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**A1218 – April 29, 2012 – 1 Corinthians 7:12-16**  
**Do Not Divorce An Unbeliever**

To begin today, as you turn to 1 Cor 7:12, the marriage chapter, my counsel to all of you is “remain as you are.” The lesson throughout the chapter is basically the same, “stay as you are,” don’t move, don’t do a thing, if you’re married stay married, if you’re single stay put. We’ve worked our way to verse 12, **But to the rest I say**, that is, the rest of the Christians in the assembly who are married or who have been married. We’ve already seen the have been marrieds, that’s vv 8-9, which should be translated, “the widowers and the widows,” not “the unmarried,” that’s a bad translation that creates a contradiction with verse 11 because v 9 would then be saying they should remarry when verse 11 says they should not remarry, so it should read “the widowers and the widows,” and we’ve already seen vv 10-11, “the married,” those are married couples who are both believers. That brings us **to the rest** who are married, verse 12, namely, those believers who are married to an unbeliever. And this is important instruction.

Now I would like to say, before we embark on it, that every passage must be interpreted in light of its historical context first. You’re asking what does it mean, then you can ask, what does it mean to me or how does it apply? But the first question is not what does this mean to me but what does it mean period, what did Paul intend? That’s the authorial intent. Now, as far as the situation at Corinth is concerned they had some believers who were married to unbelievers. The question then becomes, in light of what Paul has taught earlier, should the believers divorce the unbelievers. The reason this was an issue goes back to statements like 1 Cor 5:9, so let’s turn there. One of the problems of young, immature believers is that every time you say something to them they twist it; they take it and say, oh, you mean this. No you dimwit, obviously that’s not what I mean. And when you meet a believer like that just take it as a sign of immaturity. Peter said the immature distorted what Paul

taught. The Corinthians were immature, they distorted everything Paul said; it's a miracle he could communicate anything. Notice, verse 9, "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup>I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world." See how they twisted it? Oh, Paul's saying we can't hang out with unbelievers. No, that's not what I'm saying. Obviously then you'd have to leave the world. That's not what I meant. Then some of the Corinthians took this distorted interpretation and said, hmm, here I am a believer married to an unbeliever, someone from the outside world, so maybe I should divorce them. That's the situation Paul is answering in 1 Cor 7 and he says don't divorce them.

Now, the Corinthians may also have misinterpreted a situation from the post-Exilic days, turn to Ezra 10:11. This is when Judah, the southern branch of the nation Israel was partially restored to the land after being in Babylon. When they returned many of them married foreign wives. Now this was against the Law of Moses because in the long run God said they would adopt pagan worship systems and further the line of Christ would be destroyed. You could marry a foreign girl, if she was a believer in YHWH, that's girls like Rahab or Ruth, but you couldn't marry pagan girls. So the remedy since they had already married pagan girls was to divorce them and send them away. Notice verse 11, "Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers and do His will; and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives." That means divorce and by the end of the book they're all divorced, just read the last verse. The Corinthians may have said, and we don't know for sure, but they may have said, well, that's what they did in the OT, so we have precedent for divorcing our unbelieving spouse, why can't we if they could?

The short answer is that doesn't fly because that was related to the Law of Moses and the purity of the Messianic bloodline. Paul argues exactly the opposite. If you are married to a pagan spouse, stay married to them. But the Corinthian's were experts at twisting the word of God and so I'm showing you these things so you see the way they were distorting and contorting the text. Everybody has an argument from Scripture, that's not the issue; every ministry says we're bible based and quotes Scripture. So what? That doesn't mean a thing; the thing that matters is proper usage of Scripture.

So what does Paul say in vv 12-13 to believing spouses married to unbelievers? **But to the rest I say, not the Lord**, that is, if you go back to the Gospels you will not find Jesus addressing anywhere the issue of a believer married to an unbeliever. He only addressed believers as vv 10-11 showed. However, Paul is now going to address it and he does so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so it is just as authoritative as what Jesus taught. In one sense every letter in the Bible could be red, it would be the first true red letter edition, because in one sense every letter is Jesus' letter. So he says through Paul, **if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.** Again, like last week, the word translated **divorce** in verse 12 is the same word translated **send away** in verse 13, they are the exact same word, and the exact same morphology, so I don't know why they changed the translation; I guess for stylistic variation, but it doesn't help the average laymen see the point. The point is, whether it's a believing husband with an unbelieving wife or a believing wife with an unbelieving husband the rule of thumb is no **divorce**. As long as the unbeliever is willing to **live with him or her**, there is no reason for the believer to initiate a divorce.

They had mixed marriages just like we do now. Now the way the Corinthians came into these mixed marriages was before Paul and Apollos came and preached the gospel, they were married as unbelievers, then one spouse believed and the other one didn't. So that's how they got into mixed marriages. But no matter how you got into a mixed marriage, whether you were already a believer or not, the rule of thumb is you don't divorce the unbeliever to remarry a believer or to go be single. It is always better to stay married to an unbeliever than to divorce and remarry a believer. That may sound strange but that is exactly what Paul teaches and he has good reasons for it, namely verse 14.

Notice verse 14, **For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.** There are two things here; the spouse and the children. First of all the spouse, the **unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife** and vice versa. It goes both ways. Now, that does not mean they are saved by the wife

or husband in the sense that because they are married to you they get a free pass to heaven. You are only saved through personal faith in Jesus Christ. Something else is going on here. So let's take the word **sanctified**, *agiazo*, very similar to the word at the end of the verse, **holy**, *agios*. One is the verb, one is the noun. The verb, translated **sanctified** means, "sanctity due to contact." I'll draw this out in a moment but turn to Exod 29:37 to see what it means. Usually we think that if we put something corrupting together with something pure then the whole thing is corrupted, that's what we saw in chapter 5 with the fornicating man corrupting the entire congregation, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. But in this case and other cases in Scripture it's exactly the opposite, when the corrupt thing comes into contact with the pure thing the corrupt thing is made pure. It's very strange to see this work the other way and I don't know all the reasons why but I suspect it has something to do with the design of things in creation and how they get mixed together, some things are okay to mix, other things are not. I don't know all the individual cases but the Mosaic Law goes into don't put this seed with that seed and you can put these things together. It's an area Christians need to analyze because they could make some tremendous discoveries in food, science, etc... Observe Exodus 29:37, "For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, *and* whatever touches the altar shall be holy." There you have an example of things obviously unholy, but when they touch the altar, they become holy, they become holy through contact. That's very interesting. Now let's come back to 1 Cor 7:14 and transfer that picture to an unbelieving spouse being married to a believing spouse. Whoever the unbeliever is they are sanctified by contact with the believer. That's what verse 14 says. So how are they sanctified? What does that mean? It means the unbeliever now has contact with the truth. Day after day he has access to a believer who has the truth. Maybe they talk about issues, political issues, the believer talks about issues in terms of the truth of the word of God and through that the unbeliever is exposed to gospel truth. Whatever they talk about the unbeliever is contacting the truth. That's what Paul means - they are sanctified. So by all means, don't send them away because you have the truth and you can rub them with the truth. Now, this is going to continue on down in verse 16, because the obvious goal is that perhaps through this contact with the truth your unbelieving spouse will be saved. So then we learn something very important and that is this, God sovereignly put you two together in that situation.

You started off two unbelievers marrying, notice, there's nothing here endorsing a believer deliberately marrying an unbeliever, which is absolutely contrary to the word of God, I wouldn't date one either because that's not the right environment for evangelism. These at Corinth came into the marriage both as unbelievers, then Paul came and preached the gospel, and one believed. Apollos came and taught the word of God, some other one believed, now you have mixed marriages. In that situation, by all means don't divorce. Why not? Because who set this all up to begin with? God did. Now, why do you think He did that? This is the sovereignty of God at work in salvation. See, God doesn't just zap people and save them. It's not like He's playing a video game and you come across His screen and He says boom, I want that guy and He zaps you with salvation. No, there's a sanctifying work that God the Holy Spirit does prior to salvation, He's setting you apart through Suzy's prayers and Joe's preaching the gospel and your spouses' behavior, and God uses all these things to set you apart in preparation for responding to the gospel. You don't know it's really happening at the time, you're an unbeliever, you are just living your life, but A comes into your life, B comes into your life, C comes into your life and then one day you believe. Later you look back and you see. Hey, God sent A, God sent B, God sent C. God was doing all sorts of things to prepare you so that one fine day you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved.

Turn to 2 Thess 2:13. This is a passage that teaches the pre-salvific work of God in unbeliever's lives. He does this through various means. Now this passage is one of the grandest statements on the plan of God past, present and future bringing about salvation. I just want to look at one part, the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit. Notice, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation," that's the eternal plan of election. But notice how it effected it in time, "through sanctification by the Spirit," that right there is the setting apart work of the Holy Spirit in advance of faith, then comes the faith, "faith in the truth" and he goes on to say it's all for the purpose "that we will gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." So that's the total package of salvation, but the important point we want to draw out is that in history there are means God uses to bring people to faith, it doesn't just happen out of the blue one day, you're just sitting there on the pot and boom, you're born again. People like to try and argue that with Paul's

conversion on the Damascus Road in Acts 9, it looks like, if you take it out of context God just went wham. But if you're careful with the exegesis of Luke's book of Acts you see there is a preparatory work of the Spirit going on starting as early as Acts 6. Every indication is that Stephen debated with Saul and Saul got whooped real good; he didn't like that very much and so Stephen is put on trial in Acts 7. When it's all said and done, who is standing there approving Stephen's execution? None other than Saul. Why is Saul there? Because he was the one who initiated it. Saul was no dummy, he saw that if what Stephen was saying was true then Judaism was finished. And he didn't like that so much. So when you come to Acts 9, Saul on the way to Damascus to kill Christians, yeah, the Lord does do a tremendous work in Saul's life, but that was the final straw in a progression that led to that moment. There was a preparatory work of the Spirit in Saul's life prior to conversion on the Damascus Road.

The point is, going back to 1 Cor 7:14, that if you are married to an unbeliever, you are that sanctifying link; you are in a key position by the sovereignty of God. Now your unbelieving spouse has contact with you and you carry the truth. That may be the only reason you ever married them, for their salvation. So get out of your mind you are supposed to get something out of the other person in marriage, this isn't about you, this is about God, this is about eternal life, this is about the other person's eternal destiny and you are the link! God put you there.

Now if you turn back to chapter 3, verse 5 I want to recall your attention to this truth we learned earlier. I never heard this taught, I never read this in a commentary and I don't know why not; this could be deduced from the sovereignty of God in salvation but it is also taught directly in the text. This is the way Paul thought, here I am, I am a missionary, I go to town after town and when I go to a town and preach the gospel there are certain people allotted to me, certain people God has said, these people are going to come to faith through me and those over there, they're not going to come to faith through me, they're going to come to faith through someone else, maybe Apollos. That's what he's saying right here in verse 5, "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one." Not gave *opportunity*, scratch that out, that's not in the original, the point is who did you believe through? I believed through my father, he was the one through whom I believed. Why? Because God gave me

to him as a convert. That's why. I was assigned to him. What does that make my dad? A servant. And it's that way with all of us. Some believed through Paul, some believed through Apollos, some believed through Jesus, some believed through Wesley, some believed through you. What does that make you? Nothing but a servant. What does that make God? Everything. Paul always took it back to God, God gets the glory. Not us. Now take that truth and come back to 1 Cor 7:14 and it's quite easy to see what the apostle Paul means. If you are a believer married to an unbeliever today Paul says, don't divorce them because you may be the one through whom your unbelieving spouse will believe, they may be assigned to you. That is the way Paul thought and that is the way God works. God has assigned each of us to come to faith through someone. And often it is the spouse, even more often it is the parents to the children like me; not all of the time, obviously, but the vast majority of the time God has appointed children to come to faith through their parents. And often God has appointed spouses to come to faith through the believing spouse. So don't divorce them because God put you and them together for a purpose and that purpose may be their salvation.

Now another purpose for not divorcing lurks at the end of verse 14 and that's the children. **for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.** Now let's dismiss the idea that this is talking about infant salvation. Say your baby dies at a year old, that's a tragedy and I'll deal with it in a moment but this passage does not directly deal with that question, because first of all it's not dealing with infants, there is a Greek word for infants, *nepios*, and there is a different Greek word for children, which is the word used here, *tekno*s, sometimes these words overlap but generally speaking *tekno*s refers to children 4 or 5 years old, kids who can understand the gospel if you worked with them, whereas *nepios* refers to little bitties and they don't even know what you're saying, goo, goo, ga, ga, can't grasp the gospel yet. So this really isn't dealing with infant salvation, some people have come to this and said, see, in a mixed marriage the infants are born holy, meaning if they die they'll go to heaven. But if they're born to unbelievers then they're unclean and if they die they'll go to hell. More often in Church History, since Augustine, they said you have to have them infant baptized, but that has nothing to do with the Scripture and any kind of idea like that is completely foreign to this text. But since we're here let me say a few words about infant salvation. There's not anything in Scripture directly addressing the issue but I do hold to infant salvation. I think all infants are saved and

the reason is because I think it's a logical implication of two other doctrines. First of all, that Christ died for all, unlimited atonement, Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, and secondly, the human responsibility of faith, you have to believe the gospel in order to be saved. But the problem with little bitties is they can't meet that condition because they don't understand words, they can't speak, they can't think, so in my humble opinion I think God does not hold them to that responsibility and on the basis of Christ's death for them He saves them. And we could show some passages that support this indirectly, like David saying of his first son born to Bathsheba, who died only seven days old, what did David say? Here's an uncircumcised baby boy, dies seven days old and what was David's response? "He will not come to me, but I will go to him." Well, where is David going? Surely David is a believer. So David believed in infant salvation, at least of his infant. People could argue, yeah, but the reason David's infant was saved was because David was saved. If David was not saved David could not have said that. So you can see there are counter arguments to that kind of passage. But the two main things are the unlimited atonement and God's grace in saving those who are unable to even understand the terms of the gospel, namely infants but also mentally retarded, etc...And finally, on the infant salvation question, don't worry about it. Will not the judge of the earth do what is right? God always does what's right. What's your problem? Do you have to have Him spell it out for you? Get over it and trust Him. He never did anything wrong. We're the one's who do wrong, so trust Him; He's got it under control.

Now if verse 14 doesn't have anything to do with infant salvation what does it have to do with? First of all the tough word here is **unclean**, that throws people, but if you contrast it with the earlier word **sanctified**, the unbelieving husband or wife is **sanctified** by the believing spouse, knowing that it means sanctity due to contact, then **unclean** means no sanctity due to contact. The kids are out of contact with the truth because they are out of contact with the believing parent. Now there are special issues underlying this text that presuppose you know the Roman Laws of divorce and child custody so we'll explain that in a minute; they're not our divorce and custody laws at all.

So let's take a situation in 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome. Here's Joey and Suzy, brother and sister, two kids born to you. You're a believing woman, but your husband is an unbeliever. You divorce your unbelieving husband. Paul is saying Joey



and Suzy aren't going to come into contact with the things of God at all because you were the link, now you're out of the picture, **your children are unclean**. You say, why's that? What if the believing woman gets custody of the kids. Uh, uh, uh, not under Roman Law. The children of divorced parents in the Roman Empire belonged to the father. And almost no women brought custody suits in Rome because it was just a waste of time. If the father had any desire whatsoever to have them, and he usually did, he always won. So it was heavily favored toward the men. And if you ticked your husband off he could make sure you never saw your children again, ever. That's what Paul is so concerned about here. Don't divorce; you're the kids only link to truth, if you divorce they are unclean, no link to truth.

Now, you say, well, what if the husband was the believer and the wife was the unbeliever? He could divorce her and then they could really get exposed to truth because they wouldn't have that pagan woman disrupting things. Well, the NT answer is that just didn't happen very often. It did happen; Paul's verse covers that rare situation. But what do we read over and over in the Book of Acts? When Luke gives gospel reports of those who responded what do you read time and time again?

Luke reported two very interesting things. The first thing he reported was that when a father of a household came to faith guess who else came to faith? The rest of the household. You see it at Cornelius' house in Acts 10, the whole household believed. They followed the father. You see it at Philippi with the Philippian jailer in Acts 16. Paul spoke the word to his whole household and what did the whole household do? They believed. You even see it at Corinth. Remember the first leader of the synagogue, Crispus, he came to faith and what did his household do? They also believed. Then you see it again at Corinth when Sosthenes, the replacement leader of the synagogue came to faith, and guess what his household did? They also believed. Over and over you see that when the father came to Christ, the family followed.

But it didn't work the other way around. When the women came to faith their husbands and kids did not necessarily follow. And the Book of Acts reports this strange anomaly, especially in Europe, where Corinth is, of Gentile women coming to faith. This is extremely odd. The only conclusion you can come to is that Luke had never seen anything like it, masses of Gentile women coming to faith. One reason Christianity was so popular with the

women was when they heard the gospel message they connected that with a freedom they had never known. Hey, I may be chained to this idiot husband but Christ sets me free in the most fundamental way. And so you had a lot of women coming to faith. But the husbands and kids did not normally follow. And what that means is that in Europe, where Corinth was, you had a lot of believing wives with unbelieving husbands. And who were the custody laws in favor of? The father. So if the wives divorced their husbands they might never see their kids again. Then the truth link is gone, your kids have no access to the gospel through you. Paul says, for the sake of the children don't do it.

So that's the situation Paul is addressing. And without the background from Acts you could get the idea that verse 14 is balanced; you had an equal amount of believing husbands with unbelieving wives as believing wives and unbelieving husbands. That couldn't be more wrong. This is heavily lopsided toward believing wives which makes it all the more serious a situation because of the custody laws of Rome.

Now, wrapping up vv 13 and 14 I want to make the general observation that the text makes very powerfully; namely God uses means to save people. Sometimes people are so intense on the sovereignty of God in salvation that they don't emphasize enough the means that God uses to accomplish His salvation. For example, the Sunday we taught 2 Thess 2:13-14 which we turned to earlier and which discusses the pre-salvation work of the Spirit, I had a group of Reformed Calvinists visiting, one of whom was a seminary student in a Reformed Calvinist seminary and after the lesson one of them said to me, you're right, we do not emphasize enough the means God uses to accomplish salvation. Because the tendency among some of them is to protect the sovereignty of God in salvation we don't allow any human involvement. Now I'm not involving humans in the way some people think; God is the only one who saves. It is 100% His work. But He has given human means by which people are saved. For example, what did Paul say in Rom 10? How will they believe if they don't hear the gospel? And how will they hear the gospel if a preacher is not sent? So gospel preaching is a means, preachers are means, prayer is a means, circumstances in life are means, your life before unbelievers is a means? God uses all these things to bring people to salvation. And two of the most common means God uses are packed right here in verse 14, spouses and parents. Those are very influential positions and they should

be used as such, for the sake of the gospel. For goodness sake don't sit there and say, well, I just want my kid to think for himself, because if you do, he will and you won't like it one bit because kids are born brats, they're depraved in Adam and you are only sowing a disaster to be reaped later. Don't you believe the sovereignty of God? Don't you believe God made you the parent of that child for the very important reason that you are to rub his or her nose in the truth, so they have contact with truth? That's your responsibility. Now that doesn't mean don't share with them what the world believes too. I do that and I make my children think through it so they see how pagans think so they understand the world outside of them. You can't shelter them from that forever because one day they're going to be dropped out there in the world and then boom, they're going to be bombarded with it and they're not going to know how to handle themselves. So you train them to think biblically so they can critically analyze paganism. I'm not afraid of paganism, it is not a threat, there is nothing to it, it's vanity, less than a vanity. Paul didn't have a problem with it, one pagan parent, one believing parent, you think Paul was scared? Nonsense. He didn't say run and get away, he said stay. That is why you are there, to rub their nose in the truth, to show them the difference, you may be the tool God uses to bring them to salvation.

And by the way, that is why adoption is so very important. Think of the situation some of these kids come out of and now they are in a Christian home, or at least a half-Christian home, now they have the opportunity get their noses rubbed in truth. That is entirely significant. So don't take your responsibility lightly, you are the light in that child's life, you are the light in your unbelieving spouse's life, you, you, you. He put you there!

Now, verse 15 we have an exception and this has to do with the unbelieving one initiating the divorce. What if that happens? Should the believer fight to hold the marriage together? Well, what does Paul say? **Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.** Now the point is not to say that you as a believer ought to act like an ass so the unbeliever wants to leave you and that way you are free to remarry. People have tried that interpretation of this verse and that's why this verse has been called "The Notorious Pauline Privilege." Paul, they say, is telling believing spouses if your unbelieving spouse leaves you, you are set free to re-marry.<sup>1</sup>

The first thing I want to say about that is that the verse absolutely says nothing at all about remarriage. Where do you see remarriage in there! It says let them divorce you, don't hinder that, but it says nothing at all about remarrying somebody else. That is a joke and that is sorry exegesis. I'm sorry to rain on some people's parade but that is not possible from the grammar even though many people have tried to force that on the passage. What they try to press is the word **bondage**. They say, see, they're not in bondage to the unbeliever anymore and since they are not in bondage they can remarry since being bound to someone in marriage is the real issue. And the rest of the NT teaches that you are bound until the partner dies, that's verse 39, that's Rom 7:2, that's Jesus in Mark 10 and Matt 19. Over and over the issue is as long as your spouse is alive you are bound. So here they say, aha, now we have an out. Paul says they are not in bondage. Wrong, wrong, wrong. Sorry. Not only is the Greek word different, it's not the same word for being bound to a husband or wife but the point is that you as the believer are not to stand in their way. You're not to refuse divorce because if you do that you're just going to cause unnecessary frustration and enmity. And God hasn't called us to be thorns in the side of unbelievers. He has called us to what? To **peace**. That is, let them go. Don't stand in their way; if they want a divorce let them have one and in the end that will be better for the overall situation. You can express that you don't want a divorce but don't stand in their way, you are not in bondage in that case, you don't have to stay married, you can let them divorce you.

But you are still bound to them technically, by the covenant, and for a believer in this situation verse 11 would kick in. In this case you have two options; you must remain unmarried or else be reconciled. Those are both valid options at that point. And don't throw these out as unrealistic. Maybe the person becomes a believer later and wants to be reconciled. That has happened before in history, many, many times. Otherwise however, you should remain unmarried.

Now, on that note, I'm not sure Jesus understood 21<sup>st</sup> century marriage and divorce practices. I mean that sarcastically but the point is, my goodness, we are in a melting pot of sin here. When we're trying to find a way to justify our divorce and remarriage we have a really big sin problem going on in our hearts. And Jesus said it was hardness of heart. And what is it that hardens hearts? Sin. And a big pile of it. Now some of you want me to go into a big

spiel and answer all the questions you have about divorce and remarriage, all the possible situations, etc...Now I can do that and if you want me to I will do that, but it will take a few weeks to do it and I'd like to get through this chapter first since this is part of it. But there are many, many passages throughout the word of God that are involved many you may not even know of. There's Hosea, the whole book of Hosea, all 14 chapters make an argument for no divorce, even with fornication going on. Malachi says God hates divorce so it makes the case against divorce, then you have Ezra, where the Jews intermarried with pagan wives and they were told to divorce them and send them away, so that has to be explained. Deut 24 is the argument where Moses permitted divorce, but why did he permit it? Because of hardness of heart. What if they had a soft heart? Then you have Matt 5, 19 and Mark 10, all Jesus arguing for no divorce and remarriage on the basis of the creation design in Gen 2. Gen 2 being the passage that establishes marriage as a divine institution, which means that violation of this institution has especially large repercussions, not just like any other sin, this one has much farther consequences. Which brings into the argument the fact that Israel had four wives, did you know that? The nation Israel is spawned from one man with four different women and look what happened to the nation, a disaster. The OT nation just goes down, down and down further into depravity. Then you have the individual example of David and that gets you into law and grace and how when we confess, genuinely confess (because there can be false confessions, Malachi and Hosea both record false confessions, gimmick confessions, people just mouthing the words, oh I sinned and there was no restoration, God was very upset with gimmick confessions, it has to be genuine, and if it is genuine, from the heart), then we are restored to fellowship instantly, but the consequences are not erased. So now we're dealing with the situation of damage control. And God gave David the grace to deal with all the damage control. Four sons would die, the prophet said, as consequences of David's sin, and the grace was given to David to deal with that. Four body bags, just imagine, four of your children dying and you have to live through that. Your daughter lies naked and has sex in public, you have to deal with that, God says, I will give you the grace to deal with that damage David. And God does give us the grace to deal with that damage. And David utilized the grace and that's why he was called a man after God's own heart. He said, alright I see bodies coming in here but I'm not going to get mad at God, this is my doing, I brought this upon myself and the Lord will give me the grace to get through it. And he did. So

understand there is law and grace in this and the grace is given to help you deal with the damage. That stuff doesn't just disappear because you confess your sin, and anyone who's opened their eyeballs to these situations knows the stuff doesn't disappear. It just goes on and on like it did for David. But there's not a single person here that even knows the extent of the damage. The economic fallout annually in this country alone - the first study has been done for all 50 states by the American Institute of Values and the annual cost in our country for divorce is 120 billion dollars, that's just the economics of it. That's not including the children and the tremendous increase in likelihood that they will get divorced or the tremendous increase in worse test scores, the high likelihood of child poverty. This is a ball that keeps on rolling and that's why Paul says in 1 Cor 7:17 and 18, just stay where you are, don't move; if you're married stay married, if you're divorced, stay divorced, don't change a thing because every time you change something you create more damage and so just stop it already.

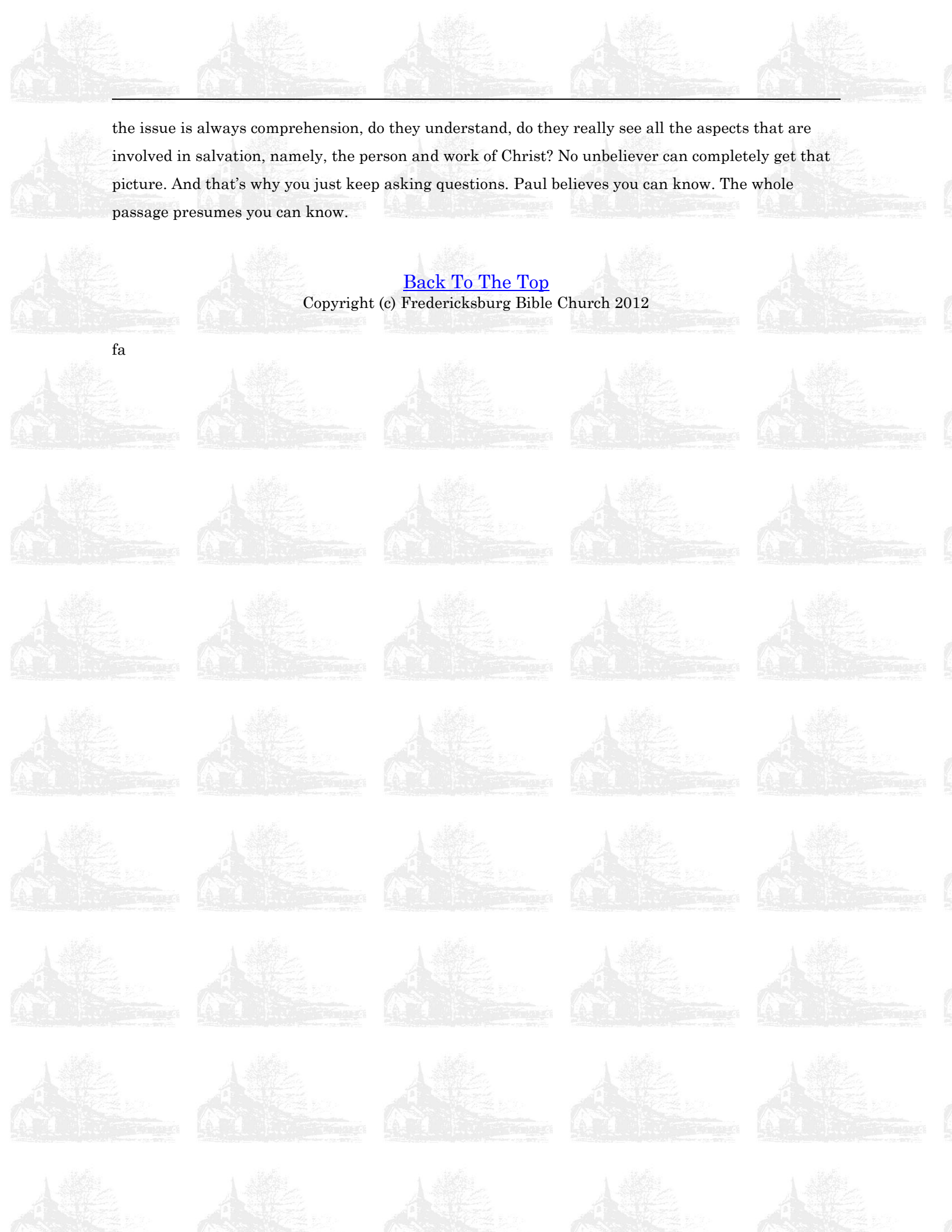
Now the bottom line of the whole thing gets down to choosing the right mate, choosing wisely. And that's where we need to focus our attention so far as the next generation is concerned. But the Bible also recognizes some of us come into the Christian life in these situations and we already have damage control so we have to work with what we have and don't go around condemning people and running off at the mouth; people have to start getting on the right track somewhere. So it's not a big bash session. You want them to get into the word of God and grow. But you have to understand at the same time we are really in a bad way with the marriage and divorce thing. It is not taken seriously and the bottom line gets down to helping our young people make the right choice of a partner, that's the number one thing, not choosing to marry someone just because I can't control my hormones. And those of us who have made mistakes, forget about it, move on, there's nothing we can do about it, except help the young people to not make the mistakes you and I made. Be ready to tell them, hey, I really messed this one up, don't follow me, follow the word of God, God knows best. But if you did screw up don't sit around and mope and think Jeremy's coming down on me and all the rest of it. Hey, I didn't write this book and we're all sinners. This isn't a heaven/hell issue. You're still saved, has nothing to do with that. It will affect your fellowship, it will affect your rewards, and sin affects all of our rewards. But get over it and do something about it now, you can't go back and change anything, but now you can help Christians realize the seriousness of

marriage. We've got to help our young people realize the seriousness of marriage because we're losing it folks. And we've got to help them realize the importance of choosing the right mate. That's what it all gets back to, we did an idiot thing and then ten years later we said, hey, this person is mean to me, I don't like them, I don't have to put up with it and I want out, I'm a victim, poor me. No, you are not a victim, you made a bad choice. Now admit it and get with the program. Now, granted, if they're abusing you, what am I going to counsel? I'm not going to send you back home to get your face bashed in. Obviously you separate for a time, go live with your parents or something. But you don't just jump into a divorce. You give the person time to change. Everybody needs time to change and heal. Aren't you thankful God gave you time to change from an unbeliever to a believer? He didn't have to do that but He's gracious. So be gracious to the person, we all know it takes time to change. The thing is we want everyone to give us time to change but we don't want to give anyone else time to change. Well, what kind of attitude is that? It's a sorry one.

Well that's the basic story but if you want the full version that deals with all of those passages you'll have to let me know because this isn't a biblical theology class that covers all the passages on divorce and remarriage. And I'm willing to do that but I gave you a quick overview of what I think you'll find if you go into those passages.

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<sup>i</sup> This is absurd on the face of it. For someone may well say, well, I can remarry because I don't think my husband or wife was *really* a believer. Well now were they or not? And by the way, Paul assumes throughout the passage that we can know who is a believer and who is not. The passage is total nonsense if we can't know that. Yet I continue to hear believers say, well, we just can't see in their hearts whether they believe or not. Give me a break. You're taking a right principle and applying it to a wrong situation. You want to know if someone is a believer, ask them, hey, how sure are you if you died today you'd go to heaven? The answer to that question will tell you. Then, just to be sure they understand the gospel, ask them, okay, why do you think that? What do you believe that makes you so sure? Then listen for the answer. Don't give them the answer, don't give them all the stuff and then say, do you believe that, because all they have to do to get you out of their face is say, yeah, yeah, I believe that. And the whole thing is a sham. What you're interested in is can this person explain the gospel clearly. And if you start asking little questions about this and that you'll find out. A slick unbeliever cannot get out of my office without me knowing because I ask enough questions benignly but necessary to the gospel and no unbeliever can get them all right, only a believer can. So



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the issue is always comprehension, do they understand, do they really see all the aspects that are involved in salvation, namely, the person and work of Christ? No unbeliever can completely get that picture. And that's why you just keep asking questions. Paul believes you can know. The whole passage presumes you can know.

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