

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

Last time, we finished chapter 6 of Genesis, and now we are ready for chapter 7. Chapter 6 ends by making it clear Noah did everything God asked him to do, just the way God asked him to do it. All that was preparation for what was to come in chapter 7. Verse 1 starts the story of the actual flood, but before we talk directly about this verse, let's remember the nature, as well as the desire, of God is to see man repent. It's not the will of God that any of us perish but that all of us come to repentance. (II Peter 3:9) This may be a New Testament verse, but God does not change! (Heb. 13:8) As we look at the stories in the Bible, we see other times when God determines to destroy wickedness, and the end result is not always the same.

There are two good examples. One is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. God came to Abraham and told him He was going to destroy those wicked cities. Abraham, being in step with the heart of God, asked if God would save the cities if Abraham could find a certain number of righteous individuals in them. Each time Abraham asked to find a lower number of men, and each time God agreed He would spare them if that number could be found. This went all the way down to if ten righteous could be found; but in the end, even Abraham knew he could not find ten righteous people in that place. Abraham had to let it go. God gave Lot's family the chance to escape before He rained destruction on the cities, but not even everyone of them could follow God's commandments and make it to safety. (Gen. 19:15-29)

Then there is the story of Jonah. God was going to destroy Nineveh, and Jonah was to warn them. We get caught up on the whole being swallowed by a big fish thing, but there is far more to the story. Jonah was not like Abraham and did not even desire to see the city spared if they did repent. In fact, he was quite upset about the fact it was even an option; but the people of Nineveh covered themselves in sackcloth and ashes. They repented of their sins, and God spared that city in spite of Jonah's attitude. (Jonah 3:10)

God is a God of mercy and long suffering. (Psa. 86:15) The story of Noah starts by saying, "And Noah was five hundred years old:..." Genesis 5:32 Verse 6 of chapter 7 says, "And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth." There was a hundred year span between the time the story begins and the time Noah boards the ark. That is a lot of years even by today's standards of fast pace living. For a century, Noah had hammered away on this gigantic watertight structure, and shared with all who would even take the time to listen why he was doing it! If Sodom and Gomorrah could be spared for the sake of ten righteous individuals, and if the imperial capital of Assyria was spared because they were willing to repent, how much more would God have turned back from His plan to destroy all flesh if the people, or even a segment of the people, would have been willing to repent and seek God!

This is why we see these verses in chapter 7. The plan did not have to come to completion. God desired to turn back and save them all, but the time for the flood had come. So, God says to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." As we talked about before, many believe the Bible is just repeating itself; but it is not. God was not repeating the fact Noah was the only righteous man to reestablish why Noah would be saved, God was telling us why He had no choice but to go through with the plan. After all this time, Noah was still the only one God saw standing before Him seeking to have a relationship with Him. Because no one else had taken the opportunity to seek the Lord, the flood would come and there was no turning back!

Verse 2 shows us the furtherance of that truth as Noah is instructed to board the animals. Earlier, Noah was told two of every kind would come to him. (Gen. 6:19-20) This was laying out the basic structure of how the animals would survive the flood; but here in verse 2 of chapter 7, Noah is told more specific instructions. Noah was to take seven of all the clean beasts and two of all the unclean beast. He was also



to take seven of all the fowls of the air. Here is where the question arises. The law of Moses had not been given as yet, so what does it mean to have clean and unclean beasts? Some suggest that the law was already being revealed before Moses' time, and those who truly served God knew of these things. This is a point which, again, the story of Cain and Abel certainly confirms. There were things like the blood sacrifice verses non-blood sacrifice differences understood by the way God had interacted with men. There is no reason to believe God did not instruct men on many things which would only later be laid out in the law of Moses for the Jewish nation to exemplify. However, the clean and unclean rules contained in the law of Moses are primarily for the purpose of what can be eaten and what can not! This wouldn't have applied at the time of Noah before the flood. It was not until after the flood that God gave the permission for man to eat the flesh of animals.

Now, some would argue that men were most likely already eating animals before the flood, and that is yet another fact I would agree with. However, the fact men were doing such things was part of the reason God destroyed the planet with the flood. God had not given man permission to kill and eat animals, and I will not accept the notion that Noah was righteous before God enough to receive instructions on how to do something God had not yet given permission to do. That is simply absurd! The better likelihood is that the reference to clean and unclean here does not refer to the exact same things as the clean and unclean in the law given to Moses.

There is a good likelihood that the clean reference here has to do with domestication of animals. Going back to the story of Cain and Abel, we see again that one of the first occupations taken on by man was the herding of sheep, or in broader terms, the domestication of animal life. As man populated on the planet, he would have looked to the animals just as he looked to the plant life to build the things he desired and imagined. Just as man would have quickly learned that cutting down trees was a way to obtain a material good for building houses, and just as man would have found which seed was good to specifically plant for the fruit they produced, so too, men found value in training certain animals for certain tasks. This would have been a process of observing different animal species and their capabilities, then picking the very best animals of a species which exhibited the qualities you most wanted. You would then keep those animals separated from the wild animals in order to build a specific group with just the traits you wanted. This process would have made the animals "clean" from their wild untamed nature of breeding as well as eating. The word "clean" here can easily be used in the same sense as we use the word "pure" today. The "clean" animals Noah was to take by sevens were "purebred."

Now, at the time of Noah there is no way for us to know exactly what those animals were, but we can make some good guesses as to what they were not. Just as today, it's not

likely a lion or bear would have been a "clean" animal. However, because of Abel, we can be almost certain that sheep were considered "clean." We do not know if they had domestic horses or cattle as yet; but if they did, those animals would also have been taken on the ark by sevens instead of twos.

Unlike other things, this was likely something Noah could determine on his own. God was giving Noah permission to take more of the animals which work had already been done, by man, to domesticate. Those animals Noah thought would be useful on the other side of the flood for the rebuilding of their lives, could be taken by sevens. This would have given him a head start which Adam and Eve did not have, nor did they need. Adam and Eve still had a virtually perfect world. The curse of the ground was going to take some time before it started to affect their everyday survival. Noah, on the other hand, was going to be in a fight for survival from the minute he stepped off the ark. He needed the advantage of some of the resources man had found and developed. Taking seven of all the domesticated animals is also in step with the commandment God gave earlier about taking note of all the food which was eaten and take it with him. In following that commandment, Noah would have taken domesticated plant life with him as well.

Before we move on to verse 3, we also need to take note of a debate which exists about this commandment when it comes to numbers. The words here tell us Noah was to take seven of the clean and two of the unclean. However, it also states he is to take the male and his female. This would probably be nothing, but the argument arises as to how you take an uneven number like seven when you are to take pairs of male and female? One explanation some have forwarded is that Noah was actually to take two and seven pairs, consisting of male and female. This would mean there were four of most animals and fourteen of the clean animals and birds. However, if you go back to verse 19 of chapter 6, God specifically instructs that Noah was to take "...two of every sort..." and he was told they should be male and female, to clarify not to take two males or two females. This would seem to make it clear the minimum of every kind of creature was to be two not four. So, why the seven? Well, the answer is found in looking at the earlier scripture which Noah may not have had in writing, but would have been familiar with. In six days God made the heavens, the earth, and everything there in, but the seventh day was sanctified unto the Lord! God made everything for man's uses, but the seventh day He took for Himself. This knowledge would have translated all the way down to Noah.

All the wild animals would simply need to be carried to the other side of the flood in order to repopulate the planet. They were created for man, and the ones able to survive on the other side would remain for the uses of man. However, there were those clean animals which refer to the animals man had already begun to mold in specific ways. They

Divorce & Remarriage

Part II

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

My boyfriend and I have known each other for a few years, and we have been in a committed relationship for the past several months. He is divorced, and I have been separated for a couple of years. Now, my boyfriend and I have spoken of spending the rest of our lives together, and just a few weeks ago I filed for divorce. After doing this, my friend informed me that the Bible says I am still a married woman and he can no longer have a romantic relationship with me. He just suddenly ended our relationship, telling me his decision was based on what the scriptures say. I explained to him I've read things in the Bible about "divorce papers" and I have already delivered these "divorce papers." I told him that if he was interested in someone else he should just say so and not suddenly tell me the Bible says we can no longer be together. Can you help me with this? Does he really need to stop dating me because of what the Bible says? Can you find anything in the Bible that says we have to suddenly stop? Does this make sense to you? I want to know what the Bible says about love and being true to your word. He told me he would always be there for me and never leave. He told me we would spend the rest of our lives together. Now, he tells me this! Doesn't the Bible say things about going against your word?

Last time, we talked about the emotions contained in a situation such as this question lays out. We talked about why people may and/or should react in the way they do when it comes to learning what they, at the very least, believe is a Biblical truth. Then we covered the dynamics of marriage by talking about how God created man, and why that led to the establishment of the institution of marriage between a man and a woman. Gaining an understanding about why marriage exists in the first place is very important to our understanding of the explanation of divorce and its consequences, which is what we are going to talk directly about in this second segment of "Divorce And Remarriage."

Nowhere is the issue of divorce laid out more simply than what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 19 verses 1 through 9. Here, Jesus admitted that in the law of Moses (which is that law God committed to the Jewish people: that part of the Bible we know as the first five books) God allowed a man to give a woman a "bill of divorcement." However, Jesus tells us this was not the perfect will of God, by pointing out that, "...from the beginning

it was not so." God only allowed divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts! This goes back to the point about God making us individuals. There's no union among humans which has the potential of being closer than the union of marriage; but even in marriage, there is still individuality. The Bible tells us a man and his wife become one flesh; but humans, unlike animals, are not flesh only. We are also mind and spirit. Only one part of what we are is irreparably linked, and it's the same part which links us to this earth - the flesh. The fact we become one flesh is why we say a child is the fruition of marriage. A child is an individual spun off from the original one flesh truth of a marriage. Genetically, a child is a mixture of both its parents, but still an individual with its own mind, body and spirit. People say things like, "divorce is easier when there isn't a child involved." This is true, because one of the main reasons marriage is the right institution for the raising of children is the fact children have both parents to learn from in order to understand the mixture they are made of. They also have the example of their parent's union to draw from. The parent's union is the cloth - so to speak - from which a child is cut. This is an important aspect most people do not appreciate; but in a way, marriage is like a child, in and of itself! The two becoming one flesh is a new melding. One of the reasons it's so hard on children for their parents to get a divorce is because it's much the same as losing a sibling to death! Children often describe their parent's divorce as if a part of them died. This is also very true. When the union they are the fruition of ceases to exist because of the death of a parent, children experience a natural loss; but when parents attempt to dissolve their union, it's an attempt to destroy the very fabric the child consists of!

Because this is true, God teaches us in His Word that the fabric can't truly be destroyed. The union of marriage is until death do us part, whether we like it or not! Jesus specifically states, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Mark 10:9 The union will end upon death because the flesh is what succumbs to death, (Matt. 10:28) but as long as both are alive, the two are one. That fact does not change, even with a bill of divorcement! So, what did Jesus mean when He said God gave us permission to write a bill of divorcement due to the hardness of our heart? He was telling us that God would allow men and women to

separate from living together in the case where they just can't get along. Couples often forget they are still individuals with individual thoughts and feelings. Marriage is a lifelong journey of being joined at the hip - so to speak - while learning who each other is and creating a life together which serves both of you. This is sadly not what most of us expect out of marriage. Many enter it with the thought they have found the person of their dreams, and everything is going to be great! Then, when the marriage turns out to be something other than they expected, they want out; or they make their spouse so miserable, they want out. Whether one or both people want out is not the relevant point. The relevant point is that in some cases there are those marriages where because one or both the people involved can't see their place or refuse to accept what they have agreed to, the marriage becomes truly dysfunctional. This can go to such a bad degree that violence and/or constant upheaval become the norm. In these cases, where the two individuals who have become one flesh can't, or will not, workout their differences one step at a time while attempting, to the best of their ability, to live in peace with each other, God determined it would be better for them to go their separate ways than to continue on the path they are on.

However, let's be clear, the hardness of our heart is a failure to be what we are capable of being: to accomplish what we are capable of accomplishing. A bill of divorcement in the Bible is not the same thing as a divorce according to our law. The Bible is only talking about a parting for the sake of civility because the two people are so bad together they actually need physical separation. Biblical divorce is not the freedom to try it again with another, and this brings us to the issue of remarriage.

For that, there is no better straightforward words spoken than, again, those of The Messiah Himself! In the book of Matthew chapter 5, beginning in verse 31, Jesus says, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 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." Here, the responsibility is put on the man directly. Jesus says if a man puts away his wife for any reason except in the case where she has committed fornication, the man causes the woman to commit adultery. This is based on the simple fact which Paul points out in I Corinthians 11:9, "Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." It's the responsibility of a man to take care of the woman he has joined with. Putting her away is going

back on the commitment of taking care of her for life. In doing so, the time you have spent together becomes adultery in the same way as having a relationship with a woman the man never intended to make a commitment to in the first place. The only exception to this is in the case where the woman has given herself to another man. This does not include rape because that would be forced upon her, but if she chooses (as we would say today) to have an affair with another man, she is the one who has violated the commitment by becoming one flesh with another. This creates a mess, and God will, under these circumstances, allow a husband to put away his wife. Even in this case, it would actually be for the sake of not having a physical relationship with her anymore.

Jesus also points out here that any man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery, and this is because of the one flesh facts. The divorce does not dissolve the truth she has already become one flesh with a man. Taking her while her husband is still alive is just as much an act of adultery as having an affair with her before she is divorced. This fact is also pointed out in those verses of Matthew chapter 19, where we were before. Beginning in verse 9, Jesus says, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." This is actually one of the most straightforward, black and white issues in all the Word of God. We can even look at a couple of other scriptures to see it emphasized.

In the Gospel of Mark, we see the same conversation recorded in chapter 10 as we saw in Matthew 19; but in Mark, we get a little extra. Mark chapter 10 verse 10 tells us, Jesus' disciples ask Him about this matter again once they had went inside the house. Verses 11 and 12 tell us Jesus' answer, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." Here, Jesus specifically points out that if a man puts away his wife and marries another, that man commits adultery "against" his wife. In modern terms we might be tempted to say, "The man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is cheating on his first wife!" If a man does not fulfill his commitment to one wife, he has no right to take another. Here, Jesus also talks about the responsibility of a woman. Jesus points out if a woman puts away her husband and is married to another, she commits adultery!

It simply doesn't matter how you slice it, divorce is not the end of the one flesh union of marriage. Adultery is simply having a physical relationship with someone

you have not made or should not be making the commitment God intends us to make. This is why Jesus went so far as to explain in Matthew 5:27-28 that if a man looks at a woman to lust after her he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. That man has not made a commitment to that woman, and that woman has not made a commitment to him. It's inappropriate for the man to allow his mind to lust after a woman under those circumstances, and it doesn't matter whether the man is married or not. The pleasures derived from a physical relationship belong only between a man and a woman who are committed to their union!

Now, through all that we have covered, I believe we have answered your fourth question. Yes, your friend's actions do make sense to me. The Bible does support the truth that your relationship as a previously married woman to a previously married man is inappropriate. He may have been using something he heard as an excuse to leave; but the truth is, his explanation to you is supported in the Bible. If he is off with another woman, as a divorced man he is still committing adultery, but his adultery is no longer affecting you. As long as you keep yourself clean, you are no longer committing adultery; so Biblically, it works well for you. This means the only issue left to cover is your question about God telling us to keep our word.

Yes, the Bible does teach us to keep our word. The ninth commandment, out of the ten commandments, tells us we should not bear false witness. (Ex. 20:1-18) In Revelation 21:8 we are assured that liars will, "...have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Remember what I said earlier about the flesh being the part which succumbs to death? That is what can be appropriately labeled as our first death. Hebrews 9:27 tells us, "... it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: . . ." The judgment is the place where we will find out if we will be granted eternal life or suffer the second death: which is the destruction of those parts of us which are not flesh. Lying is one of those activities which will certainly cause us to suffer the second death. It's very important we keep our word, but that's where we have made a big mess of our lives! The question is, once we have made conflicting commitments, which word do we keep and to whom do we keep it? Your friend, at some point in the past, gave his word to another woman that he would stay by her side, and he did not keep that word. If his past wife did not commit adultery, the Bible says he causeth her to commit adultery by divorcing her. One of the things you mentioned in your question is that you had talked about marriage and always being there for each other; yet, it would seem you were already having a physical relation-

ship which would make you one flesh. In doing this, your friend has also committed adultery by being with a woman who is already one flesh with another. You as well have committed adultery by being with him. The problem is, so many people do not see the action of sexual intercourse as becoming one flesh. Making the commitment should come first, but when it doesn't, it does not change the fact the action joins you. In I Corinthians 6:16 Paul asks, "know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh."

There is a reason a marriage ceremony is supposed to be very public. Even if you do not want to share the moment with many others, the law often still requires there to be at least two witnesses - which is Biblical. (II Cor. 13:1) The fact people go back on commitments all the time is one of the main reasons legal paperwork abounds. You don't purchase a car or a house without the signing of documents committing both parties to their end of the deal. Even when you go to the grocery store and buy food, it's traditional for the clerk to give you a receipt which proves you purchased, as opposed to stole, the items you are walking out with. If you give yourself to someone before you get that more public and legal commitment from that person, you are taking an action without care for the automatic consequences, and with no way to hold the other person to what they have said. In the end, what you have ended up with is a situation where adultery exists both in the physical relationship you shared as well as in the very promise of a marriage which is not right before the Lord. The best way to see it is, as a divorced man, any talk of a marriage commitment to you was a lie the moment it was spoken, and no amount of action on his part can change that. Remember what I said before about time? We can't change the past. It's not so much that he is going back on his word now, but recognizing his words were wrong then. Simply put, it does not matter how much you loved each other, a commitment to you was not rightfully his to give; and as long as his wife and your husband live, that will remain true!

At the end of your question, you stated that you are very distraught over this situation, and I can certainly understand why. This is exactly why God tells us not to commit adultery. The ability God gave us to have close physical relationships with the opposite sex is very serious indeed. The decision we make to enter into such a relationship should not be taken lightly. The pain of broken commitments, whether spoken, legal and binding or not is something we don't want to feel. However, the only way to avoid such pain is by listening to the voice of God in the first place. His direction is not about keeping us from having a life, it's about keeping us from destroy-

ing our life and the lives of those around us, because that is exactly what sinful actions do! As I touched on earlier, if your friend truly wronged you, it was in the fact he did not try to help you understand what he came to understand; but if he felt he just could not handle the pain or temptation of the time it would take to explain it, then he did what he felt he had to do. We also cannot discount the possibility he simply felt the conviction of The Holy Ghost to stop living in adultery; but he may not, for many years to come, be able to thoroughly explain why your circumstances were adultery.

The thing you should look at is this: Romans 8:28 tells us, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Every time we fail to do what is right, we complicate our lives with sin in some way. The more we sin, the more complicated it can get; but thanks be to God, He looks beyond our faults and sees our need! Even in trying our best to do what is right, we may inadvertently do something else wrong. Just as in your case where promises were made which should never have been made, it simply is not possible to untangle every mess we have made and do everything we have said. Remember, in spite of all you and your friend have said and done, you are still individuals. You will stand before God as individuals, and that means you should not worry about what your friend has done right or wrong. Your concern should be to do what you know is right. The Bible tells us to, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." I Corinthians 6:18 If your friend is being truthful with you, that is exactly what he did; and your friend not attempting to help you understand the issue, caused you to reach out in a way you may never have done before. In the end, you probably have gained a greater understanding about the issue than you ever would have in talking to him, while at the same time you also have not been tempted to continue down a wrong path. Now you can sit down and, in a clear mind, make the choice as to what you are going to do next. The choice to reject the wrong and choose the right is always up to us!

If you are tempted to harbor bitterness toward your friend, just remember, we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23) There is none righteous, no, not one! (Rom. 3:10) The only way for us to pull out of this nose dive we are in is turn to the Lord with our whole heart (Ps. 119:2) and allow Him to do a work in our lives. Then we can stand on the promise that all things work together for good, because where we are unable to

do the work - God is able. (Rom. 14:4) Right now you may not feel that what has happened to you is a good thing, but trust me, you have been given an opportunity to heal your life. (Isa. 55:7-8) If God is what you want in your life, you will find He never fails! The Bible tells us if we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9) What you need to do now is forgive your friend for any wrong he has done to you, (Luke 6:37) and begin to seek the ways of God in your life more and more.

In this life, opportunities to live in the way we desire may be lost, and things may never work out the way we would like them to. However, with God that's OK, because if we have God, we have everything we need, and the promise of an eternity filled with so much more than this life could ever offer! (Matt. 6:19-21) You mentioned that you wished you knew what the Bible said about love. Well, that's an easy one! The Bible tells us simply, God is love, (I John 4) which means we will never know true love if we are unwilling to have a relationship with Him; and that is why the Bible tells us the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with everything we are! (Matt. 22:34-40)

In closing this Q&A, I want to be clear that this segment of teaching is the basic truth which the Bible tells us, and in it I mention, more than once, the fact things in our lives can become very messy when we fail to follow God's plan. What we must understand is that sin will only be fully defeated in our lives when our lives in this flesh pass away. This is the whole reason Jesus came to provide for us a new life. This new life can be eternal because there will be no sin which needs to be wiped clean by the death of our flesh. Jesus' blood washes away all sin because it allows us to die in the flesh without losing our existence! Paul says, we are in the here and now free from the law of sin and death, (Rom. 8:1-2) not because we will never die, nor because we can get away with never shedding this flesh back to the dust of the ground, but because we can live our lives knowing the problems our sins have created will someday be not even a memory. (Rev. 21) However, Paul also asks, does this mean we should live in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! (Rom. 6:1-4) If we desire to continue living in sin then we are not truly dead to it nor are we free from it. This is why Paul reminds us that what we yield ourselves servants to obey that is whose servant we are. If we are the servant of sin, we will suffer the wages of sin - which is death; but if God's, we shall receive life everlasting. (Rom. 6:15-23)

I'm sure there are many of you which have read this Q&A that are not in the situation of the person who ask this question. You are not facing the question of whether to remarry, but the fact that you already have. Some of you may already have children with your new partner, and in either case you are asking what you should do based on the facts you have read here. To you, I want to say again, that sin complicates and destroys our lives. You may have a very good marriage and even feel you are blessed to have the person you are with now, especially in light of who you were with before. However, none of those facts take away from the truth contained in God's Word which were covered in this Q&A. Whether we feel we are better off or not, we have violated God's plan; and just as Jesus pointed out about the allowance of a bill of divorcement, it is because of the hardness of our hearts.

As much as we may want to, we must not attempt to sidestep or excuse this fact. We have made a mistake; and one of the things God will not accept is a heart which will not admit it has made a mistake. We should not attempt to excuse our sin; we should face up to it. We should be broken about the mistakes we have made and the harm which comes with them. Then and only then can true freedom from sin be found. For at that point, we can move into another truth of scripture. Psalms 51:17 tells us, "...a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." and I John 1:8-9 tells us, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We cannot undo the fact we are divorced at least once already, and it makes no sense to keep making the same mistake over and over. If we are already remarried, then I believe we should not seek to change that fact, anymore than I believe someone should attempt to change the fact they are not yet remarried. Instead, we should fall before the grace of God. We have all sinned and come short of God's glory. (Rom. 3:23) All any of us can do is ask for God's forgiveness and walk forward from where we are at that point! If you have not yet made a binding marriage commitment to another, you should not do so; but if you have already bound yourself to another, then to the best of your ability, you should attempt to fulfill all the commitments you have made! (Ecc. 5:4-6)

Men if you have alimony to pay, you should pay it. If you have child support to pay, then pay it; and women if you have married or remarried a man who has these payments to make, you must accept the facts. You chose to marry this man who has prior commitments. Do not give him grief or hinder him in this task. If you want to stand before God blameless, then be his helpmate, always remembering it is not about how "good" or "bad" the

"other" person is, it's about your righteousness!

Whether men or women, you should do your best to care for the children you have brought into this world. This is by no means an easy task when divorce is involved, or when there was never a marriage to begin with; and it is certainly a large reason God tells us not to get into this situation in the first place. However, we should pray to God that He help us with our weaknesses and guide us to be the best parents we can be! Do your best to instruct your children about the mistakes you have made and why they were mistakes. Share the things you know and have learned in the kindest way you can. Correct them when they are wrong, but always keep in mind the fact they will not just have to, but will, make their own choices in the end. Support them in the ways which help them, and let them know you understand you're not perfect either. Above all, let them know you love them, by loving them!

We have all made mistakes in this life, and many of them can never be changed; but thanks be to God, because of those mistakes, none of us will make it out alive. We cannot stay in this sinful flesh, but if we serve God we shall be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye this corruptible flesh and the mistake ridden life we now lead will be left behind. Then and only then can we truly, fully, and ever be with the Lord!

Comfort one another with these words, and until that great day of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's return, may you gain God's strength to continually find and live in His will for your life!

Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by Philip Busby.

If you would like to submit a question of your own or if you have questions/comments about this Q&A, you can visit us online at www.livingspringsinstitute.org and click on Q&A or write us at:

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represented man following the commandment of God to, “Be fruitful...” and “...have dominion...” Genesis 1:28 Noah would take three males and three females with him of all these animals for man’s uses on the other side of the flood, but he would also take a seventh animal, a male, for God. How do we know it would be a male? because the primary commandment was to take “a male and his female,” but with the limit at seven, the last male would not have a female, nor would he need one. Cain and Abel had already shown that blood sacrifice was to be consumed with fire. Any fruit given to God may still leave seed behind to sprout anew, but a blood sacrifice would leave nothing but ashes, at the most. It was not even God’s intent that the seventh male produce offspring while on the ark. To be sacrificed to God would be its only purpose for surviving the flood!

Now, for verse 3. Why would God tell Noah to take seven of all the fowls of the air? The answer to this is all about the numbers. To this, there are about three main elements. First, birds are very frail creatures, and containing them in an ark would have been quite a job. Their survival without obvious miraculous intervention by God was likely dependant on having a few of them. The second point is their usefulness in the ark during the voyage. Most birds do a fair amount of clean up in regard to waste and death; and unlike the lions and other carnivores, it would not be so dangerous to have many of them free to do that job. The third point is in the fact that birds, doing a lot of clean up, also do a lot of residual work they do not intend to do. They also do this work in a very widespread way. What I’m talking about is the fact birds continually spread seed. Some of this occurs because they eat fruits and spread the seed in their droppings. Other birds specifically attempt to hide seed in the ground, many of which they simply forget or never get back to. The end result is a tree, a bush, or any number of plants where there would never have been one otherwise.

This was a very vital service after the flood. Not only had things been destroyed, but some areas of the world had been washed clean. I don’t know if you have ever seen the aftermath of a flood, but one of the things you will notice are areas washed completely clean and other areas being just heaps of debris. Often you will also note that these heaps of debris are flocked by birds. The birds would have went straight to work after the flood of Noah’s day, breaking down all the heaps of debris left in various areas. They would have spread the seeds of life into many parts of the planet which would otherwise simply have turned to desert without them. Just as it took man a time to repopulate to any degree after the flood, so too, it took the land animals a time to repopulate. That was just fine because it would also take the plant life a while to repopulate to a point where it could sustain much animal life. However, the birds could feed on much of the leftovers from the flood; and in so doing, they would be vital in cleaning up the mess

and replanting the very things the rest of the animal population needed. Thus, all things worked together for good!

If you understand the number 7 in the Bible, you know 7 is God’s number of completion as it relates to our creation. Thus, in verse 4, God informs Noah he has seven days to get it all wrapped up and board the ark himself before the rain begins to fall. The final call had been given, and anyone still considering what Noah had explained about why he was doing all this would now see the time was coming to an end. All the provision and animals gathered unto Noah would be put inside the ark, including any person willing to go. Just as God had taken seven days to create everything we know, He would give man seven last days to make a final choice to board the ark with Noah!

Here in verse 4, God also informs Noah that He would cause it to rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. This was important for Noah to know! Why? Because Noah was still just a human, he needed to know that God was in control. So, God told Noah the exact number of days and nights He would take to bring enough water on the earth to destroy every living substance that He had made, from off the face of the earth. Remember, Noah had never seen rain before. The earth watered itself by what we know as dew today. The water God put in the firmament above had never come down, at least not in the form of raindrops; but once the rain started, it could truly be cried, “The sky was falling!” This would have been a terrifying experience even for Noah and his family inside the ark, and it would be enough to try anyone’s faith to the breaking point. However, it’s the promise of God that He will not put more on us than we can bear. (I Cor. 10:13) So, He told Noah exactly how many days it would last. As Noah counted them down and made that fortieth mark on the wall, he would find God was confirming to him that everything was under control. The rain stopped. The destruction of everything was complete, and the process of the water receding began. Everyone on the ark knew God was faithful in the rain for forty days and nights; He would be faithful in bringing the ark back to dry ground!

Again, we end with a simple verse; for verse 5 tells us, “And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.” Noah listened to the voice of God, and even after a hundred years of hard work and ridicule, he went right on following the commandments of God without question. When we get discouraged about following the ways of God in a world which waxes worse and worse each day, we need to think of Noah. After a hundred years, he still had the flood itself to get through and a world to rebuild. We, on the other hand, will likely not live that long as a whole; and if we are here for the change which is coming, we will be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye and so ever be with the Lord! (I Cor. 15:51-55, I Thes. 4:17)

Until next time, Shalom!