to the marriage responsibilities from other passages. Basic rules are set aside by modification given from God.

In Matthew 19, the question of the Jews, "can a man put away his wife for every cause," was not just a question about divorce. The controversy among them, in which they tried to involve Jesus, was over divorce *and* remarriage. Most corn-

monly, the Jews divorced in order to remarry. This should be seen by the statements of Jesus in verse 9 as well as 5:31-32.

The reply of Jesus was to appeal to the basic rule in existence from the beginning. In actual fact, fornication is an exception to the basic rule established at the beginning. Even death, that allows remarriage, is an exception to the basic rule. If not for passages like Romans 7:1-4 and I Corinthians 7:39, how would we know that we could remarry after the death of a spouse?

In regard to 5:32, I agree that the man who puts away his wife, without her prior fornication, puts her in the path of temptation and must share guilt if she succumbs to it. However, she might put *herself* in a position of temptation by bringing about a separation because of her mean and vicious spirit. Our issue is not over what Jesus says as recorded in Matthew. Our question is the presence of any other modification found in other scriptures that have a bearing on a spouse leaving a mate. I believe there is such modification and have presented the evidence for it.

Addendum

I need to add some discussion of a point on I Corinthians 7:10-11 that I did not cover in my first article. It involves an argument that is somewhat popular and has made the rounds in print. The argument is that "depart" in verse 11 is *passive voice* in Greek, which means the woman is being acted upon. The con-

clusion is that the passage is talking about a woman who is put away by her husband, for fornication or not, and she must then remain unmarried or be reconciled to the husband.

Moulton's *Analytical Greek Lexicon* lists the form of *depart* in verse 11 as *first aorist, subjunctive, passive (mid. signif)*. This shows it is not to be treated strictly as passive voice but has a middle voice significance. Yet, it has been correctly presented by most translations, the best of Greek scholars, as the English active.

In verse 10, the word "depart" is the form *first aorist, infinitive, passive (mid. signif)*. It is translated that the wife is not to depart from the husband. Though the original is passive in form, as in verse 11, there is no way to translate it that way and make sense of the statement. It is also middle voice in its significance, but translated as active.

The word for "depart" in verse 10 (*choristhenai*) and the word for "leave" in verse 11 (*aphienai*) are used synonymously. The wife is not to depart from the husband, the husband is not to leave his wife. But, the word for "leave" *aphienai*, is *present, infinitive, active*. It is not passive, even with a middle voice significance. I conclude that the two terms and phrases are to be understood alike and correctly translated as active voice. This means that the departing of the wife was taken on her own volition and not because she was put away by her husband.