



Beliefs of Grace Fellowship Church

Statement on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

To answer the questions:

1. What is marriage?
2. Is marriage dissolvable by anything other than death; if so when, if not, why?
3. What is “divorce?”
4. Is divorce ever permissible in the life of a believer; if so, when, if not, why?
5. If divorce is ever permissible, is remarriage ever an option, if so, when, if not, why?

Led by the Holy Spirit’s illumination from Scripture we will answer those questions according to our understanding from God’s Word.

Primary Bible texts under consideration:

- Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9
- Mark 10:4-12
- Luke 16:18
- Romans 7:1-3
- 1 Corinthians 7:10-16

Marriage is a sacred union established by God to be a covenant relationship between one man and one woman for life. We understand that marriage was and is meant by God to be such an emotional, physical and spiritual bond that it is defined as each spouse being “one flesh” with the other and as such the marital covenant should not to be separated by anything other than the death of a spouse. However, we live in a sin cursed world, being ourselves sinners, and who apart from Christ can do nothing including persevere in marriage for life. As sinners who do in fact sin even though it grieves our Heavenly Father, divorce is only one of many of those sins and it is no more an unforgivable sin than any other apart from “blaspheming the Holy Spirit.” We believe God in His mercy, recognizing the hardness of even the genuine believer’s heart, has made some provision for dissolving marriage upon certain circumstances in order to protect the innocent spouse and that that provision, although not God’s idea, but man’s is called ‘divorce.’ We believe a legal “divorce” does in fact “dissolve” the marriage covenant both in the eyes of man and God once a “certificate of divorce” has been granted. We further believe remarriage after divorce is lawful for the “innocent” spouse, if in fact there is one, which should be determined according to Scripture, based on the individual facts of the divorce. We further believe that even the guilty party of a divorce, if and when he or she has sincerely repented and has genuinely demonstrated that repentance should be allowed to remarry.

This debate amongst sincere, godly, God-fearing, God-loving, sin-hating and mature believers is really a debate over three words, their meanings in the original Hebrew and/or Greek text and their interpretation into the English language. How we interpret these words will determine our position on marriage – divorce – remarriage.

Those three words are:

1. Divorce
2. Adultery
3. Fornication

“Divorce” seems to have a different meaning dependent on which side of the debate one agrees with and that is dependent on how one defines the words “adultery” and “fornication.”

Here’s how we understand that argument:

Divorce – The dictionary defines divorce as the “dissolution of a marriage bond by legal process or by accepted custom.” In other words the marriage existed, but is now dissolved by the divorce. The debate is “Does the divorce dissolve the marriage **in God’s sight** as well as in a society’s?”

Adultery – The dictionary defines adultery as “The voluntary sexual **intercourse of a married person** with someone not the spouse; unfaithfulness.”

Fornication – “Voluntary sexual **intercourse between unmarried persons.**”

Now **with those words and definitions in mind** we should translate these verses:

Mark 10:11 (NIV): 10When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11He answered, "Anyone who **divorces** his wife and marries another woman commits **adultery** against her. 12And if she **divorces** her husband and marries another man, she commits **adultery.**"

Luke 16:18 (NIV): 18"Anyone who **divorces** his wife and marries another woman commits **adultery**, and the man who marries a **divorced** woman commits **adultery.** "

Romans 7:1-3 (NIV): Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? 2For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 3So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an **adulteress**. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an **adulteress**, even though she marries another man.

If in fact the English word “adultery” is correctly translated from the original text and “adultery” is defined as above, and if we had no other Scripture to rely on to help us with this question the only honest conclusion one could make is that yes “in God’s sight” the marriage is still in force, i.e., the divorce was not recognized by God as being “dissolved” because in these verses, even though there was “divorce” there was still “adultery.” Not only that, but in these verses there is absolutely no exception whatsoever. Marriage is marriage and can not be legally “dissolved” in God’s sight apart from the death of a spouse.

But, these aren’t the only verses we have on the subject nor does the word “adultery” always

translate the meaning of the original text as we'll see later. A quote from the "Wycliffe Bible Dictionary," page 469, addressing this very same subject wisely asserts:

"Here we have to apply the principle that all the details must be gathered and scripture must be compared with scripture before we come to a final conclusion. A complete inductive synthesis requires that all Christ taught on divorce, as recorded both in the Gospels and in 1 Corinthians 7:10 ff, be assembled before a final decision is made on Christ's teachings. To this must be added all else found on the subject in the N.T. in order to be sure of the N.T. doctrine of divorce."

Now let's look at other texts concerning "marriage – divorce – remarriage" starting with Matthew 19:3-9 where we see an exception not mentioned in the previous verses, but which adds clarity to it and presents a consistency to other principles of the Bible such as:

- Sin is destructive
- Sin is forgivable
- God doesn't hold one person accountable for another person's sin
- God in His mercy provides for the innocent
- "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."
- God doesn't contradict Himself
- Scripture won't command you to do something you're not "gifted" or able to do
- God will not tempt us to sin
- And many others

Biblical Basis for Our Position:

Matthew 19:3: "Some of the Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, **"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"**"

Although the question was to trap Jesus into agreeing with one of two prevailing views among Jewish scholars of the day, Christ's answer took them to the real question, i.e., what is marriage? His response was:

Matthew 19:4-6a: "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and "for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one."

God created and divinely approved marriage to be a permanent physical, spiritual and emotional bond between one man and one woman for life. Jesus' explanation reached back to creation itself where God had created man to be in fellowship with Himself for all eternity. "Man" created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27) was never intended to be separated from God and likewise when He established marriage between one man and one woman defining it as "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24) neither were they to be separated one from another by anything other than death. But thank God that by His mercy and the blood of Christ He made a provision for us to come back into His presence. Christ took the Pharisees back to the origination of all things to impress on them the true nature of marriage. With that he added:

Matthew 19:6b: "Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate."

As an unbroken relationship with the Eternal God for eternity was the ideal for mankind at creation so was the ideal relationship between a man and woman (marriage) to be for life. But sin entered the world through Adam and separated man from God (Isaiah 43:27; Romans 5:12).

Man's heart has always been hard (Matthew 19:8a) and apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life always will be hard; obviously something God knew. And in His mercy He made provision for restoration:

1. The provision of "the blood of Christ" to restore the relationship between repentant sinners and the Almighty God through Christ work on the cross (Acts 17:30-31).
2. The provision of "divorce," although not God's original design or desire, but man's was **permitted** by God to protect the innocent spouse of a broken marriage covenant.

Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 19:6b "What God has joined together, **let man not separate.**" He did not say "**man can not separate,**" but that he should not separate it. We certainly agree, but as sin separated our original relationship with God, sin can also separate the members of a marital covenant as Jesus explains below.

Matthew 19:8a: "Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard."

In his statement "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives..." Jesus was referring to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in which **divorce clearly ended** the marriage and **permitted** a subsequent marriage:

Deuteronomy 24:1-4: "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and **her second husband** dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, **then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again** after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."

Note: In Malachi 2:16: God said "I hate divorce," but He made provision in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to protect the innocent party, i.e., the woman in this case who could be divorced for "any and every reason."

Clearly Jesus knew he was talking about "divorce" here, i.e., the "dissolution of marriage" for that is what divorce is. He didn't have to explain that to his listeners; they already understood what he was referring to for as we stated earlier it was a divisive issue among "God's chosen people" even in Christ's day. The text that Jesus referred to clearly stated that the original marriage was ended or it wouldn't have included the words "her second husband," "her first husband," or "to marry her again." The question about "divorce" intuitively included the question of "remarriage" or Jesus wouldn't have referred back to a text that included both divorce and remarriage. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4 the "certificate of divorce" was given so that the husband could remarry.

Jesus described the ideal nature of marriage in Matthew 19:4-6 and stated that divorce should never happen among believers (Matthew 19:6b), but then he gave one exception, i.e., **except for marital unfaithfulness**. In that case divorce is permitted and remarriage of the innocent party is permissible. How do we come to that conclusion?

Matthew 19:9: "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

There are several things Jesus said that we need to take note of here:

1. "Anyone who divorces his wife..." Jesus recognizes divorce is a reality at times.
2. "...and marries another woman commits adultery..." Jesus recognizes that remarriage is a reality at times and is sinful under every condition;

Except one:

3. "except for marital unfaithfulness..."

What we understand Jesus' answer to be in response to the Pharisee's question:

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

is 'no,' it is not lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason; it is lawful for only one reason and that is on the grounds of "marital unfaithfulness" in which case remarriage for the innocent party is also permissible. And of course God shows no favoritism or partiality, therefore the woman would have the same right if the husband was unfaithful to his marriage vows.

A couple of notes here:

Note #1: The Greek word in Matthew 19:9 translated "marital unfaithfulness" in the (NIV) is translated "fornication" in the (KJV.) "Fornication" as noted on page #2 above is defined as "Voluntary sexual **intercourse between unmarried persons.**" The argument from the side of this issue that states that "once you are married you are married until death with no exceptions" sees this one exception Christ made for divorce in Matthew 19:9 as based on "Voluntary sexual intercourse between unmarried persons" prior to the marriage. That being the case, the marriage itself was based on false pretenses, should never have taken place and is therefore invalid, i.e., divorce is acceptable. Said another way, the divorce is valid only because the marriage was invalid to begin with not because of something that happened after the marriage.

But many translators translate the original text into various English words:

- a. Marital unfaithfulness (NIV)
- b. Sexual immorality (NKJV)
- c. Immorality (NASB)
- d. Fornication (KJV)
- e. Unfaithfulness (GNB)
- f. Unchastity (NRSV)

These words are often used interchangeably in Scripture denoting sexual activity both within and outside of marriage and in some cases in a broader sense may even include flagrant and ongoing desertion.

"This is borne out further by the fact that the sinful conduct of Israel as Jehovah's wife is sometimes called adultery (Jeremiah 3:8; Ezekiel 23:45) and sometimes fornication (Jeremiah 3:2-3; Ezekiel 23:43) and in 1 Corinthians 7:2 fornication is used to cover either sin." (Note from Wycliffe Bible Dictionary – Page 469)

For example let's look closer at Jeremiah 3:6-8:

"6During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen what **faithless Israel** has done? She has **gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery** there. 7I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her **unfaithful sister Judah** saw it. **8I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce** and sent her away **because of all her adulteries**. Yet I saw that her **unfaithful sister Judah** had no fear; she also went out and **committed adultery**. 9**Because Israel's immorality** mattered so little to her, she **defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood...**"

God does not sin yet He divorced Israel for her faithless, adulterous, immoral behavior which

certainly meant “sexual activity,” but in this text the immorality had to do with “defiling the land” and idol worship “with stones and wood” on “every high hill and under every spreading tree.” Israel and Judah’s “adulterous” behavior for which God “divorced” her included murder, fornication, adultery, unfaithfulness, desertion and idol worship at least as much as anything else. Divorce was not God’s desire, but He used it and put away His wife. Not only that, but in a very real sense He took another bride:

Look at Acts 28:25b-28:

"The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

26" `Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." 27For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' 28"Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"

For another example of God “divorcing” Israel/Judah see: Isaiah 50:1; God’s bride is not “chosen Israel” anymore; it is “believers,” the “Bride of Christ,” His chosen people who have come to Him through their relationship with Christ His Son, i.e., “God’s salvation has been sent to the gentiles and they will listen”

Note #2: Although Jesus “allows” divorce for “marital unfaithfulness” it is not mandatory. Confession, repentance and reconciliation are the preferred means by which we as believers resolve even this most grievous of sins.

The implication of Matthew 19:8-9 is monumental because it implies two things about divorce:

1. There is such a thing as a “legal” divorce which we’ll call “Biblical” divorce, i.e., permitted by Christ
2. All other divorces are “illegal” divorces which we’ll call “Non-biblical” divorce,” i.e., not permitted by Christ.

And of course Matthew 19:8-9 is not the only place where Jesus said these things:

Matthew 5:31-32: "It has been said, `Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' 32But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, **except for marital unfaithfulness**, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."

In Matthew 5:31-32 Jesus was preaching his “Sermon on the mount,” setting the standard for living the Kingdom life. Even in that context, while stating his ideal for marriage He said:

Paraphrased: “Anyone who divorces his wife causes her to become an adulteress as well as her future husband an adulterer, unless there has been ‘marital unfaithfulness’ in which case (if she was the offender) she has already committed adultery by which she has already dissolved the “one flesh” standard of marriage, and therefore, can be divorced.”

Again as we noted earlier, although Jesus “allows” divorce for “marital unfaithfulness” it is not mandatory. Confession, repentance and reconciliation are the preferred means for resolving even this most grievous of sins.

Here we want to repeat what we “enclosed” earlier:

The implication of Matthew 19:8-9 and Matthew 5:31-32 is monumental because it implies two things about divorce:

1. There is such a thing as a “legal” divorce which we’ll call “Biblical” divorce, i.e., permitted by Christ
2. All other divorces are “illegal” divorces which we’ll call “Non-biblical” divorce,” i.e., not permitted by Christ

When this truth is understood, and that is our understanding, it allows us to make sense of many of the other New Testament verses that relate to the subject of divorce. (Note: I say “many” because there are some additional verses that seem to give another exception under which a believer is permitted to divorce, but that exception is related to one spouse being a non-believer (1 Corinthians 7:10-16) .

Before we go further we’ll define “biblical” and “Non-biblical” divorce as it applies to **two believing spouses**:

- A. “Biblical divorce” is a divorce in which the innocent spouse has been sinned against by the “unfaithful” spouse and no repentance or attempt at reconciliation has occurred. The unfaithful spouse refuses to repent and seek reconciliation, but rather seeks a divorce, or the offended spouse seeks a divorce based on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness without repentance.
- B. “Non-biblical divorce” is every other divorce that takes place between two believers.

Example of a “biblical divorce:”

- 1. A spouse has engaged in “marital unfaithfulness:”
 - A. We have a guilty believer (the offender) and an innocent believer (the offended):
 - 1. If the offending believer initiates the divorce they have only added to their sin
 - 2. If the offended believer initiates the divorce they are within their rights on the grounds of the other spouse’s marital unfaithfulness.

But there is an exception here also. If the offending believer has genuinely repented, asked for forgiveness and demonstrated their repentance by fruit, but the offended spouse refuses to forgive them and initiates a divorce, then the “offended spouse” has now sinned just as grievously as that of the original offender and has initiated a “non-biblical” divorce.

Now keeping in mind our understanding from Scripture of both “biblical” and “non-biblical” divorce let’s look at some verses we looked at earlier on the subject and translate them accordingly:

Mark 10:11: 10When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Luke 16:18: 18"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

We have no problem with these verses. The exception Christ made is not present and therefore these divorces are “non-biblical.” There are neither grounds for nor a right to a divorce in these verses. We would define them as “non-biblical” divorces, but it is likely that there is a guilty and an innocent party within these divorces which would have to be determined by the individual details of the divorce.

When you get divorced you are divorced. The reason sexual activity is called adultery in a subsequent marriage is that you have no right to be remarried if you are the guilty and/or unrepentant party of either a biblical or non-biblical divorce. In God's sight you are divorced, but you shouldn't be.

1. The initiator of the divorce, i.e., the unfaithful spouse, is living in sin and if he/she becomes remarried, apart from repentance and reconciliation with the original spouse if possible, he/she is committing adultery and causing the new spouse to engage in adultery with him/her. But, the spouse unwilling to divorce, but having a divorce forced on him/her is "innocent." As we stated before, God hates divorce, but He did make provision to protect the innocent party.
2. The initiator of the divorce, i.e., the unfaithful spouse, is not eligible for remarriage until genuine repentance has taken place. (See a. below) If and when that takes place, and if the "innocent" spouse of the original marriage has remarried allowing no chance of reconciliation, then the restored spouse would be eligible for remarriage.
 - A. An argument will be made that the guilty party of a biblical or non-biblical divorce may claim to have repented only for the purpose of being able to remarry, i.e., the repentance was not sincere. That may in fact happen, but we are reminded of the following: 1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 16:2; Jeremiah 17:9-10, Hebrews 4:13, etc. We are left to discern "outward" appearances, let "motive" belong to God and with love, caution and diligence proceed to doing His will in all things.
3. The innocent party of a biblical or non-biblical divorce is eligible for re-marriage, but not until they have done everything in their power to reconcile the original marriage covenant.

Our understanding of a "Biblical divorce" between two professing believers is very narrow, i.e., marital unfaithfulness without repentance; exactly what we believe Christ permitted and no more. But Paul added another exception, different in that it addresses "marriage – divorce – remarriage" between a believer and a non-believer and is defined in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. This adds to our understanding of divorce since Paul's words have the same authority as Christ's words themselves, i.e., "All Scripture is God breathed..." Paul says that a believer who is married to a non-believing spouse must stay with that non-believing spouse if the non-believer is so inclined, but the believer is permitted to divorce without sin if the non-believer determines they want to be out of the marriage. His statement permits divorce and remarriage for the believer under certain circumstances, i.e., another exception which we recognize as a "biblical divorce."

One final comment concerning Romans 7:1-3. We believe the guilty party who has initiated a non-biblical divorce and who refuses all attempts at being brought to repentance or reconciliation has in effect by way of their sin become dead to this marriage covenant. Is that possible? Can you "commit adultery," i.e., become martially unfaithful without actually engaging in the physical act of adultery? Jesus says you can:

Matthew 5:27-28: "You have heard that it was said, `Do not commit adultery. 28But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart

It's not always the physical act that God has in mind; it's the intentions of the heart.

In the arguments above we've often noted an "innocent" party of a divorce. How do we come to the conclusion that there can be an innocent party in either a "biblical" or "non-biblical" divorce and therefore remarriage is permissible for that divorced spouse? Let's look at some bible principles:

1. Divorce is not an unforgivable sin.

- a. There are no unforgivable sins apart from blaspheming the Holy Spirit.” (1 John 1:8-10)
- b. Divorce is no more an unforgivable sin than is “murder.” In Revelation 21:8 the text says among other things that a “murderer’s place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” Does that mean anyone who kills someone is a murderer and is doomed because the murdered person can not be brought back to life? Of course not for there is repentance and forgiveness available (1 John 1:8-10). God forgives a repentant sinner, blotting out there transgressions “for His own sake” (Isaiah 43:25) and “Then He adds, their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” (Hebrews 10:17). Wouldn’t that also include a divorce that couldn’t be restored to life?

2. Is one person held accountable for the sins of another?

- a. But one may ask, “Once the divorce has occurred if either divorced spouse remarries the original marriage can never be reconciled if and when the guilty party decides to repent and reestablish the broken marriage. That is true, but should the guilty party’s sin hold that kind power and restriction over the innocent party? Asked a different way, “Is the innocent party subject to the guilty party’s sin?” Not according to Ezekiel 18:1-20 where God explains how each person is responsible for his/her own sin. Granted this does not specifically address divorce, but neither do many other places in Scripture where sin is listed, i.e., Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21-22; Revelation 9:21; 21:8 or 22:15. (Note: It’s interesting that none of these lists of sins includes divorce)

Ezekiel 18:4 says, “For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.” Ezekiel 18:20 says, “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.”

3. Does God expect the innocent and/or repentant party of a biblical or non-biblical divorce to “sacrifice” to a point of never remarrying?

- a. Hebrews 10:17: “And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.”
- b. Matthew 9:13 says, “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Or Matthew 12:7 which says, “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.”

4. If God disallowed remarriage after divorce (*Remember we’re concerning ourselves with the innocent and/or genuinely repentant believer in a broken marriage here*) in all circumstances wouldn’t that nullify:

- A. Genesis 2:18: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone.’” Would it now be “good for man to be alone?”
- B. 1 Corinthians 7:9: “But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” Would it now be better for a man to “burn with passion?”

- C. It's interesting that the following text is in Matthew 19, the very same texts in which Jesus permitted divorce for marital unfaithfulness.

Matthew 19:12: "For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and **others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven**. The one who can accept this should accept it."

In the highlighted verses above Christ was speaking of a person who has the gift of "celibacy" and uses that gift in order to serve the kingdom of God. Would God require a person who does not have that gift to be "celibate?" Not according to 1 Corinthians 7:9 mentioned in "B" above. "The one who can accept this should accept it."

5. We realize this argument is somewhat different, but believe there is a principle here that applies.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah the Hittite killed. When Nathan brought God's message to David and David repented of his sin, God disciplined him, but He did not tell David to "put away" Bathsheba. He allowed the marriage to stand. He disciplined them both for their sin (they were both guilty), but David (a man after God's own heart) and Bathsheba (an adulterous wife) were permitted to continue their marriage. Then God gave them another son Solomon through which the human ancestry of both Mary the mother of Jesus and Joseph his father (it was thought) came and ultimately Christ and the Throne of David. The argument could be made that David was permitted to stay married because Uriah was dead, but wouldn't that make the argument that murder is in some way a lesser sin than divorce? We don't think so. Murder kills a person and divorce "kills" (so to speak) a marriage; both are sin and both are forgivable. God forgave their sin, allowed the remarriage of David and Bathsheba and blessed it.

We realize Bible scholars have disagreed over this issue for centuries and that we as elders of GFC will be unable to resolve all of the difficulties around this doctrine for everyone. But ours is a widely held position throughout evangelical Christianity and one we firmly believe has Biblical merit.