

Masterwork of the Messiah

Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

Rockin' Relationships

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

January 19, 2014



What should be qualitatively different about Christian people? Our relationships ... how we respond to each other, first and foremost. Many verses give us the much needed instruction:

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love ...” (Romans 12:10).

“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (Romans 13:8).

When it comes to other believers, our love for them should be readily seen and known. That love, in turn, should also be evidenced toward those who don't know God:

“For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Galatians 5:14).

There is no doubt that all of our relationships should be known for the presence of Christ's unconditional, unflinching love. This is what sets us apart as kingdom people, the kind of people Jesus spoke about in His Sermon on the Mount. But there is so much more.

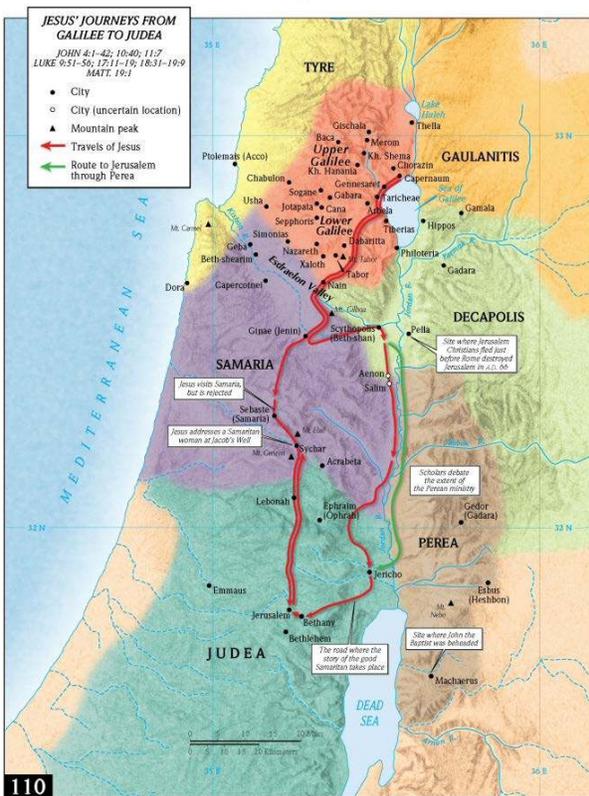
As Jesus headed toward the cross in Jerusalem, He focused His specialized teaching to His disciples around radical relationship concepts, concepts which mirrored and expanded on what He had taught in His first sermon. From Matthew chapter 18 through chapter 20, He

circled back around and addressed those core points He had introduced years earlier: the sanctity of marriage (Matthew 19:3-12; Matthew 5:31-32), the humble status of those who will receive the kingdom (19:4; 5:3-10), the importance of the Mosaic Law (19:18-19; 5:17-48), the concept of acquiring heavenly treasure (19:21; 6:19-21), the danger of loving money above all else (19:21; 5:48) to name a few. By doing this, Jesus stressed just how differently we, as His followers, His kingdom members, are to live as we await the consummation of the kingdom. Above all else, our respect and reverence for Him as our Savior/Messiah should radically impact every facet of our lives and touch upon all of our relationships in a powerful, instructive fashion.

In chapter 18, Jesus showed us just how differently we should live. We are to go out and attempt to find those sheep who've strayed from the fold instead of abandoning them (Matthew 18:10-14), we are to confront other believers, in love, when they sin with the goal of restoring the broken relationship (Matthew 18:15-20), we are to forgive those who wrong us as God forgives: freely, kindly, and continually (Matthew 18:21-35). In light of all of this, I must ask, "How are you doing at really living differently as a believer? Is your faith in Christ making any appreciable difference?" It should.

In chapter 19, Jesus moved to "the region of Judea beyond the Jordan," which is probably

Perea (Matthew 19:1-2). Herod Antipas ruled this area, along with Galilee, and it, too, had large Jewish population Jesus could address with His gospel. And, as occurred in His Galilean ministry, massive crowds followed Him and He, out of great compassion, healed all those who had debilitating diseases (as before in Galilee; Matthew 4:24; 8:16; 12:15, 22; 14:14; 15:30); thereby definitively demonstrating His deity and messianic qualifications as prophesied (Isaiah 29:17-18; 32:1-3; 35:4-6; 42:5-7). And, as occurred in Galilee, opposition from the religious authorities, who were threatened by His profound and powerful teaching, continued to increase. Chapter 19 introduces us to a group of godless Pharisees bent on trapping Jesus in a theological issue so they can remove, or at least silence Him. Imagine the depths of their unbelief. Despite irrefutable evidences substantiating His absolute messianic deity they chose to hang tightly onto their false religious system. Do not tell



me false teaching does not blind.

Christ's pointed (and prickly) response to them will put them in their theological place, but it will also serve to teach His saints how other-worldly our relationships should be as His kingdom people. Hence, though the passage is a negative rebuke, it does, in fact, teach positive relational truths; therefore, I wish to present the spiritual import of this entire pericope with a positive thrust:

God Wants Our Relationships To Rock (Matthew 19:1-12)

Stated differently, Jesus wants our relationships to be amazing, to do well, to be vastly different than those of the lost around us so they ultimately are a model to learn from and live by. In verses 1 through 9, we bump into the first relational concept:

Our Marriages Should Rock (Matthew 19:1-9)

If anything, the marriages of the Pharisees did not rock. No, many of their marriages were, well, on the rocks because of their low, watered-down view of marriage. They, who had strings of divorces following them, came to Jesus with a question about divorce.

³ And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" ⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh ' ? ⁶ "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Underline the word “testing.” It comes from the Greek *peirazo* (πειράζω) which speaks of entrapping someone in an inquiry so you can sideline them (Matthew 16:1; 22:18, 35; Mark 8:11; 10:2; 12:15; Luke 11:16; 20:23).¹ They had no intention whatsoever in learning from Jesus. No,

¹ Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature gives us the for lexical meanings, none of which are positive: **πειράζω** impf. ἐπειράζον; fut. πειράσω; 1 aor. ἐπειράσα, mid. 2 sg. ἐπειράσω. Pass.: 1 aor. ἐπειράσθην; pf. ptc. πεπειρασένος (fr. πείρα; Hom., then Apollon. Rhod. 1, 495; 3, 10. In prose since Philo Mech. 50, 34; 51, 9; also Polyb.; Plut., Cleom. 808 [7, 3], Mor. 230a; Vett. Val. 17, 6; schol. on Aristoph., Pl. 575; PSI 927, 25 [II A.D.]; LXX; TestJos 16:3 v.l.; ApcSed 8:5 p. 133, 5 Ja.; Joseph.; Just., D. 103, 6; 125, 4.—B-D-F §101 p. 54; Mlt-H. 387 n. 1; 404).

① **to make an effort to do someth., try, attempt** at times in a context indicating futility (ὁ θεὸς τῶν πειράζοντι δοῦς ἐξουσίαν τὴν τοῦ διωκεῖν ἡμᾶς Orig., C. Cels. 8, 70, 11) w. inf. foll. (Polyb. 2, 6, 9; Dt 4:34.—B-D-F §392, 1a) **Ac 9:26; 16:7; 24:6**; Hs 8, 2, 7. Foll. by acc. w. inf. IMg 7:1. Abs. Hs 8, 2, 7.

② **to endeavor to discover the nature or character of someth. by testing, try, make trial of, put to the test**

ⓐ gener. τινά *someone* (Epict. 1, 9, 29; Ps 25:2) ἑαυτοῦς πειράζετε εἰ ἔστέ ἐν τῇ πίστει **2 Cor 13:5** (π. εἰ as Jos., Bell. 4, 340). **p 793** ἐπειράσας τοὺς λέγοντας ἑαυτοῦς ἀποστόλους **Rv 2:2**. προφήτην οὐ πειράσετε οὐδὲ διακρινεῖτε D 11:7.

ⓑ of God or Christ, who put people to the test, in a favorable sense (Ps.-Apollod. 3, 7; 7, 4 Zeus puts τὴν ἀσέβειαν of certain people to the test), so that they may prove themselves true **J 6:6; Hb 11:17** (Abraham, as Gen 22:1). Also of painful trials sent by God (Ex 20:20; Dt 8:2 v.l.; Judg 2:22; Wsd 3:5; 11:9; Jdth 8:25f) **1 Cor 10:13; Hb 2:18ab; 4:15** (s. πειράω); **11:37** v.l.; **Rv 3:10** (SBrown, JBL 85, '66, 308–14 π.=afflict). Likew. of the measures taken by the angel of repentance Hs 7:1.

ⓒ The Bible (but s. the Pythia in Hdt. 6, 86, 3 τὸ πειρηθῆναι τοῦ θεοῦ κ. τὸ ποιῆσαι ἴσον δύνασθαι ‘to have tempted the deity was as bad as doing the deed’; cp. 1, 159) also speaks of a trial of God by humans. Their intent is to put God to the test, to discover whether God really can do a certain thing, esp. whether God notices sin and is able to punish it (Ex 17:2, 7; Num 14:22; Is 7:12; Ps 77:41, 56; Wsd 1:2 al.) **1 Cor 10:9; Hb 3:9** (Ps 94:9). τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου **Ac 5:9**. In **Ac 15:10** the πειράζειν τὸν θεόν consists in the fact that after God’s will has been clearly made known through granting of the Spirit to the Gentiles (vs. 8), some doubt and make trial to see whether God’s will really becomes operative. τὸν διὰ σου θεόν πειράσαι θέλων, εἰ *since I want to put the god (you proclaim) to a test,*

their whole motivation was focused on getting Him out of their way, and what better approach than to ask Him to answer a loaded question of the nature which got John the Baptist beheaded? You will remember, John lost his life because he dared to speak out against the adultery in the life of the King. Mark this well as we head into ever-darkening immoral times: Those who hate the moral light of the Word of God will attempt to silence us by asking us loaded questions about our stance hot button issues, and those issues, as in Christ's time, will typically be concerned with the world's flimsy view of marriage and sexuality.

For the Pharisees, the burning question of the day they loved to debate with those more conservative religious leaders, who had been influenced by Rabbi Shammai, was this:

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?"

Shammai said you could never divorce for any reason. On the contrary, because of the influence of Rabbi Hillel, the Pharisees believed you could, in fact, divorce your wife for just about any reason you could cook or dream up. The debate centered on the teaching of Moses in Deuteronomy 24.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house, ..."

These sexually deviant religious leaders camped on that word "indecency," and interpreted it so broadly they could, in good conscience, trade one wife for another for just about any reason whatsoever. For instance, he could divorced her if she ruined a dinner, or if he found a woman who was more attractive, or if she put too much salt in his food, or if she took her hair down in public and so forth.

Don't laugh at their looseness because our culture is in lock step with them. Why do couples get divorced today? The reasons will all sound so Hillelish ...

- We just grew apart over the years.
- He has anger issues.
- She is so moody. She didn't used to be like that.
- She just let herself go after the second child.
- We are not compatible anymore.
- We just don't have anything in common.
- He doesn't pay enough attention to me.

whether AcPt Ox 849, 20–22 followed by οὐ πειράζεται ὁ θεός *God refuses to be put to a test.*—ASommer, D. Begriff d. Versuchung im AT u. Judentum, diss. Breslau '35. S. πειράω.

③ **to attempt to entrap through a process of inquiry, test.** Jesus was so treated by his opponents, who planned to use their findings against him **Mt 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; Mk 8:11; 10:2; 12:15; Lk 11:16; 20:23** v.l.; **J 8:6.**

④ **to entice to improper behavior, tempt** **Gal 6:1; Js 1:13a** (s. ἀπό 5εβ) and **b, 14** (Aeschin. 1, 190 the gods do not lead people to sin). Above all the devil works in this way; hence he is directly called ὁ πειράζων *the tempter* **Mt 4:3; 1 Th 3:5b.** He tempts humans **Ac 5:3** v.l.; **1 Cor 7:5; 1 Th 3:5a; Rv 2:10.** But he also makes bold to tempt Jesus (Just.. D. 103, 6; Orig., C. Cels. 6, 43, 28) **Mt 4:1; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:2** (cp. use of the pass. without ref. to the devil: ἐν τῷ πειράζεσθαι ... καὶ σταυροῦσθαι *Iren. 3, 19, 3.*

- She has personal habits which just drive me crazy.
- She ignores me sexually.
- He has a drinking problem.

And on and on go the rationalizations for a so-called easy divorce. These didn't come out of thin air either. I hear them all the time from religious people.

Christ's response, really His rebuke, to the Pharisees gives us to reasons why your first marriage should rock.

Because Of Its Structure (Matthew 19:4-6). What is the divine structure of marriage? Is it built in such a flimsy fashion it can be traded as easily as a baseball trading card? Wrap your heart and mind around Christ's timely teaching:

⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh '? ⁶ "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

In Greek, the first word of Christ's response is "not" (Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε), making it highly emphatic. He just verbally thumped them, big time. It is as if He said sarcastically, "Have not you, of all people, read what God says about marriage in Genesis?" Of course they had, but, like most selfish, sinful religious people they focused on a verse they could twist to support their desire to do something which ran counter to other biblical teaching. Instead of looking for a verse or two to support getting a divorce, Jesus basically said, "You men, of all men, should be asking, 'When God created marriage, what was His main goal with the institution?'"

Jesus answered their question by quoting from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. Both of these texts pre-dated the Mosaic text by, at least, 1,400 years. The first quote clearly demonstrates that from the beginning (a phrase reminiscent of Genesis 1:1, viz., "in the beginning") God designed marriage relationships to be between one man and one woman. He didn't create one man and five women (polygamy), nor did He create one man for one man (homosexuality), or one woman for one woman (lesbianism). No, God specifically made one man to be complete by being with one woman for life, and other people were originally not around to serve as potential other choices. The emphasis couldn't have been clearer: Marriage was/is to be about oneness.

What is another divine goal for this unified relationship? To establish dominion and rule over the earth by means of creating progeny:

"And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1).

Only a viable relationship between one man and one woman could/can achieve this divinely ordained goal. All other relational combinations are warped versions of the perfect version. God was, from the very beginning, therefore, concerned with the oneness of the male/female relationship.

By quoting Genesis 2:24, Jesus underscores not only that He believed in the historicity of Adam and Eve, but they were both divinely fashioned to cleave to each other and weave their lives together into complete oneness. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew for “cleave,” *dabaq* (דָּבַק) denotes a strong bond, something akin to using Super Glue on a two distinct pieces. That is what marriage is to be: a complete bonding of a man and a woman, for life. Additionally, God, says that only this kind of marriage relationship has oneness about it. He calls it “one flesh.” It is the only viable relationship where the math equation one plus one does, in fact, equal one. When did they become one flesh? They became one when they were covenanted in marriage before God. The sex act merely demonstrated, outwardly, the oneness they had achieved in that covenant.

Hence, it doesn't matter if you are married in Las Vegas, or on the beach, or in a magnificent cathedral, you are, at that precise moment, one in God's eyes, and, as Jesus says, God is the one who makes you one. The logical implication is drawn by Christ: Why in the world would you ever think of dividing what God, Himself, bonded together? Again, the rebuke of Pharisees is most powerful, and personal. God was and is all about martial oneness for life. How could they, the spiritual leaders and teachers teach and act contrary to God's timeless design?

On a practical note, all of this teaching tells us how to make sure our marriages rock: They, first of all, realize they are one in every way possible: spiritually, physically, emotionally, financially, etc. Secondly, they are careful to monitor anything which threatens oneness. Interestingly enough, when you attend a *Weekend To Remember* conference, and there just happens to be one scheduled at the Hyatt Regency in Reston on March 28th, the first thing they speak about are the five threats to God-ordained oneness: difficult adjustments, the world's 50/50 pattern, selfishness, difficulties/trials/and problems, and extramarital affairs. Perhaps one or more of these are robbing your relationship of its oneness right now. My prayer is this message will motivate you, as a couple, to do what you need to do to safeguard your oneness from further attack. You are a unified team before God. It's now time to start acting like one, especially where your oneness is concerned. I've been happily married for almost 34 years. I know firsthand how important it is to work on making sure Liz and I are pragmatically living in light of the oneness we have before God based on the covenant we took in 1980. It's now your turn to get in on the action.

Those who understand the importance of oneness in marriage know what a great marriage is all about. When there is oneness, say, in when a child should date or not date, what a curfew should be or not be, what your budget is, and so forth, there is joy and happiness in the home. And that happiness is merely an outer reflection of the oneness you possess positionally before God. So, go and work hard and creatively at living in light of that oneness.

It's true. Our marriages as kingdom members should rock because of the structure of marriage, a structure which is all about oneness. But there is more. Our marriages should rock

...

Because Of Its Stricture (Matthew 19:7-9). What is a “stricture?” Good question. According to the *New World Dictionary* it is “a limiting or restricting condition” (1410). Boundaries, in and of themselves, bring peace by letting us know where the edge of a “cliff” is. I remember the first time I walked down from Masada. As a former tree trimmer, I am not afraid of heights, but I had to really think about this descent. Here you can see the door leading to the small, steep staircase which will take you to the desert floor. The only problem is that handrail goes



away about half-way down the ominous, rocky trail. Believe me, there is something comforting and peaceful just knowing the handrail is there, just in case you lose your footing. When it goes away there is this empty feeling in your gut, especially as you look at the sheer drops from the path you are walking on.

I submit this story because it directly relates to what happened next in Christ’s exchange with the Pharisees. Thinking they had Jesus in a corner, the crafty religious leaders offered this next “innocent” question:

⁷ They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a

certificate of divorce and send her away?"

Ever so wanted a sin in your life you were willing to continue to argue against the Word of God by using the Word of God in a twisted fashion to validate your position/activity? The Pharisees were not interested in God’s lofty concept of marital oneness. On the contrary, they were only interested in a passage they could use to get out of marriages they didn’t like. Once again, the quote is from Deuteronomy 24. Their point can’t be missed, “Hey, Jesus.



Since Moses commanded, in some instances we get divorced, then divorce in those instances, and by the way there are a lot of instances, yes, then it must be valid before God, right?"

Christ wasted no time correcting them and giving them a railing they should have learned to hold onto:

⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. ⁹ "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

I'm sure the Pharisees swallowed hard at this juncture. The sinful nature of people moved God to create an exception to perpetual marital oneness, but this, in no way, was a divine command. Sin caused God to move in this fashion.

See how the Pharisees twisted the Word? They said God commanded divorce when your mate committed one of the many infractions they had come up with. God never said that, however. Divorce was only permissive, not proscriptive, and, as Jesus says, from the beginning of time, divorce has never been God's plan for marriages. In God's mind, when you are married you become one and nothing should destroy that oneness. So much for getting a divorce simply because, "We've grown apart," or "We just have irreconcilable differences." I don't know about you, but I fear we have forgotten just how important oneness is to God. We, like the Pharisees, look too often and too quickly for ways out of what we call dead-end relationships. On the contrary, we should be taking note that in God's eyes we are one in a perpetual fashion.

Jesus does state that God did permit divorce, as Moses did. Yes, divorce was permitted in Christ's mind only if one's mate committed some type of sexual sin:

⁹ "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

The Greek word for "immorality" here is *pornia* (πορνεία). Many New Testament scholars identify this word as adultery, or classify it with a mate having sex outside of marriage. The NIV certainly translates it this way (NIV Matthew 19:9. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for *marital unfaithfulness*, and marries another woman commits adultery." Lexically, this is one semantic option, but it is not the only one. Really, *pornia* speaks of a wide array of sexual sins: homosexuality, lesbianism, pedophilia, incest, adultery, molestation, prostitution, and so forth.² Ostensibly, Jesus states that divorce is permitted ... not commanded ... only when there is

² Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature: **πορνεία, ας, ή** (of various kinds of 'unsanctioned sexual intercourse': Demosth. et al.; LXX, En, Test12Patr; GrBar [in vice lists]; AscIs, Philo, apolog. exc. Ar. W. φθορά Iren. 1, 28, 1 [Harv. I 220, 14])

① **unlawful sexual intercourse, prostitution, unchastity, fornication, 1 Cor 5:1ab** (CdeVos, NTS 44, '98, 104–14); **6:13** (on **1 Cor 5–6** s. PTomson, Paul and the Jewish Law: CRINT III/1, '90, 97–102); Hm 4, 1, 1. In a vice list (cp. AscIs 2:5) **Ro 1:29** v.l. W. ἀκαθαρσία **2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5**. Differentiated fr. μοιχεία (Philo, Mos. 1, 300; s. also πορνεύω 1) **Mt 15:19; Mk 7:21** (WGabriel, Was ist 'porneia' im Sprachgebr. Jesu?: Ethik 7, '31, 106–9; 363–69); Hm 8:3; D 5:1 (the pl. denotes individual acts). On the other hand μοιχεία appears as πορνεία (cp. Sir 23:23) Hm 4, 1, 5. Of the sexual unfaithfulness of a married woman **Mt 5:32; 19:9** (for the view that ref. is made in these pass. to forbidden degrees of marriage, s. 2 below.—JSickenberger, TQ 123, '42, 189–206, ZNW 42, '49, 202ff; KStaab [παρεκτός 2]; AAllgeier, Angelicum 20, '43, 128–42. Cp. AFridrichsen, SEÅ

sexual deviancy by one of the marriage partners. Put differently, Jesus taught that if you divorced your wife based on one of the superficial reasons of the Pharisees, and you went out and got remarried, you were, in fact, committing adultery. Once more, don't you know the Pharisees stood there speechless for they were all guilty of being adulterers.

The exception clause is God's fence. How does it protect? It protects insofar as we know, as married couples, or people thinking about getting married, that marriage is for keeps in God's mind ... with little wiggle room for getting out of it if it doesn't turn out as good as we'd like. You just might need to re-read all this one more time. You should never rush into marriage without proper time for thought, prayer, and counsel, for once you say, "I do," you are one in God's eyes with your mate. According to Christ here, the only way out of the relationship if it goes south in the ensuing years is if there is some type of sexual deviancy. I would say too many believers don't give Christ's teaching the thought it deserves.

After pastoring for twenty-eight years, I have spent untold hours with troubled couples, and, believe me, no two are the same either. Every marriage is unique and has its own unique issues and problems. But if I have learned anything it is this: *Many believers in tough marriages typically want to walk away from them, knowing they don't have biblical grounds.* And when I tell them they won't be able to re-marry because that would be classified as adultery because Christ's criterion has not been met, they, almost to a person say, "Oh, you have to worry about that. I would never re-marry after what I've been through." You can guess what typically happens. They go off and get married, and in God's mind they are still one with the other mate because they didn't have biblical grounds for the divorce in question. If you are thinking about getting a divorce, and it doesn't match Christ's teaching here, you need to reconsider, my friend. Divorce in this scenario is not neutral. No, it's sinful.

9, '44, 54–58; Alsaksson, Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple, '65, 127–42 [lit.]; s. also JFitzmyer, TS 37, 76, 197–226). Caused by lust D 3:3. διὰ τὰς πορνείας **1 Cor 7:2** (the pl. points out the various factors that may bring about sexual immorality; PTomson [s. above] 103–8). BMalina, Does Porneia Mean 'Fornication'? NovT 14, '72, 10–17. φεύγειν τὴν π. **6:18**. Also ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς π. **1 Th 4:3** (cp. Tobit 4:12). ἐκ π. γεννηθῆναι *be an illegitimate child, a bastard* (cp. Cephalion [II A.D.]: 93 Fgm. 5 p. 444, 5 Jac. ἐγέννησε ἐκ πορ.; Gen 38:24) **J 8:41**. On ἀπέχεσθαι τῆς πορνείας καὶ πνικτοῦ **Ac 15:20** (cp. vs. **29; 21:25** and s. 2 below) s. the lit. s.v. πνικτός and in BBacon, The Apost. Decree against πορνεία: Exp. 8th ser., 7, 1914, 40–61.

②**participation in prohibited degrees of marriage, fornication** (s. Lev. 18:16–18; cp. Acts 15:20–29, s. Bruce, comm. Ac; **21:25**) **Mt 5:32; 19:9** (w. some favor RSmith, Matthew [Augsburg] '89,100; RGundry, Matthew '82, 91: "no need to adopt obscure definitions of πορνείας, such as marriage within the forbidden degrees. ... The specific word for adultery does not appear in the exceptive phrase simply because a general expression occurs in Deuteronomy" [24:1], but s. BWitherington, NTS 31, '85, 571–76: 'except in the case of incest'. On these pass. s. 1.).

③**immorality of a transcendent nature, fornication**, in imagery, of polytheistic cult in the mystic city Babylon, which appears in Rv as a prostitute with an international clientele. Fr. the time of Hosea the relationship betw. God and his people was regarded as a marriage bond. This usage was more easily understandable because some Semitic and Graeco-Roman cults were at times connected w. sexual debauchery (cp. Hos 6:10; Jer 3:2, 9; 4 Km 9:22; on the positive side, for concern about propriety on the part of some cults s. e.g. SIG 820 [83/84 A.D.], in which an Ephesian official assures Rome that the annual autumn fertility festival is conducted 'with much chastity and due observance of established customs'. This level of conduct prob. stands up well against activities associated with celebration of a modern Mardi Gras.) **Rv 19:2**. μετανοήσαι ἐκ τῆς π. αὐτῆς *repent of her immorality* **2:21**; cp. **9:21**. ὁ οἶνος τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς π. *the wine of her passionate immorality* **14:8; 18:3** (on these passages s. θυμός 1 and 2). ὁ οἶνος τῆς π. **17:2**. τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς π. vs. **4** (ἀκάθαρτος 2).—V.l. for πορνείας Hv 1, 1, 8 (Leutzsch, Hermas 447 n. 53). S. next entry 2.—DELG s.v. πέρνημι. M-M. EDNT.

I would also add there are, in my understanding of the New Testament, one other viable justification for a divorce: desertion by a non-believing mate (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). Other than these two exceptions, there are no other biblically viable ones. And even if you qualify for these two exceptions, the higher spiritual road calls you to forgive and restore the sinning mate. Such is the story of the prophet Hosea and his prostitute wife, Gomer. Go and read the story and you'll see what I mean. In a spiritual sense, the prophet stands for God, and the unfaithful wife is Israel, and God is pictured to be committed to forgiveness even when most atrocious acts have been committed against the relationship. We should, in fact, seek to emulate Hosea's godly, lofty behavior with a wayward mate.

Maybe God is speaking to you in all this. Your mate has destroyed the oneness of your marriage in the way Jesus or Paul described and you are ready to pull the legal plug. Perhaps the Spirit is saying, "You might need to move toward forgiveness, not toward termination." Believe me, a restored marriage serves as a brilliant light to all those who see it, and it gives other hurting people hope in the revitalization of much coveted oneness. Will you move toward restoration?

You know, God wants the marital relationships of His kingdom people to be the best marriages anyone can see. If you have a marriage full of oneness today, then may your tribe increase. Guard carefully what you have, and enjoy it to the fullest. And if your marriage isn't as one as you'd like, then there are things you can do. Currently, one of our elders and his wife is teaching from Chip Ingram's book, "House or Home?" in Modular 2A at 11:00 a.m. You might need to attend this important class for marriage improvement. Our women also have a great study on Tuesday mornings called "Enhancing Your Marriage."

And if you are divorced and it was not on biblical grounds, realize it is not the end of the road, spiritually speaking. God uses broken people, as we know from the life of David and his sinful mis-steps with Bathsheba. God is also a God of rich, bountiful mercy (Psalm 111:4, "He has made His wonders to be remembered; The LORD is gracious and compassionate."). In light of this, I can think of a couple of Psalms you might need to pray. Here's one which is most appropriate:

⁵ Lord, you are kind and forgiving, most loving to all who call on you" (Psalm 86).