

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

April 3

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HOW DOES ONE CORRECT AN ADULTEROUS MARRIAGE?

Many are surprised to learn that there is such a thing as an “adulterous marriage.” But Jesus clearly said, “And I say to you, *whoever divorces his wife*, except for fornication, *and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery*” (Mt.19:9; cp. Mk.10:11-12; Lk.16:18; Rm.7:1-3). If the Lord’s words are true (and they are), then it follows that many people are living in adulterous marriages. Since adulterers cannot go to heaven (1Cor.6:9-10), it behooves us to know how such a marriage can be corrected. I know from experience that many find this topic very difficult. However, the difficulty is not so much in *understanding* what the Lord said, but in our willingness to *accept* it. The bottom line is that an adulterous marriage can only be corrected by repentance – *which means that the sinful relationship must cease!* Think with me about this timely subject.

Many will protest to what I have said above by asking, “Aren’t we forgiven of all our past sins when we are baptized?” And the answer is, “Of course all past sins are forgiven in baptism.” But therein lies the real problem! You see, baptism washes away past SINS (Ac.22:16) – not past SPOUSES! Being baptized does not change the fact that you have been previously married, and are now in an unlawful relationship. In other words, baptism does not turn wrong into right.

To illustrate, consider the example of John the baptizer, who confronted Herod about his unlawful marriage to his brother’s wife: “For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her. Because John had said to Herod, *“It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife”* (Mk.6:17-18). Now if it is not lawful to have her, the only way to fix that is

to STOP HAVING HER! Furthermore, if baptism washed away spouses, this would have been the ideal time for John to have added, “But come on down here to the Jordan River, and we’ll fix your marriage by baptizing both of you, and washing away your wife’s previous spouse; then, the two of you may continue in wedded bliss!” Yet John he did not say that, did he?

The basic problem here is that *baptism must be preceded by repentance* (Ac.2:38). If one steals money, baptism will not allow him to keep the money he stole (Lk.19:8). If one is an idolater, baptism will not allow him to keep worshiping false gods (1Cor.10:20-21). If one is in a false religion such as Judaism, baptism will not allow him to keep following that faith (Ga.1:13-24). If one is a polygamist, baptism will not allow him to keep all of his spouses (Mt.19:4-5). If one is in a “gay marriage” (?), baptism will not allow him to continue his homosexual relationship (1Cor.6:9-11). And using the very same logic, if one is in an adulterous marriage, baptism will not allow him to continue in that unlawful relationship! If not, why not?

Some say, “That places too much hardship on people.” Well, I guess that depends upon whether you want to be right with God or not! Consider an example from the Old Testament, where people had to divorce their unlawful spouses. In Ezra 10:1-3, there were some Jews who had married pagans – which was not permitted under the Law of Moses. Note that the solution to their problem was not to proselytize the pagans to Judaism. Instead, they were instructed *“to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law”* (v.3). Was that hard? Yes! But those who find themselves in violation of God’s will must face a similar hardship today. And while it is no longer sinful to marry an unbeliever (1Cor.7:12-14; 1Pt.3:1-2), adultery is still sinful (Mt.19:9). Further, any such relationship must cease in order to be right with God.

Believe me, I truly sympathize with those who are in such difficult situations. Yet my role as a preacher is not to tell people what they WANT to hear, but what they NEED to hear! These situations are truly where the proverbial “rubber meets the road” with respect to discipleship: *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”* (Lk.14:26-27).

✍️ Lanny Smith

TURNING REASON ON ITS HEAD

The title of our article is a common idiom, used to describe the attempt to make the unreasonable seem reasonable. To accomplish this, others must be persuaded, intimidated, and sometimes even forced to look at reality in an unreal way. But in the end, this “new way of thinking” merely normalizes irrationality. There are numerous examples of this in our modern, PC culture. In this article, we shall consider a few of them.

We must save endangered animals, but we may kill human babies. The younger generation may not realize this, but there was once a time when such an idea was understood to be irrational. Human life was considered precious, and certainly more important than animal life (cf. Gn.9:1-6). My, how times have changed! Now, we are told by some that killing animals is murder, but killing innocent babies in the womb is merely “a choice” – and one that must be constitutionally protected! This cheapening of human life has turned reason on its head, and allowed the slaughter of untold millions of babies over the last 47 years (since Roe v. Wade). Someday, many will be held accountable for this shedding of innocent blood (Pr.6:16-19).


A mother may murder her baby – but no one else can! This point follows on the heels of our previous point. In a rather strange twist of irony, a mother can choose to hire a professional hit-man (doctor) to kill her baby. But if that same woman is shot on the street, and her baby dies, the killer can be charged with murder! Now, I fully support charging the man with murder; but when the same woman can do the same thing (via abortion), reason has been turned on its head! According to Scripture, that which is “conceived” in the womb (e.g. a son) is same thing that is “brought forth” in birth (cf. Lk.1:36,57). If this is true (and it is), then why are not the mother and her doctor charged with murder when they jointly conspire to end her pregnancy?

One’s sexual preference is genetic; but gender is a choice. Again, for our younger folk who have been conditioned by a secular and worldly society to think irrationally, you may not be aware that such thinking was unheard of only a few years ago. I am “only” (?) fifty-eight years old; but in less than that span of time, society has been bullied into accepting homosexuality as a genetically predetermined trait. In other words, we are told (yea, bullied) that being “gay” is no different than having blond hair or blue eyes! The problem is, this confuses “conduct” (i.e. a gay lifestyle) with “genetics” (eye color). Not only does that turn reason on its head, but its latest revision has turned it on its head even further! Now, we are told that we can “choose” our gender! *In other words, something we cannot change (our genetics – i.e. X and Y chromosomes) can be altered by mere*

decree; and something we CAN change (our conduct – i.e. a gay lifestyle) is “set in stone” by – wait for it – our genetics! Is that not amazing? Not only have some turned reason on its head, they have completely abandoned it. This, by definition, is insanity! And in a sane word, people who think like that would be recommended for psychiatric treatment – and yes, I am serious. But sadly, reason has been so overturned that irrational thinking is celebrated and encouraged. Yes, we literally live in a crazy world; and that craziness has infected our government, our institutions of learning, and therefore, our homes and churches.

As I ponder the normalization of such irrationality, I wonder what God must think of all this. But then I am reminded of what Solomon said: “there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl.1:9-11). Irrational thinking has always been around; and God’s people have always had to challenge it. The only difference is in the way it manifests itself. In ancient times, people actually prayed to trees, rocks, and metal objects. This is irrational on its face; yet it was popular, and done by many (Isa.44:9-17). If you think about, idolatry is nothing more than turning reason on its head. What is happening today is just a “new idolatry” – the worship of SELF!

As Christians, our job is to confront such irrational thought with the power of truth – the sword of the Spirit (Ep.6:17). This weapon, forged by God Himself, “is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hb.4:12). ***Go forth and do battle, my brethren!***

 Lanny Smith

Gospel Meeting April 3-8: Meeting at 7pm Monday-Friday

Belleville church of Christ

5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258

www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	4:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

Brad Phillips..... (765) 720-2816