

**Biblical guidelines for the counselling of pastors in the
Bluff area, Durban on Divorce and Remarriage with
special reference to Matthew 19:1-10**

by

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SUMMARY

This study is an attempt to provide Biblical guidelines for the counselling of pastors in the Bluff area, Durban on Divorce and Remarriage with special reference to Matthew 19:1-10.

An attempt is made to analyse and evaluate various Scriptures with regard to Divorce. The original plan of God for the marriage covenant (Genesis 2:24) as life-long commitment is discussed and evaluated. Old Testament Scriptures are also analysed for a deeper knowledge and understanding of the marriage concept. In particular, attention is given to the key passage on Divorce and Remarriage, namely, Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

In addition, key passages from the New Testament passages are dealt with. In particular, the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:1-10 are analysed and evaluated, utilising the original Greek words to ascertain their correct significance and meaning. The specific words used by Jesus, "*porneia*" and "*moichao*," hold the key to the actual meaning of the passage. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 is also analysed, and confirms Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19. In particular, Paul encourages the new Church to strive after these teachings, as they confirm the will of God in the serious matter of divorce.

The study also consists of an empirical investigation into the pressure points perceived by church leaders in the Bluff area, Durban, to be responsible for the increase in divorce. The findings of the research indicate that the churches in the Bluff area need to provide pastoral counselling, specifically in the areas of Interpersonal issues, Spiritual issues and Ministry-related Issues.

Finally, the study proposes Biblical guidelines for understanding and preventing marital problems and for counselling couples considering Divorce or Remarriage. In particular, practical proposals are made regarding the hosting of marriage enrichment workshops and seminars on effective communication.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem: Divorce and Remarriage amongst pastors

1.5.1. Background to the problem.

A survey that was conducted in 1995, questioned five divorced American pastors and the findings were documented. These five pastors were asked to share their feelings, experiences, and views on the subject of divorce and the ministry. Strauch (1995: 67) reveals that the; “Journal staff published the forum because they believed the growing problem of divorce among ministers needed to be faced openly and honestly.” The article also claimed that pastors were third on the list on the highest divorce rate, exceeding medical doctors and policemen.

Within the ranks of the Church, the social issue of divorce has become a concern. Through deception, leaders are absorbed into the main stream of worldly activities and then find they are caught-up into making careless decisions without prior consultation for advice in order that restoration can be achieved.

There seems to be a tendency amongst today’s pastors to ignore the Biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage. It has been two thousand years, since the Apostle Paul warned his readers concerning the dangers of Church leaders basing their theology on what can be termed, “the traditions of men” and worldly principles instead of basing it on the teachings of Scripture:

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ (Col 2:8, NKJV).

It appears that the high rate of divorce amongst pastors is having a serious effect on society in general, but particularly on those families and churches that have been caught up in the nasty sting. No doubt the devastation caused by divorce has a catastrophic effect on the performance of any person, let alone the performance of a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, it has been found that divorce causes emotional instability, fear, frustration, anxiety, trauma, etc., which numbs the senses and leads to

ineffective and poor leadership. Decisions that are made by divorced pastors seem to be done carelessly and without thought or wisdom. This would naturally have a devastating effect on their entire ministry (Eldredge 2002:35-84).

God is a God of love – *Agape* love, the type of love, which is sacrificial and that has no boundaries (Eph 2:4; 1Jn 3:1). He seeks that mankind, and especially His ministers should live in peace and harmony with all of those people that He has entrusted into their care. In this regard, the most important people in the pastor’s care are, firstly, his wife secondly, his children and then his church members. In order to care for his flock properly, the pastor needs to place God and His teachings first. This would enable him to make godly decisions and to restore and live in harmony with others, something that God earnestly seeks (Rom 12:16; 1Pet 3:8).

1.5.2. The problem observed

1.1.2.1. Some possible causes of Divorce in today’s society.

- ***Man’s general lack of sacrificial love toward others***

Jesus’ disciples one day questioned Him as to the signs of His return to earth. Jesus offered them one of the many signs to watch out for. “*And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold*” (Mt 24:12, NKJV). The phrase Jesus used, “*the love of many will grow cold*” aptly describes the state of the world today and indicates how this prophecy is slowly being fulfilled. The love that Jesus expects from His true believers is the type of love that does not blame or point fingers, but it is the love (*agape*) that forgives, forgets and seeks restoration (Gal 6:1). God detests sin (Prov 6:16), but has a tremendous amount of love for the sinner (Jn 3:16). He enjoys it when mankind come to Him and repent of their unjust acts. He also delights in restoring us to where He wants us to be (2Pet 3:9).

- ***Man’s general selfishness and self-centredness.***

Another feature of today’s society is man’s attitude of selfishness and self-centredness, which has had a devastating affect on mankind’s general approach to constructive decision-making. Man also displays a negative attitude by placing himself at the centre of everything. This shows a lack of humility and submission to God’s commands. Wherever the “I” is involved, pride is close to

its roots. Solomon and his writings in the book of Proverbs, gives warnings against, as well as solutions to combat the area of pride (Prov 8:13; 29:23).

- ***The general hardness of heart amongst today's leaders.***

As a result of man's lack of sacrificial love, his heart has become hard and at times insensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The commands of God have to a large extent been neglected by today's leaders and even on occasions been totally disregarded. Jesus warned His disciples against the danger of disregarding God's commands (Mt 5:19-20) in His popular message called the Sermon on the Mount:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Mt 5:17, NKJV).

It is clear from this passage of Scripture that the commandments of God are as much valid today as they were then.

1.1.2.2. Statistics on the rate of Divorce and Remarriage today

- ***Global statistics on current divorce rate***

The website Aneki (2006) gives the current "Top 10" country divorce statistics as:

1. Maldives	10.97%
2. Belarus	4.63%
3. United States	4.34%
4. Cuba	3.72%
5. Estonia	3.65%
6. Panama	3.61%
7. Puerto Rico	3.61%
8. Ukraine	3.56%
9. Russia	3.42%
10. Antigua and Barbuda	3.40%

- ***South African statistics on current divorce rate 2002***

Gulnar Nugman in his article on the "World Divorce Rates," reveals the following current (2002) statistics with regard to the divorce rate in South Africa: Nugman gives the statistics for the "Divorce rate per 1000 people, as 0.81." This would, therefore, indicate an 8.1% rate as per 100 marriages.

- ***Statistics on divorced pastors in the AFM Church in South Africa.***

George Maleba (2004) shares certain information on recent statistics relating to Divorced pastors in the AFM Church (1996-2002). The research document

covers seven years from 1996-2002 where they found that a sum total of 33 Pastors (those recorded in their books) were divorced during this time. What is, however, interesting is that the research did not only involve young married couples, but also older couples, who were not spared. Maleba also records in the same article, that some of these leaders were also between fifty and sixty years of age.

The AFM Church, however, sees this as an alarming and disturbing trend, since this social behaviour is exposing the weakness of their moral leaders. The AFM leadership are quick to remark, "It raises eye brows in both the Church as well as in the secular world."

The AFM is concerned about the divorce rate amongst its leadership, because it is seen as a violation of their Biblical obligation and the tradition of the AFM as a movement. However, due to the timely intervention of various church structures, some potential cases of divorce were withdrawn.

The following table represents the statistics of AFM pastors affected by divorce between 1996 and 2002:

Year of Divorce	No of Cases	Reason
1996	7	1 Desertion 2 Ministerial Incompatibility 2 Socio-economical Incompatibility 2 Adultery
1997	0	
1998	7	1 Sexual Incompatibility 2 Socio-economical Incompatibility 4 Unknown
1999	3	1 Infidelity 2 Socio-economical Incompatibility
2000	8	1 Socio-economical Incompatibility 2 Ministerial Incompatibility 1 Sexual Incompatibility 5 Unknown
2001	6	2 Socio-economical Incompatibility 2 Ministerial Incompatibility 1 Sexual Incompatibility 1 Infidelity
2002	3	2 Sexual Incompatibility 1 Adultery

Cases outstanding (2002) 1 Case not completed

Cases withdrawn 2 Cases withdrawn

Total = 33

What needs to be added here is that during the period of this research the AFM Church had 1744 ordained ministers registered with the denomination.

The above AFM statistics on the pastors' divorce rate represent a good summary of the general trend in the problems faced by other denominations.

1.1.3. Summary of the problem

The research problem can be formulated in terms of the following primary question relating to the problem statement:

- What are the main risk factors responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst pastors today and what pastoral guidelines can be afforded in order to counsel pastors considering divorce or remarriage, and,
- What guidelines can be given in order to help them to resolve these ongoing problems?

The following secondary questions that can be derived from the primary problem statement question are:

- What is the Biblical view of the Divorce and Remarriage of pastors?
- What do Christians believe surrounding the issues of Divorce and Remarriage amongst pastors?
- Should pastors be relieved of their positions of authority if they remarry after divorce?

The phrase, "except for marital unfaithfulness by any of the partners" found in Matthew 19:9 will be a pivotal issue in this study. The question arises: Should pastors be allowed to divorce on any grounds other than marital unfaithfulness? The answers to this question can be divided into two main categories each with its own implications:

1. If one answers, "Yes," then the pastor would be encouraged to continue in any form of leadership position.
2. If, however, one answers, "No," it would then be advisable for him to rather step down from any form of office.

It is the understanding that the key to this answer lies in Matthew 19:9 which is commonly termed as "the exception clause." This entire study will, therefore, be centred on this very clause.

1.2. Aims of the Study

The current research is designed to achieve two fundamental goals. Firstly, the main objective of the study is to investigate the main factors that are responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst ministers in the Church in recent years. Secondly, will be to give recommendations as well as a Biblical model and other intervention strategies that can be employed to alleviate or prevent this tendency. If the above two goals are to be achieved one would need to follow the following guidelines:

- To present a Biblical exposition of Divorce and Remarriage of pastors with special reference to Matthew 19:1-12 (Chapter 2).
- Investigations through interviews and the completion of questionnaires will help gauge the perceptions of Christians in the Bluff area, Durban regarding the Divorce and Remarriage of pastors (Chapter 3).
- To propose Biblical guidelines for the counselling of pastors considering Divorce or Remarriage (Chapter 4).

1.3. Definition of relevant concepts

1.3.1 Marital concepts

- **Marriage**

Geisler (2002:277) defines *marriage* as follows:

Marriage is the most basic and influential societal unit in the world.

He elaborates on its importance: "It is difficult to overestimate the importance of marriage."

Eldredge (2002:15) provides the following definition:

Marriage is an exclusive and intimate union of a man and a woman that is established when they make a covenant to leave their parents and form a new family unit. It is a pure and holy union that is similar to the eternal union of Jesus Christ and His Church.

- **Divorce**

Davis (1993: 81) defines *divorce* as, "... a legal or customary decree that a marriage is dissolved." He elaborates:

Divorce is distinguished from annulment, in which it is declared by some authoritative body that the marriage attempted by a couple was invalid according to the rules of society, and that as a consequence a true marriage never existed.

- **Remarriage**

Webster (1956:1436) defines *remarriage* as, "A second marriage; the marriage ceremony repeated."

1.3.2. Relevant concepts relating to the pastor

Grudem (1994:1250) describes the meaning and function of the term *pastor* as follows:

A term used interchangeably with "elder," "overseer," and "bishop" to refer to the main governing office of a local Church in the New Testament." He continues to give the translation from Greek - the term "*poimen*" is the term that identifies the shepherding task with the office of an elder.

Erickson (1998:1091) indicates how the different titles indicate different functions:

The titles of bishop, elder, and pastor are believed to be different names for the same office; it has been suggested that they designate different functions or different aspects of the ministry.

1.3.3. Christian Counselling

- **Counselling**

Webster (1956:394) defines the term *counselling* as, "To give advice to: to advise: to exhort; to warn, admonish, or instruct."

- **Christian Counselling**

Collins (1988:15) defines *Christian counselling* as follows:

Counselling attempts to provide encouragement and guidance for those who are facing losses, decisions, or disappointments.

1.3.4. Concepts relating to empirical research

- **Qualitative research**

Wikipedia (2006) affords the following definition:

In the social sciences, qualitative research is a broad term that describes research that focuses on how individuals and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences; it is essentially narrative-orientated.

- **Quantitative research**

Wikipedia (2006) quotes this definition:

Quantitative research is based on the numerical representation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena. It is used in both natural and social sciences...Quantitative research begins with the collection of data,

followed by the application of various descriptive and inferential statistical methods ... In opinion surveys, respondents are asked a set of structured questions and their responses are tabulated.

1.3.5. A demographic profile of the Bluff area, Durban

The eTekweni Metro Council (2006) gives the Zulu name for the Bluff as “*Sibubulungu*” which means “*The long bulky ridge.*”

The Bluff is one of the oldest suburbs in the greater City of Durban. Dating back to the days of Dick King, the Bluff was established as a whaling station where many of the Norwegian fisherman and other residents like cane cutters and other ethnic groups lived. The Bluff has progressed since to be a metropolitan hub with many facilities extracted from the main city centre. Its infrastructure has enabled the residence to become a self-sufficient community. At the close of the apartheid era and when the open areas acts was passed, the Bluff experienced an influx of other race groups which has changed the demographical profile and given it a multi racial flavour. The crime rate is the lowest of all the suburbs that surround the city of Durban. The Bluff has approximately 50 000 people that inhabit it, this does not include its neighbours, such as Merewent which is mainly made up of the Coloured community, and Merebank that is predominantly an Indian residential area. Treasure Beach is an up market residential area where both the Coloured and Indian residents reside. The Bluff has five sub-areas namely: Fynnlands, Grosvenor, Wentworth, Kings Rest and Ocean View. It is an area with great potential and the last ten years have seen large amounts of economic wealth spent in the upgrading of residential areas and infrastructure upgrading (eTekweni Metro Council 2006).

1.4. Methodology

- The Zerfass theological research model will be used.
- Chapter 2 will attempt to provide a Biblical exposition and literature study on the Divorce and Remarriage of Church leaders. Various passages of Scripture will be analysed and the arguments of various authors will be used to reach conclusions regarding the issue of divorce and remarriage. Special attention will be given to Matthew 19:1-12.
- The fieldwork and the research findings will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. An attempt will be made to ascertain the perceptions of

Christians in the Bluff area, Durban regarding the main factors that are responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst Church leaders in recent years. This will be done by means of an empirical survey, which involves both qualitative and quantitative research: the collecting of first-hand information through interviews and questionnaires.

- Chapter 4 will be utilised to apply the themes drawn in the previous chapters to a new practical theological theory as interpreted from Zerfass' methodological model. A new practical theological theory will be presented at this point. Practical proposals will be made regarding Biblical guidelines for the counselling of pastors considering Divorce or Remarriage.

1.5. Literature review

The following authors will be used to bring understanding to this research document for the following reasons:

Evangelical Ethics [Issues Facing the Church Today] by John J Davis

John Davis has been widely praised for the best treatment he has contributed toward ethical problems that face Christianity today. John is quick to use history, medicine, the law, and most of all Scripture as a vantage point to make the message of ethics clear and understandable to the layman. A mature approach is what makes this book good research material for good academic work. John Davis is a professor of systematic theology and Christian ethics at Gordon-Cornwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. He holds a Ph.D. in systematic theology.

Can Divorced Christians Remarry? by Robert Eldredge

Robert Eldredge believes that he has the solution to the problem that exists when facing divorce and remarriage. He also believes that it is a must for every Christian, who is thinking about, going through, or recovering from a divorce, to read this book. He also gives insight to those who have already remarried. He gives encouragement to ministers when it comes to the emotional needs of divorced men and women who have been banished from office in churches. It is an excellent resource to have when counter arguing various points.

Christian Theology by Millard J Erickson

Millard Erickson's book on Christian Theology has long been used as a reliable and comprehensive introduction to systematic theology. In the insert he makes reference to the reason for revising his previous work. It is because there have been "so many changes in the theological world, as well as in the intellectual, political, economical and social world," he remarks. Millard J Erickson is a distinguished professor of theology at Baylor University's Truett Seminary and at Western Seminary, Portland.

Christian Ethics [Opinions and Issues] by Norman L Geisler

Norman Geisler established himself as a leading evangelical ethics teacher. This current book is from time to time being updated because of the lofty standard the author has set for himself. The book includes an analysis of contemporary issues that has not been explored previously. He also brings refinement to issues that he has dealt with in previous works. He acknowledges that as the world changes, new challenges need to be explored for sound Biblical solutions. Norman L Geisler is a former professor of apologetics at Dallas Theological Seminary and is currently dean of the Liberty Center for Christian Scholarship, Liberty University. He holds a Ph.D. from Loyola University.

Systematic Theology [An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine] by Wayne A Grudem.

Wayne Grudem believes that theology is meant to be "lived and prayed and sung," but before this can happen, it must be understood. Wayne gives clear definition to the various doctrines that he covers in this book. Everything is based on the foundation of Scripture. Many controversial issues are covered in this work, including the issue of leadership in the Church. Wayne A Grudem was formerly a professor of Biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, and is now a research professor of Bible and theology at Phoenix Seminary, Arizona.

Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible [The Social and Literary Context] by David Instone-Brewer.

David emphasises that many scholars of the New Testament, when dealing with the issues of divorce and remarriage, seem to be partial and unfair. In this book his intention is to bring balance between the plain meaning of the Scriptural

texts and the current issues facing humanity. He is quick to remind his readers that both Jesus and Paul condemned divorce without valid grounds and also discouraged divorce even for valid grounds. This book not only gives solid insight into Old Testament proof, but also validates what is taught in the New Testament. David is a research fellow at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England.

Biblical Eldership [An Urgent call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership] by Alexander Strauch.

The amount of copies (140 000) published speaks of the importance of this book when considering research material. Alexander takes a comprehensive look at the role and functions of elders, bringing all the advantages of shared leadership into focus. Extensive material is available in this book regarding the essential work of an elder, their qualifications, their relationships with each other, and the main Biblical passages relating to eldership. Alexander, with the help of Scripture, brings a clear understanding of the mandate for Biblical eldership.

Divorce and Remarriage, Four Christian Views by H Wayne-House.

Wayne-House is a former professor of systematic theology at Dallas Theological Seminary. Presently he is dean and professor of theology at Western Baptist College, Salem, Oregon. In this book, Wayne-House allows four writers, namely Carl J Laney, William Heth, Thomas Edgar and Larry Richard to argue around the same points relating to the Divorce and Remarriage of Christians. What makes this book so effective is that all four the writers are peer reviewed by each other in order to bring a balanced approach when dealing with this sensitive issue. As Wayne-House so rightly puts it, "Here is a book that is helpful to all who wish to think Biblically about a crucial issue confronting the church."

An exegetical analysis of Matthew 19:3-12, by Ronald D Harper.

Harpers writings in many ways have become an inspiration to the writing of this thesis. Many of the resources that Harper used was not available as part of the research to this thesis. Nevertheless, his writing was clear enough to fully understand the direction he was taking. Harper covered the subject conclusively and with the Biblical authority needed to expound on the teachings of Jesus,

Paul and others that contributed to the issues surrounding divorce and remarriage. His coverage on Matthew 19:10-12 assures what needs to be considered when leaders are caught up in the misfortune of divorce. His complete work is excellent resource material.

Chapter 2

A Biblical perspective on the Divorce and Remarriage of pastors with special reference to Matthew 19:1-12

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present a Biblical exposition of Divorce and Remarriage of pastors with special reference to Matthew 19:1-12. In pursuit of the above aim, the following aspects relating to the divorce and remarriage will be discussed:

- The Background of the passage
- The Context of the passage
- The Pharisees' first question and the Lord's response (Matthew 19:3-6)
- The follow-up question and the Lord's response (Matthew 19:7-9)
- Jesus' teaching on eunuchs and the disciples' response (Matthew 19:10-12)
- Paul's teaching on Marriage and Divorce
- Contemporary views within the evangelical-reformed community regarding divorce and remarriage.

2.2. The Background of the passage

It needs to be emphasised from the outset of this study that Matthew 19:1-12 appears to be an extremely difficult passage to interpret. Within these twelve verses one is able to interpret two of the main questions that the Pharisees posed to Jesus. The correct interpretation of this passage will help to achieve a balanced understanding of this teaching.

In Matthew 19:1-12, firstly, Jesus deals with the issue surrounding God's original plan for marriage found in Genesis 2:24. Secondly, Jesus deals with the very technical subject and a sensitive issue of divorce and remarriage in Deuteronomy 24. This passage was the entire basis of the argument of the Pharisees. Lastly, Jesus shared His views on the matter, giving some clear and important interpretation. With this in mind, does the sudden debate of the Shammai and Hillel not provide a constructive background in obtaining an answer to these issues we face today? Their questions were also cunningly

delivered in order to see if Jesus would oppose the marriage of Herod who had unlawfully married his brother's wife.

Matt 19:1-12 can be divided into two categories:

- God's Law, and
- The Secular Law.

Due to the progressive eradication of Biblical truth in today's society, divorce has become the accepted norm and the accepted trend. Hence verses of Scripture, such as Matt 19:1-12 are simply brushed aside and hardly ever discussed. This trend is not only having a negative effect on God's original plan for marriage, but is also nullifying the Word of God in such a way that the compromising of Scripture waters down its power. This has resulted in a high rate of divorce.

Divorce, in turn, is having a far-reaching effect within the community. De Bruyn (1993: 201) lists three main issues that directly influence and even challenge the unity of the marriage relationship. He includes items such as, "loss of family unity, disruption of the parent's lives, disruption of the children's lives," to name a few of the damaging effects of divorce. The morals in today's society in South Africa and even in the church seem to endorse and even encourage divorce for just about any reason.

Norman Geisler (2002: 277) a writer in the area of Christian ethics confirms the importance of marriage in society:

Marriage is the most basic and influential societal unit in the world ...It is difficult to overestimate the importance of marriage, yet each year in the United States there are about half as many divorces as marriages.

It is understood that he was making special reference to Christian marriages.

Numerous other authors have expressed various statements regarding the state and reality of the problem of broken marriages, but the burning question remains, "What effect does divorce have on society and what influence does it have on Christian Church leaders?"

Statistics indicate that divorce forms a major part of the crippling sociological condition, not only in this country, but its adverse effect is being felt worldwide. As today's society faces this problem, it is evident that divorce is

having a catastrophic effect on the Church, particularly on its leaders. Finding a balanced solution to this widely debated subject will help provide some answers to many of these pressing questions.

Some Church groups have also failed to allow the promotion of potential leaders into positions of authority, when the individual has broken the initial covenant of marriage (Divorce) and has then desired to enter into a second marital covenant (Remarriage). The question arises: Are these Church groups correct in their application of Biblical principles?

The following question can also be posed: Are South Africans facing this very same problem? Are Christians violating those very Biblical laws that have been enforced by God? Statistics indicate that these are relevant problems in society, as well as in the church.

Knowing that the problem of divorce exists within the Church itself, much debate has been centred on the issue as to whether leaders should remain in office once they have been divorced. What happens if an ordained leader decides to remarry? Should he remain in office or should he step down from his leadership position?

2.3. The Context of the passage

2.3.1. The historical context of the book of Matthew

Harper (1996: 3) describes the book of Matthew as follows:

Matthew is recognised as the most comprehensive of the Gospels. It presents us with the most complete account of the teachings of Jesus.

Kriban (1979: 1189) states that the Book of Matthew “was probably not the first book of the New Testament to be written even though it is placed first in its present order.” What is noteworthy, however, is that the Book of Matthew refers to the Old Testament writings more than the others.

The Amplified Bible (1987: 1073) affords the following historical view:

The Judaic background is reflected in Matthew’s use of the phrase “kingdom of heaven,” which occurs thirty three times in the book. He continues to reveal that, “The ethical and spiritual principles of the Messianic kingdom are particularly emphasized, indicating that the kingdom had a present spiritual existence as well as a future material manifestation.

During this time there was also concern for the Gentiles. The main focus of the book was to accentuate the healing ministry of Jesus, which is found five times in these writings. They are detected in Matt 5:3-7:27; 10:5-42; 13:3-52; 18:3-35; 24:4-25:46.

To better understand the historical writings of this book, one would need to give due consideration to the author as well as the purpose and motivation for his writings.

2.3.1.1 The author and his overall purpose

The author of the book of Matthew was one of the twelve disciples that Jesus selected to be on His team. He worked for the Roman government as a tax collector prior to him being called to be a servant of the kingdom. He was also well known amongst the citizens of Capernaum and accredited by the early Church fathers to be the author of the book that would also bear his name. As a Jew it is likely that he first wrote this Gospel in Aramaic in order that the Jewish people could understand the man named Jesus. He later provided a Greek edition, which became widely known and gained extensive circulation (*The Amplified Bible* 1987: 1073).

Kirban (1979: 1189) indicates Matthew's aim in writing the book:

His aim is to show that Jesus was the promised Messiah and King whose coming was foretold by the Old Testament prophets.

It is important to take into consideration the traditional background of the author. Finding himself, no longer as a government official, but employed in the kingdom, he was elevated into giving some valuable insight and revelation to the works of Jesus Christ. Matthew understood the historical circumstances and also witnessed the constant opposition that Jesus found Himself facing.

2.3.1.2 The recipients and their historical circumstances

This narrative was written to the Jews in order for them to understand that the Messiah, their King has come in the flesh just as the Old Testament had predicted. It was appropriate to start the book, showing them that Jesus Christ was a descendent of David. One of Matthew's envisaged goals was to indicate that God sent Jesus not as an earthly king, but as a heavenly king. The

kingdom that they needed to follow was better than that of their earlier king David (*Life Application Bible* 1993: 1665).

When looking back at the birth of Jesus one sees that many acknowledged Him as king. Even Herod, the ruling leader of that day knew that a king was born and after paying homage to Him did everything in his power to destroy Jesus (*Life Application Bible* 1993: 1665).

2.3.2 The setting of the passage

When looking at the Matthew's structure, it is evident that it could be analysed in different ways, but there is little consensus in this matter. Various scholars agree that the Gospel of Matthew uses five discourses. This, however, suggests that he wrote the Gospel in five sections or otherwise termed books:

- 1) Introducing Jesus (1:1-4:6)
- 2) Public Ministry in and around Galilee (4:17-16:20)
- 3) Private ministry in Galilee; preparing His disciples (16:21-18:35)
- 4) Ministry in Judea (19:1-25:46, and
- 5) The death and resurrection of Jesus (26:1-28:20).

France (1994: 907) elaborates on the structure of the book of Matthew:

Others suggest that the repeated clause '*From that time on Jesus began to...*' in 4:17 and 16:21 is intended to mark the beginning of major new sections of the narrative.

Some scholars have noted that the stories in Matthew and Mark have generally the same outlines. They also appear to have been set in the same geographical setting from the early ministry in Galilee and moving toward the final confrontation in Jerusalem (Harper 1996: 4).

2.3.2.1 The setting of the text within the Gospels

The synoptic issue:

The concept "synoptic" could mean the following: "seeing the whole together, taking a comprehensive view" (Harper 1996: 4). He continues to explain the following:

It is unlikely that three biographers of the same individual would be able to give three accounts that contain nothing but material unique to their account.

What also needs consideration is that some years had elapsed between Jesus' earthly life and the documenting of these various writings. Another consideration is that there were oral accounts of the words and deeds of Jesus. What also needs to be determined is the literary relationship that exists amongst these accounts.

One question that keeps coming up when reading these writings is, "Did the three authors have access to each others writings, or were they written independently?" Also, were these teaching accounts documented directly by the author, or did he make use of the oral tradition that was already established?

There are two accounts of divorce mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels. It will, therefore, be important to deal with both accounts in this study, even though the accounts are significantly different. The account in Matthew 19:9 gives the answer to the Pharisees question in the form of an "exception clause." Whereas the account in Mark comes in the form of a total prohibition and this is where the dispute comes in its main focus. It must be noted that no form of an exception clause exists in the writings of Mark. There have, however, been arguments that give Matthew the blame for the exception clause. Harper (1996: 8) explains:

In Matthew's account he mentions the case of a man divorcing his wife when Jesus said, '*whoever divorces his wife...*'" (19:9). Mark, however, uses these words, "*and if she herself divorces her husband...*" (Mark 10:12).

What needs to be understood is that the words about a wife divorcing her husband are never mentioned in the Matthew writings. Another consideration is that Jesus' teachings on the "eunuchs" (Matt 19:10-12) is not found in the Mark writings.

Harper (1996: 8) emphasises that, "The 'synoptic issue' raises these questions with which any treatment of Matthew 19:3-12 must deal." This study will attempt to deal with these differences in the next section.

Differences between Matthew 19:3-12 and Mark 10: 2-12 (Parallel passages)

Since these passages form the foundation of this study, it is important to gain a greater understanding of what is meant by the synoptic issue. In particular, the differences between the parallel accounts in the book of Matthew and the book of Mark, relating to the issue of marriage and divorce, need to be clarified.

Matthew (19:9) identifies the prohibition of divorce and explains its meaning. He reveals Jesus' words by which He affords the Pharisees with the answers to their testing questions. What is not revealed in the writings of Mark is the "exception clause," which is without a doubt the criteria of the entire issue surrounding Jesus' teaching on the matter. The use of the Greek words "*porneia*" (fornication) and "*moichao*" (adultery) are used in the same sentence. An almost similar account is given in Mark chapter 10 and verse 11, but the difference of this passage is that it delimits divorce to the issue of "*moichao*" which in the English language means "adultery" (Harper 1996: 9-10).

Another issue that is not dealt with in the Mark writings is Jesus' teaching on the issue of "eunuchs," found in Matthew 19:10-12. Mark fails to even make mention to this important issue Jesus taught on.

Some Church groups lean toward the writings of Mark, and are opposed to what Matthew reveals. The book of Mark then forms the basis of the various doctrines that they believe. It needs to be emphasised that the entire message from all Scripture should be taught. This is clearly revealed by Jesus in His popular Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:17-18).

2.3.2.2 Setting of the discourse in Matthew 19:1-2: Jesus' ministry of healing in Judea

The latter part of Jesus' fateful journey to Jerusalem was where the setting of this debate is about to unfold. This journey heralded the mission to His eventual death on the cross. As most of His ministry was in the area of Galilee, He would only return there again after His resurrection. The further Jesus and the group travelled south, so too did the shadow of the cross grow deeper. Jesus continued with His teachings, because He was preparing His disciples for what was to come (France 1994: 929).

2.4 The Pharisees' first question and Jesus' response (Matthew 19:3-6)

To understand the complexity of the questions raised by the Pharisees, one would need to deal with each of the questions that were required of Jesus to answer, separately. This will help to systematise the questions asked and then to reach a conclusion on the matter.

2.4.1 The Pharisees' first question (Matthew 19:3)

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?' (Mt 19:3, NIV).

Regarding this first question, Mounce (1991:181) indicates that, "The Pharisees permitted divorce, but differed on the appropriate terms." Tasker (1996: 179) elaborates:

It is clear that the Pharisees were attempting to place Jesus in a dilemma by forcing Him to say something which would imply that He took either too lax or too strict a view on the notoriously difficult and much debated subject of divorce.

The two schools of thought (Shammai and Hillel) at that time were in opposition to each other; so when the question was asked, it also came in a form of testing. This was not the first time in Jesus' ministry that He was pressed for an answer to a very controversial and sensitive question.

The question raised by the two schools of thought stem from the Jewish tradition that was also still accepted in those times. France (1994: 929) reveals the following information: "In Jewish law a man had the right to '*divorce his wife*' by a simple declaration; there was no trial and no appeal." It could, therefore, be deduced that the intention of this question was based on the Pharisees' perception of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which was still a very practised principle in those days.

In this regard, France (1994: 929) elaborates on the use of the term "something indecent" in Deuteronomy 24:1 as follows:

... the 'something indecent' which that passage gave as the grounds for divorce left room for debate. Some teachers restricted this to adultery or other gross sexual behaviour, but in common practice; supported by some rabbis it was virtually a matter of the husband's whim, *for any and every reason*.

Jesus' answer (verse 4) to what the Pharisees asked Him in verse 3 can be seen as a clear "No!" Laney (1990: 31) elaborates on Jesus' response as follows:

In contrast to the religious leaders of His day, Jesus affirmed the permanence and inviolability of the God-ordained marriage union.

Jesus' answer can then be seen as follows: "There is no valid reason at all" for divorce. Therefore, it is understood that whatever question was opposed to Jesus and in whatever form of testing, it was dealt with in the appropriate manner as not to implicate Himself in any way.

Gardner (1940: 289) contends that the reason why the Pharisees asked Jesus the question was because, "They were testing Him to see if He would be in conflict to Scripture (Mt 5:31-32) and if He did, He would then discredit Himself."

One would need to look deeper into the nature and motive of why they needed to readdress this issue, considering that Jesus had already discussed it in Matthew 5.

2.4.1.1 The nature and motive of the question

What was the nature and motive of the Pharisees' question? Having an understanding the state of marriages in the region and knowing the traditional attitudes toward marriage of those times, would help one to have insight into what motivated the Pharisees' question.

Calvin (2004: 262) sheds some light on what motivated the Pharisees' question:

Though the Pharisees lay snares for Christ, and cunningly endeavour to impose upon Him, yet their malice proves to be highly useful to us, as the Lord knows how to turn, in a wonderful manner, to the advantage of His people all the contrivances of wicked men to overthrow sound doctrine.

Regarding the nature of the question, it should be pointed out that the question that the Pharisees posed made reference to the liberty of the divorce settlement (Deut 24:1-4), as well as to a fixed law laid down that had reference to the indissoluble bond of marriage (Gen 2:24).

2.4.1.2 The background for their question: the two Jewish schools of thought
The test came in a subtle, but cunning question. If Jesus replied in a negative way they would therefore exclaim that He wickedly abolished the Law. In the same manner if Jesus affirmed with the question, the Pharisees would then discern that He is not a prophet of God. These were the calculations that they prepared in their own minds, but the Son of God knew how to moderate a wise answer in their own craftiness (Job 5:13).

In Jesus' time there were two famous divinity and philosophical schools among the Jews. These two were the Shammai and the other, Hillel.

Instone-Brewer (2002: 112) explains one reason why the two schools disagreed:

The second matter on which the Hillelites and Shammaites disagreed was the complexity of the 'stages involved in getting a divorce.'

So it was natural to approach Jesus with the question and with their devious intentions, try and trap Him at the same time.

In order to acquire a better understanding and background, it will therefore be beneficial to have insight into their traditional manner of thinking of these two schools as well as their doctrinal differences.

- The Shammai

Clark (2004: 265) indicates the position of the school of Shammai on the issue of divorce:

The school of Shammai maintained that a man could not legally put away his wife, except for whoredom.

Laney (1990: 32) confirms this:

The conservative school of the Shammai allowed divorce only on the grounds of adultery.

From the above scholars it can be concluded that Jesus actually sided with the Shammai school of thought, but they never even saw it. The reason for this is found in Matthew 19:9, "*I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery*" (NIV). The two schools were too busy trying to trap Him, that they missed the whole point of the conversation.

- The Hillel

Clark (2004: 265) states the position of the school of Hillel regarding divorce:

The school of Hillel taught that a man might put away his wife for a multitude of other causes, and when she did not find grace in his sight; i.e. when he saw any other woman that pleased him better.

Laney (1990: 32) agrees with Clark in describing the position of the Hillel school:

The more liberal school of the Hillel said that divorce for any reason was legitimate.

It could be argued that the opinions of the Church of Jesus Christ are as diverse as the above two schools of thought. If one were to interview ten pastors, one could, for example, find seventy percent siding with the Shammai school of thought and thirty percent siding with the Hillel school. If this were the case, then this would place the Scripture found in Matthew 19 in jeopardy, since Jesus' teaching on divorce in this passage is extremely clear.

2.4.1.3 The nature of the test: Challenging Jesus to take sides

Laney (1990: 32) broadens the complexity of the question; he indicates that they were enticing Jesus into accepting sides and having preference with one or the other; but Jesus was alert to their crafty schemes. He elaborates:

If opposed to the liberal side of the Hillel and the conservative side of the Shammai, Jesus would be condemning the marriage of Herod Antipas, endangering His own life and this was precisely what the Pharisees wanted (Laney 1990: 32).

To fully understand the complexity of the question, one would also need to take into consideration Jesus' response to the Pharisees' first question.

2.4.2 The Lord's response (Matthew 19:4-6)

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, '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. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." (Matthew 19:4-6, NIV).

Jesus handled the first question posed by the Pharisees in the same manner as He dealt with the question that was raised in Matthew 5:31-32.

France (1994: 929) explains:

Rather than to enter this debate, Jesus again declared that divorce, for whatever reason, was incompatible with God's purpose for marriage.

Jesus (v. 4) points out that the original ordinance of the covenant agreement of marriage found in Genesis 2:24. By doing so, Jesus also places the above Scripture above that of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, because Jesus foreknew that the passage in Deuteronomy was not a command, but that it was given as permission only "*because your hearts were hard.*" Jesus was also saying in a non-direct way that the divorce regulations were a concession in order to deal with the result of sin. This was not to be regarded as an expression of the way God intended things to be (France 1994: 929).

Laney (1990: 32) describes Jesus' response to the Pharisees' first question as follows: "Jesus rejects both the liberal and conservative views on divorce that were held by the rabbis of His day." Jesus appeals to the first part of the question with regard to divorce. This question did not form part of God's original plan for marriage. Jesus also regarded marriage to be permanent as God intended. Laney (1990: 32) elaborates on Jesus' three appeals:

1. He appeals to the original plan for marriage found in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. He goes on to appeal to the fact that God made them male and female. The female was physically taken from the man and that they through this act, became one.
2. "Genesis 2:24 shows that in marriage two people actually became united together in a family (one flesh) relationship."
3. Jesus then goes on to say that God is the One that joins the couple together in marriage. He is present at the ceremony and is the third person sealing His original intent. This is why Jesus said to the Pharisees, "*Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate*" (Matt 19:6, NIV). In other words, "Stop severing marriage unions which God has permanently bound together."

There is little doubt that the Pharisees clearly understood that Jesus was ministering a "no divorce" message, and not even for the most bizarre circumstances. They then turned their debate to the Mosaic reference found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This aspect will be dealt with later in this chapter.

2.4.2.1 God's original plan for marriage (v 4) (Gen 1:27, 2:24)

God's original plan for marriage is revealed in Genesis 2:24. This text is again quoted twice in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. It is also quoted in the book of Ephesians (Eph 5:22-33).

Laney provides insight into the message found in Genesis 2:24. He divides this passage into three parts and mentions three things that are very essential to marriage (Laney 1990: 33):

1. "A public act of "leaving" one's family with a view to establishing a new home;
2. A permanent bond, "cleaving" or being permanently bound in a partnership as husband and wife;
3. A physical embrace, "becoming one flesh" physically through sexual union."

Richard Booker (1981: 27) affords the following powerful insight:

God sees marriage as a blood covenant (Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17). ...The blood covenant is therefore made permanent when the groom and bride come together as husband and wife. The blood covenant is then consummated when the hymen is broken. This is why God condemns pre- and extra-marital sexual unions.

Eldredge (2002: 17) confirms the permanence of marriage:

Marriage is to be a lifetime commitment for the rest of one's life, annulments are then to be seen as unscriptural ...Once the marriage covenant has been confirmed through the exchanging of vows, they cannot be annulled by man.

2.4.2.2 The permanence and priority of marriage (v 5) (Gen 2:24)

Concerning the permanence of marriage, Calvin (2004: 264) asserts that:

The bond of marriage is more sacred than that which binds children to their parents...God joined the male to the female, so that the two made an entire man; and therefore he who divorces his wife, tears from him, as if it were the half of himself.

Eldredge (2002: 15) elaborates:

Marriage is an exclusive and intimate union of a man and a woman that is established when they make a covenant to leave their parents and form a new family unit. It is a pure and holy union that is similar to the eternal union of Jesus Christ and His Church.

In Malachi 2:14 God makes a profound statement:

You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

When analysing this particular passage one needs to consider to whom God is actually referring. Ryrie (1986: 1291) comments as follows:

All divorce breaks the covenant (promise) made at the time of marriage, and remarriage violates the pattern God established at creation when He made only one wife for Adam.

At this stage it would be helpful to consider Genesis 2:24 more carefully in particular, to ascertain the meaning of the three terms: leave, cleave and become one flesh.

It would now be a good time to look at Genesis 2:24 more carefully and attain revelation from what is understood by the three terms, leave, cleave and become one flesh.

2.4.2.3 Analysis of significant words/phrases

Concerning the meaning of Genesis 2:24, Smith (2005) provides the following insight:

This verse had three parts and mentions three things, which are essential to marriage. And this is exactly what God intended:

1. A public act, "leaving" one's family with a view to establish a new home.
2. Permanent bond, "cleaving" or being permanently bound in a partnership as husband and wife.
3. Becoming "one flesh" the physical embrace through sexual union.

In the following paragraphs, each concept will be dealt with individually to obtain a clearer understanding.

Leave

The Hebrew word for "leave" is "*azab*" which means, "leave behind" or "depart from." In Genesis 2:22 one reads, "*Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*" Laney (1990: 17) provides an interesting interpretation of this passage. "Because God made woman, man must let go of his parents, with a view to establishing his own home and family." With this in mind one could then say that without the firm

establishment of this first clause, the marriage would not last, that is, without this first essential step of *leaving*.

What also needs to be borne in mind is that the *leaving* does not imply the complete abandoning of one's parents. The responsibility to "*honour your father and mother*" (Exo 20:12), is still valid. It simply means that one is to start one's own family unit.

Cleave

This is the second essential component found in Genesis 2:24. In every teaching of the Bible there is a divine order and a purpose for the process. It would be impossible to "cleave" until you "leave." Now the whole purpose of leaving is in order to establish a new marriage and home.

Eldredge (2002: 17) indicates that, "The word 'cleave' means to permanently join together, so marriage was intended to be a lifetime commitment."

The Hebrew word for "cleave" is "*dabaq*." It simply means to "cling" or to "keep close." As Carl Laney (1990:18) so rightly puts it, "Marriage involves a partnership commitment to which the husband and wife must be loyal." He also notes that the term "covenant," suggests that it is a binding relationship, which shall never be broken. Even though the word "covenant" has a different Hebrew word, "*b rit*" found in Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:17; the meaning of these words is closely linked to the Hebrew word "*dabaq*". The two words bear reference to a "pact made by two persons as well as that of a constitutional agreement" (Laney 1990:18).

William Heth (1990: 75) explains the following concerning the act of cleaving to one's spouse: that it "Is especially prominent as a technical term in the covenant terminology." This is evident when one looks at the passage found in Deuteronomy 10:20; 11:22; 13:4 and 30:20.

Heth (1990: 75) elaborates on the use of the word 'cleave':

... the use of the word 'cleave' found in Genesis 2:24 bears no reference to any form of sexual union between the husband and his wife, but points to a covenant relationship modelled after God's covenant Israel in the Old Testament. Therefore, human marriage

in its ceremonial design serves as a pedagogical¹ metaphor of God's love for His elect.

Therefore, it can safely be concluded that:

[The] permanence of marriage is fundamentally a theological issue rooted in the divine-human relationship to which marriage stands as an antitype" (Heth 1990: 75).

Becoming one flesh

Becoming one flesh is the third essential ingredient to the marriage union. It is the physical union in the sense that "*they shall become one flesh.*" This has direct reference to the sexual union within the covenant of marriage. Laney (1990: 19) concludes:

Becoming one flesh symbolises the identification of two people with one community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated by the physical act of sexual intercourse.

It then needs to be stated that the two people are still separate beings, but become one in a mystical, spiritual unity, through the act of sexual union. The couple continually celebrates the newness of their oneness every time the partners get together to partake of that which God has given them. Sexual intercourse should, therefore, only be enjoyed in this unique covenant relationship.

De Bruyn (1993: 167) provides the following vital interpretation:

Becoming "*one flesh*" primarily indicates sexual intercourse as the most intimate physical relationship between man and woman... Sexual intercourse should not stand on its own, it should at the same time be the revelation of the most intimate spiritual association with and loving focus on each other.

It can, therefore, be concluded that God's original intention for marriage was that it should be considered as the most spiritual and at the same time the most physical act that is associated with marriage.

Having dealt with the three covenant principles of marriage found in Genesis 2:24, attention will now be given to the nature of the marriage union.

2.4.2.4 The nature of the marriage union

Laney (1990: 17) explains God's original plan and intention for marriage:

¹ Pedagogical: bearing reference to, educational, academic, instructive, tutorial or instructive.

This plan is revealed in Genesis 2:24, a text which is quoted twice in the Gospels (Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7-8) and once in the Epistles (Eph 5:31).” He goes on to say, “This foundational passage (Gen 2:24) reveals that marriage was divinely designed and instituted as a lifelong relationship.

Geisler (2002: 279) elaborates: The Bible is very clear about the duration of marriage: It is a lifelong commitment. It is to last for a time, but not for eternity.

The Bible indicates that God is “love” (1Jn 4:8, 16) and because of His love, He expects His creation to honour His Word. As the heart is the central part of the body that also keeps the blood circulating, it is also considered to be a symbol of life. Therefore, the heart can then be related to as the total person. It stands for one’s whole being, including one’s nature and one’s entire life. Booker (1981: 27) describes some implications of loving someone from the heart:

We love them with our whole being.... When you give your heart to someone, you are giving them your total life. This is the essence, as well as the spirit of the blood covenant, which God ordains.

It is clear from Genesis 2:24 that God also considers marriage as a covenant relationship between the husband and his wife.

- Marriage is established as a covenant

Eldredge (2002: 16) describes marriage in terms of a covenant:

A marriage begins when a man and a woman voluntarily make a covenant to ‘leave’ their parents and ‘cleave’ together as husband and wife for the rest of their lives ...Once the marriage covenant has been made, the man and the woman become ‘one’ in the sight of both God and man.

Booker (1981: 27) defines marriage in terms of a blood covenant:

A blood covenant between two parties is the closest, the most enduring, the most solemn and the most sacred of all contracts.

In dealing with the covenant of marriage, Booker makes logical sense, since this is the same covenant that God made with mankind in Genesis 15. It could be argued that we are all of the seed of Abraham and our covenant partner, Jesus, shed His blood as a token of His covenant relationship with

mankind. In that case, it was God's intention to point back to that very relationship, when He was speaking on the marriage covenant.

Regarding marriage as a blood covenant, Booker (1981: 27) states:

It absolutely cannot be broken. When you enter into blood covenant with someone, you promise to give them your life, your love and your protection forever, till death do you part. So it is without any doubt that marriage is a blood covenant (Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17).

Geisler (2002: 279) describes marriage in terms of a covenant of mutual promises:

Marriage is not only a union between male and female involving conjugal (sexual) rights, but it is a union born of a covenant of mutual promises... Marriage is a social institution that God ordained before the fall of mankind.

From the above it is clear that Christians as well as non-Christians benefit from what God has ordained. In addition, the covenant agreement is further enhanced when seen from God's point of view, that He initiated it to a pure and holy union.

- Marriage is a pure and holy union

This aspect of the nature of marriage will further be dealt with in a two-fold manner by means of: (1) a historical survey and (2) a consideration of God's intention.

A historical survey of marriage is important, since on numerous occasions Biblical views have been distorted, because traditional views have superseded the Scriptural interpretation. This trend is evident, when one considers the many and varied interpretations of the nature of marriage by the different ethnic groups throughout history.

The first few centuries of Christianity, saw church leaders recognising the union of marriage as pure and holy. It was, however, later discouraged, due to the severe persecution by the Roman government in the hope that Jesus would return soon (Eldredge 2002: 21).

In 56 A.D. Paul wrote the following in his letter to the Corinthian Church:

What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none" (1Cor 7:29, NIV).

The question arises: For what reason did he share on this topic? It could be argued that Paul was using this manner of speech, because so many Christians were being imprisoned, persecuted, tortured and even put to death. This persecution did end abruptly in 313 AD, when the Roman Empire granted freedom to all religions when they issued the Edict of Milan (Eldredge 2002: 21).

The emperor Constantine publicly endorsed Christianity and with this declaration, Christianity became publicly correct. With the infiltration of politics into the Church, the leadership became corrupt due to political pressure. Due to these circumstances and in hindsight to what Paul had said, the Church leaders continued to discourage marriage, for completely different reasons.

Eldredge (2002: 21) explains:

The newly appointed Church leaders overreacted to the sexual immorality that was prevalent amongst the wealthy ruling class. They then went so overboard that they promoted complete abstinence from all sexual relations, even in marriage.

In the fourth century the leaders promoted “asceticism.”² To gain God’s approval, self-denial, sexual abstinence and celibacy was encouraged and even advocated. The two historical figures responsible for this tradition were Ambrose and Jerome. Ambrose was a Roman governor, before becoming Bishop of Milan in 374 AD and Jerome was also unmarried. Eldredge (2002: 22) describes Ambrose as follows:

Ambrose was the first Bishop to write at length about sexual issues in the church as well as the abstinence of marriage.

Eldredge (2002: 23) indicates the following about Jerome’s views on sexual relations:

He was convinced that sexual relations were intrinsically³ evil even within marriage and therefore should be tolerated only for the purpose of conceiving children.

Johnson (1967: 110) quotes Jerome where he said, “Marriage is only one degree less sinful than fornication.” The Roman Catholic Church today embraces this very teaching within their leadership, even to this very day. Their

² **Asceticism** meaning: sobriety, self-denial, abstinence, moderation, temperance or self-discipline.

³ **Intrinsically** meaning: essentially, basically, fundamentally or inherently.

beliefs on human sexuality have had a very strong influence on succeeding generations.

Booker (1981:27) describes the marriage covenant as a holy union. Because the marriage relationship is a blood covenant in God's sight and involves the "becoming one flesh" Booker focuses on the sexual union within the marriage union:

The two become one flesh-this symbolic union is made complete by the physical act of marriage when the groom and bride come together as husband and wife (1981: 27).

The purity of marriage is confirmed in Scripture:

Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral' (Heb 13:4).

Booker (1981: 27) elaborates:

The blood covenant is consummated when the hymen is broken. This is why pre and extra-marital physical intercourse is a sin" (Exo 20:14; Mt 5:27; 1Cor 6:18; 10:8; Gal 5:19).

Arguing further from the holiness of marriage, one would need to consider the marriage union from a monogamous perspective.

- Marriage is a monogamous union

Ryrie (1986: 10) describes God's plan from marriage in Genesis 2:24 as a monogamous union:

This verse of Scripture emphasises the complete identification of the two personalities in marriage. The passage tells us that God instituted marriage and that it is to be monogamous, heterosexual, and the complete union of the two persons.

Geisler (2002: 280) confirms this:

Marriage is monogamous and between one man and one woman. This is confirmed with Paul's words, "... *each man should have his own wife* (singular) *and each woman* (singular) *her own husband'* (1Cor 7:2).

Eldredge (2002: 15) defines marriage in terms of an exclusive union: "God created men and women with an innate desire to join together in an exclusive union." Jesus later confirmed this when He limited marriage to the union of only one man and one woman (Mk 10:8).

Jesus' response to the Pharisees first question was dialogued around the area of divorce, but Jesus did not appear to be interested in answering the question. They were concentrating on the writings of Deuteronomy 24. Jesus, on the other hand, was drawing their attention to Genesis 2:24 and its implications for a monogamous marriage. Instone-Brewer (2002: 137) indicates that Jesus was more concerned with:

Reminding the Pharisees that marriage was meant to be monogamous and lifelong ... The two texts, Genesis 1:27; 2:24, are linked so that the conclusion can be drawn from both."

The burning question remains: "Does God still endorse His original plan for marriage today?"

2.4.2.5 The validity of God's plan for marriage today

Is God's plan for marriage still valid today? This question could be answered by quoting from Hebrews 13:8. "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*" This verse indicates that while everything else in the world changes, God never changes. Man might change the rules to suit himself. However, God never changes His standards. Moreover, He withholds His blessings from those who break His laws.

Another Scripture that strengthens this argument of the validity of God's plan for marriage today, is found in Galatians 3:15: "*Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.*" In this verse Paul is sharing his thoughts on the area of grace when he writes these words to them. The question arises: What was Paul saying in this verse? It appears that he is saying the following: No one can change the covenant or covenants that God has established. So too should the covenant of marriage that God has established never be changed. "*Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate*" (Mt 19:6). God's Word is honoured as a covenant to mankind, so too is the validity of marriage today. According to the Scriptures, it is a lifelong covenant relationship, established by God.

2.5 The follow-up question and the Lord's response (Matthew 19:7-9)

This question came as no surprise, as this was the very foundation of the Pharisees' entire belief system. What the Pharisees failed to identify is that

Moses never commanded divorce: he only permitted it, because of their hardened hearts. They, therefore, misinterpreted the crux of what they actually believed in. The latter part of Deuteronomy 24:4 confirms this very statement when Moses says, “*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.*”

Not long after the fall of mankind God’s standard of one man and one woman was violated (Gen 4:19). When Moses became leader of the entire Nation of Israel, men were orally divorcing their wives, as was the custom of those days, especially among the heathen nations. Laney (1990: 21) affords the reason why legislation regarding this matter was necessary:

Increased laxity regarding divorce and remarriage among the Hebrews necessitated legislation to deal with this matter.

Moses with his writings of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 provided a more balanced perspective to the problem. However, they failed to understand is that the writing was not a command, but merely permission granted for divorce, because of their persistent stubbornness.

To get a better insight into the reasoning of the Pharisees, one would need to carefully deal with the question asked, as well as the motive behind it.

2.5.1 The follow-up question (Matthew 19:7)

“*They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’*” (Mt 19:7).

This question was a test designed to elicit some sort of radical pronouncement. The Pharisees in their corrupt minds thought that the trap was engaged and that they had Jesus in a corner.

Gardner (1940: 289) indicates the reasoning behind the Pharisees’ follow-up question:

The Pharisees counter Matthew 19:3-6 with Scripture of their own, this time the legislation providing for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.”

France (1994: 929) elaborates:

In Jewish law a man had the right to divorce his wife (but not the wife the husband by a simple declaration; there was no trial and no appeal. This was assumed to be the intention of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (on which see above on 5:31-32), but the ‘something

indecent' which that passage gave as the grounds for divorce left room for debate. Some teachers restricted this to adultery or other gross sexual misbehaviour, but in common practice, supported by some rabbis, it was virtually a matter of the husband's whim, for any and every reason.

To have a better understanding of the follow-up question, one would need to appreciate what was the nature and motive of their question.

2.5.1.1 The nature and motive of the question (v 7) (Deut 24:1-4)

Mounce (1991: 181) explains the nature of the Pharisees' question as follows:

If divorce runs counter to the divine intention, then why did Moses give the law allowing a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?

Regarding the motive for their question, Gardner (1940: 289) indicates that, "The Pharisees counter with Scripture of their own, this time, the legislation providing for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4." France (1985: 281) elaborates:

They implied that Jesus had just repudiated what Moses commanded. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 does not, of course, explicitly command or even approve divorce, but it certainly accepts it as a real possibility and this was taken as divine sanction for the practice.

Lenski (1964: 730) comments:

Without attempting to contradict Jesus these men cling to their view of Deuteronomy 24:1 and the dissolution of marriage, which seems to permit.

It can, therefore, be concluded that their entire question rested on a false supposition, namely, that:

Through dissolution of marriage for sufficient cause was originally contemplated in the will of God concerning marriage (Lenski 1964: 730).

Harper (1996: 28), on the other hand, explains the actual meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, namely, that "Moses did not command divorce as Deuteronomy 24:1-4 speaks of divorce in terms of a practice already in existence." Harper (1996: 28) quotes Jack Lewis who states:

There is no law in the Old Testament that institutes the practice of divorce it was an age-old and accepted custom. The law does not command it or establish it as a right.

It was, therefore, clear to see that the Pharisees could and should have seen their shallow argument. Jesus could see by their response why they used Moses' commandment to further their argument. This has been discussed in section 2.4.2.

2.5.1.2 The differences between Matt 19:7 and Mark 10:3

In the book of Mark, Jesus reminds the Pharisees of their own belief system, by asking them the question, "*What did Moses command you?*" (Mk 10:3). In His wisdom, Jesus draws them into the conversation by using specific words. Jesus brings finality to their question when He says, "*It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law*" (Mk 10:5). They could have still continued arguing, but before they could, Jesus gives them God's ideal law for marriage (Mk 10:6-9; Mt 19:4-6).

Harper (1996: 25) contends, "In Mark 10:3, he gives Jesus' words about what Moses says in Genesis 2:24. It is possible that the Pharisees take this word 'command' and attempt to turn it against Jesus by applying it to Deuteronomy 24:1-4." Harper continues with this affirmation, "This is, admittedly, a difficult problem to resolve."

The only difference between the Mark's and the Matthew's account is the following: In Matthew's account Jesus allows them to ask the question and in the Mark writings Jesus asks them the same question they were subscribing to.

Harper (1996: 25) argues:

If Mark has copied Matthew, he has omitted a very significant confession found in Matthew 19:9, and if Matthew has copied Mark, he has omitted the case of a wife divorcing her husband found in Mark 10:12.

In the author's opinion, the difference between the two writers should not be seen in their being devious, but in their differences of interpretation.

Because of the continued debating around the same point, there needs to be more clarity regarding the Pharisees' misinterpretation of Deut 24:1-4.

2.5.1.3 The Pharisees' misinterpretation of Deut 24:1-4

Understanding the background of the Nation of Israel should bring clarity to the entire situation, in particular, the Pharisees' misinterpretation of Deut 24:1-4.

Throughout history the cycle of rebellion within the Nation of Israel has been evident. For example, God releases them from slavery and plans a life of abundance for them. Rebellion sets in and on so many occasions that God eventually divorces her (Mal 2:14) and rejects her as His Nation of choice. This sounds like a contradiction in support of the writings found in the Deuteronomy account.

However, Harper (1996: 34) indicates the following:

What Moses states in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is not the divine principle for marriage and divorce, it is an exception ... The principle stated in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, shows that the Pharisees should have been looking to the above principles, rather than arguing about the grounds for divorce.

Jeremiah (3:1-5) provides further clarity on this issue. Verse 1 starts off with Jeremiah posing the question they understood in Deuteronomy 24. It can be argued that the key to understanding this passage is to interpret it spiritually. When God gave the interpretation to Jeremiah, He was already proving that His marriage to His people started at the time of creation.

For the same reason, Jesus also made reference to the very same fact. *"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female'"* (Gen 1:27 NIV). He then went on to give the marriage command, *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh"* (Gen 2:24 NIV). Jesus then takes the matter one step further, when He states, *"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery"* (Mt 19:9 NIV). The Jeremiah account gives the reason why God divorced the Nation of Israel:

If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers- would you now return to me?" declares the Lord (Jer 3:1 NIV).

France (1994: 676) notes the following interesting points in order to strengthen his understanding of what the prophet Jeremiah was elaborating on:

Firstly, Jeremiah makes reference to Deuteronomy 24:4 in his statement.

Secondly, he places emphasis on the fact that they have defiled the land (their relationship) that was given to them.

Thirdly, Jesus said that the only reason for divorce would be on the grounds of “fornication” (Mt 19:9). This is exactly what Jeremiah was saying to the Nation of Israel. Jeremiah makes reference to this very fact “*But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers*” (3:1). Is this not the same displeasing, indecent, uncleanness that Moses was referring to? (Deut 24:1).

Lastly, Jeremiah shares God’s last feeling on the matter where he says, “*would you now return to me?’ declares the Lord*” (3:1).

Harper (1996: 25) contests, “Divorce legislation such as found in Deuteronomy 24 deals with contingencies and not commands.”

Harper (1996: 29) concludes that the passage of Scripture found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, neither sanction nor approves divorce:

It is incorrect to conclude that this legislation, which regulates an existing practice, provides divine approval of divorce.

God actually divorced Israel and the Pharisees claimed that this was the norm of what God established to be the latest law and command. The grounds for divorce, therefore, the only grounds for divorce were completely misunderstood.

Laney (1990: 33) summarises the position taken by the Pharisees:

Like many evangelicals today, the Pharisees had missed the point of the Mosaic legislation. Moses did not institute divorce or even command the insurance of the divorce document. The command in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is that a husband should not remarry his divorced wife if she has had an intervening marriage. This passage provides direction for cases in which divorce and remarriage has already occurred.”

It is clear that the Pharisees completely misunderstood the grounds for divorce. They claimed that, since God actually divorced Israel, this was the latest law and command that He had established.

- Wrong focus on the *grounds* for divorce

The Pharisees focused on the grounds for divorce. However, the Jeremiah, Matthew and Mark accounts provide solid evidence for the only reason for

divorce, namely, adultery. From a historical perspective, God divorced Israel (Mal 2:14) as His early bride because they prostituted themselves with many other lovers. We see that after the account of Malachi, God never spoke to her again for about 400 years, until He sent His only Son to restore that relationship. Jesus then continues in the two Gospel accounts, where He gives the only valid grounds for divorce (Mt 19:9; Laney 1990: 33).

Jesus' focus in the debate was correct. Harper (1996: 32) explains that, "Jesus' answer to the Pharisees objection is consistent with what He has already said in their first question." Jesus then goes on to imply that the marriage union is to be considered a life-long commitment and that death was the only means of dissolving the union of marriage.

It is clear that the Pharisees were confused regarding the grounds for divorce, and that their misinterpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was deeply grounded in their actual agenda.

- Wrong focus on the word *command*

France (1985: 281) identifies the Pharisees' wrong focus on the word *command*:

Jesus picks up the Pharisees verb: divorce was not commanded, but allowed, and that concession was an accommodation to human hardness of heart.

Harper (1996: 29) indicates that, "Jesus' response to this question is to show the reason for the legislation and to give God's intent for marriage." This was totally in opposition to the idea given by Moses and which they so dearly attached their teachings to. Harper explains the words used by Jesus 'allow, permit' imply nothing other than to give permission.

The first three verses of Deuteronomy 24, describes only the condition related to the subject of divorce and affords some restriction on what would transpire if the second act of marriage was to be considered. This was in relation to the woman who was twice divorced by different men. Also when seen from the position of the woman being widowed.

However, Laney (1990: 22) points out that, "It should be noted that divorce is neither encouraged nor commanded in this text." What is evident in this text, however, is that it only describes the circumstance leading up to the

divorce and not the giving of a command. Divorce is never sanctioned in this passage of Scripture.

In the book of Deuteronomy one reads in the preceding passages of how divorce is prohibited under any circumstances (Deut 22:13-18; 28-29; 24:1). One would need to also look at the purpose of this legislation to fully understand the idea behind what Moses said and what the Pharisees saw in this passage that could be interpreted as a sanction for divorce.

The question arises: What is the meaning of the latter part of Deuteronomy 24 and in verse 4? It reads, "...*Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.*" It could be argued that this legislation was to prevent any form of defilement on the land, which God was about to hand over to them as part of their inheritance. With any divorce, emotional instability becomes evident and discourages peace. Laney (1990: 24) elaborates:

Remarriage of a divorced wife creates the possibility of tension within a "lover's triangle." This is what Moses was referring to when he wrote the words found in the Deuteronomy accord.

In the next section it will be seen how Jesus evades the question of the Pharisees and sheds His own light on the issue of divorce. An attempt will be made to gain clear insight into Jesus' response.

2.5.2 The Lord's response (Matthew 19:8-9)

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Calvin (2004: 262) elaborates on Jesus' wise response to their question:

He disappointed them, sternly opposing unlawful divorces, and at the same time showing that He brings forward nothing, which is inconsistent with the Law.

Calvin (2004: 264) asserts that in His response Jesus answers their entire question under two main headings:

That the order of creation ought to serve for a law, that the husband should maintain conjugal fidelity during the whole life; and that divorces were permitted, not because they were lawful, but

because Moses had to deal with a rebellious and intractable nation.”

France (1994: 929) describes Jesus’ response to the Pharisees’ follow-up question:

Rather than entering this debate, Jesus once again (as in Mt 5:32) declared that divorce, for whatever reason, was incompatible with God’s original purpose for marriage.” Jesus kept on placing Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 above that of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which was given because of the “*hardness of your hearts* ... The divorce regulations were a concession to deal with the result of sin, not an expression of the way God intended things to be.”

De Bruyn (1993: 167) explains the background of Jesus’ response:

Because of the corruption of sin and the hardness of their hearts (Mt 19:8), the Israelites were allowed to divorce their wives (Deut 24:1). However, this was actually contrary to God’s original intention.

Gardner (1940: 289) indicates that in response to the Pharisees question, Jesus’ answer came as a complete surprise to them:

Jesus has the last word, subordinating Moses law to God’s ultimate intent as set forth on Genesis ... Moses allowed divorce, Jesus tells His opponents, because resistance to God’s will have made such provision necessary.

According to Jesus’ response, the norm for marriage remains the vision embodied from the outset of creation and was never to be seen as a later concession made because of human failure. Harper (1996: 34) elaborates:

Jesus builds His ethic on marriage and divorce, not upon Deuteronomy 24:1-4, but upon God’s ideal from the beginning (Gen 1:27; 2:24).

Harper (1996: 30) explains Jesus’ response in terms of a concession - purely because of the hardness of their hearts:

The concession was made more of a restriction. It would prevent woman being passed back and forth between men like some rag ... because of the husband being ‘hard hearted’ and unrepentant ... In the case of divorce, Jesus says that the concession was made because of the attitude of the people... There is little doubt that, in Old Testament times, divorce has become a part of life in Israel (Lev 21:7,14,22; Num 30:10; Deut 22:19, 29; 24:1-4), but as noted there were regulations in place governing the practice of divorce.”

Right from the outset of the debate the Pharisees could see that Jesus stood for a “no divorce” viewpoint. The Pharisees, however, continued to challenge Him on the basis of Deuteronomy 24. The Pharisees also thought that Moses commanded divorce, but Jesus explains that he only “permitted” it.

2.5.2.1 Jesus rectifies their mistake concerning the Law of Moses (v8)

The Pharisees in their ignorance felt that the mere certificate of divorce was sufficient to dissolve the marriage relationship. This is evident from the commentary Jesus afforded in verse 8. Heth (1990: 83) contends that, “Jesus is here denying the efficacy of the bill of divorce to dissolve the old marriage, thus allowing the wife the freedom to remarry.” Jesus then goes on to give the only valid grounds for divorce.

- A concession not a command (v 8a)

It needs to be understood that in the light of Deuteronomy 24, Moses gave a concession for Israel at that time because traditionally the Nation of Israel was practicing Polygamy. Moses gave them the concession because of the hardness of their hearts. The Pharisees obviously misinterpreted it to mean a command, as this is why the question was asked (France 1994: 221).

- He refers them back to God’s original plan for marriage (v 8b)

Jesus again, in His attempt to solve this ongoing debate, refers them back to the original plan that God instituted for marriage. In His wisdom and with the original plan of marriage in mind, Jesus then reveals to His enquirers the only valid reason and legal grounds for divorce, as well as the consequences, if the marriage union is violated because of divorce (France 1994:221).

2.5.2.2 Jesus’ teaching on divorce (v 9)

This verse of Scripture forms the conclusion and key to the entire debate. Much time will be spent on this verse, since a clear understanding of this will help in obtaining the all-important answers to many burning questions. Jesus’ teaching here should be considered as what God really had in mind when it came to divorce and remarriage.

Jesus now introduces something new that has never been taught before: “*whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery*” (Mk 10:11, NIV).

Harper (1996: 35) explains why Jesus called the second marriage *adultery*:

When a man 'leaves his father and mother' in order to be joined to his wife, there is a union formed. To marry another after divorcing the first wife substitutes another union for the union that God intended should not be broken.

Analysis of the verse Mt 19:9 will help to give the necessary clarity. It reads as follows:

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery (Mt 19:9, KJV).

The same passage is given with the Greek words added:

And <de> I say <lego> unto you <humin>, <hoti> Whosoever <hos> <an> shall put away <apoluo> his <autos> wife <gune>, except <ei me> it be for <epi> fornication <porneia>, and <kai> shall marry <gameo> another <allos>, committeth adultery <moichao>: and <kai> whoso marrieth <gameo> her which <ho> is put away <apoluo> doth commit adultery <moichao> (Stags 2000. Mt 19:9, KJV).

The two words that stand out in this passage are “*porneia*” and “*moichao*.” Many people interpret these words to be the same, but if it were the case, why would Jesus not have used the same word? Either He would have leaned toward “adultery” or more toward “fornication.” Jesus chose to use these two words specifically in relation to a concrete and valid reason for divorce. The order in which He placed the words within the sentence is important. Fornication would cause divorce and after the divorce it would be considered adultery, if any of them were to remarry.

According to the words uttered by Jesus (verse 9), fornication is the only valid reason for divorce. Adultery is, therefore, the consequence of divorce, on the grounds of fornication. The act of fornication does not necessarily point towards the man or the woman, but to either of them if they are guilty of this act. A study of the word “fornication” would, therefore, help to bring even a greater clarity on what Jesus taught.

- Jesus seems to allow only fornication as a grounds for divorce

A definition of fornication provides further understanding of the word used.

Webster (1952: 691) defines *fornication* as follows: “The act of incontinency in

single persons; if either party be married it is adultery.” He also goes on to give the Scriptural understanding: “It may mean (a) adultery; (b) incest; (c) idolatry; a forsaking of the true God, and worshipping of idols.” Fornication could also be classified as “immorality.” Webster’s (1993: 70) defines *fornication* to mean, “Illicit sexual intercourse.”

Using the above definitions, one could safely say that any sexual intercourse outside of the original marriage union, between a man and a woman, is then classified as fornication and is the only legal grounds for divorce. Adultery is then effective after the divorce has been finalised. The word adultery is not actually in question here, but the word “fornication.”

Sexual immorality is definite grounds for divorce, because it nullifies the couple’s marriage contract. Eldredge (2002: 93) considers extramarital sexual relations in a marriage as a *breach of contract*.

Marriage is also a legally binding contract and is subject by law of secular government. When seen from a purely legal and technical sense, any engagement in extramarital sexual relations is a “breach of contract.” It breaks the once mutually agreed upon terms of the marriage contract.

- Analysis of significant words: *Porneia, moicheia*

Porneia

Jesus again places Himself in contrast to the other rabbis that were questioning Him with regard to the divorce issue. Jesus uses the word “*porneia*” in this sentence to give the only legal grounds for divorce. He further declares that divorce and remarriage constitutes adultery. Laney (1990: 33) indicates that, “According to Jesus, mere formal or legal divorce does not dissolve the actual marriage that was made permanent by God.”

Jesus statement in verse 9 refers to the exception clause, “*except for fornication, porneia.*” It is clear from Jesus’ statement that God does not recognise divorce. This may sound like a contradiction as God divorced the nation of Israel, but what needs to be remembered is that they committed “immorality” by serving other God’s. Immorality “*porneia*” is the same Greek word used for fornication “*porneia.*” On these grounds of divorce, any subsequent marriage of a divorced person would then involve the sin of adultery.

The word “*porneia*” is not only used in Matthew 19:9, but one reads Jesus’ very words in an earlier passage of Scripture. “*But 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*” (Mt 5:32 NIV). It needs to be noted that, because Jesus lived under the Law and the new dispensation was not yet at hand, He purposefully used the term “*causes her*” - not undermining the authority of the woman - as He would later prescribe to Christians not be a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). The King James Version uses the word “*fornication*,” The New King James Version uses the term, “*immorality*” and the New International Version, “*marital unfaithfulness*.” Whichever English word is used, it is derived from the same Greek word “*porneia*.” Geisler (2002: 284) states, “The Greek word “*porneia*” is used to mean illicit sexual relations of married as well as unmarried people” (Acts 15:20; Rom 1:29).

Instone-Brewer (2002: 156) argues:

The meaning of the word “*porneia*” is not nearly as clear-cut as “*moichao*” ... It has a wider range of connotations throughout the area of sexual sin and impropriety, including the act of adultery.

This meaning of the word “*porneia*” is confirmed in Hebrews 13:4 where it says:

Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral (NIV).

In conclusion, Laney (1990: 37) affords further insight the word “*porneia*”:

In a broad sense in the New Testament the Jewish setting, historical background and immediate context of Matthew 19:1-12 would indicate that Jesus was using the term in a specialised sense.

Moicheia

Laney (1990: 34) indicates that, “The word “*porneia*” does not normally mean adultery. The usual word for adultery is “*moichao*.” Matthew recognises a distinction between the two terms” (Mt 15:19).

The order of Jesus' words holds the key to the entire understanding of His teaching. The use of the word order will bring the necessary affirmation to the two very specific words used, as revealed above.

- Analysis of sentence structure (order of the words)

The order of words used in Jesus' statement (verse 9) is quite clear and any debate as to what Jesus meant should be structured around His original teaching: "...*anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery*" (Mt 19:9, NIV).

Firstly, the word divorce is identified as the intended act. Secondly, the only reason for a legal, Biblical divorce is "marital unfaithfulness" or "fornication." Thirdly, He gives the consequences if the second part is not adhered to. In other words Jesus enforces His words to make "fornication" as the only grounds for divorce (Harper 1996: 39).

- The exceptive clause: major problems and its meaning

Grammatically speaking, the sentence found in verse 9 should be seen as an "exception clause" and not as a "preterative interpretation."

Many questions have, however, been asked as to "why the account of what Jesus taught, is only found in the Matthew narrative?" Harper (1996: 39-40) presents the following objections to the exception clause:

1. It is argued that, since Mark's gospel was written first, preference should be given to the earliest gospel (Harper 1996: 40).
2. It is suggested that, "Mark is the 'harder' of the two accounts." If this were the case, it would then make sense why Matthew included it into his narrative. It can then be argued that Matthew included it into his writings, in order to explain what Jesus actually meant (Harper 1996: 40).
3. Jesus' disciples were surprised at the prohibition against divorce, as this was a similar stand to that of the Shammai. In Matthew 5:21-24, 28 Jesus taught that men should return to the divine law. The Shammai taught that adultery is an acceptable ground for divorce, and so did Jesus: but to say that Jesus purposefully sided with the Shammai would obviously be open to debate (Harper 1996: 41).

4. Paul in 1Corinthians 7:10-11 quotes from the “oral tradition” of what Jesus taught. However, Paul does not include Jesus’ exceptive clause. It could then be argued that it was unknown to him. Some scholars claim that Paul only knew the “absolute form” of the prohibition (Harper 1996: 41).

According to the exceptive clause, Jesus allowed divorce on the grounds of fornication” (*porneia*). Now the Shammai would have left out the word “fornication” and concentrated on the word “adultery.” Jesus said that, “*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*” (Mt 19:9, KJV). This would then represent a significant advance on the teaching of the Shammai (Harper 1996: 45).

The word “*porneia*” is a single word clause and does not carry with it an array of different meanings. The exception clause is for any illicit sexual misconduct outside of the Biblical marriage covenant and was for this reason only. It needs to be understood that when Jesus gave this teaching to the enquirers, He was not double-minded concerning what they needed to understand regarding the exception clause.

Regarding the exception clause, Instone-Brewer (2002: 156) argues:

Some have claimed that the “exception clause” covers a much wider area, including physical abuse and even mental torture, so that Jesus specifically allowed divorce on these grounds too.

However, there are no Biblical grounds to support this view. On these grounds it would then be appropriate to investigate other English Bible translations in order to see what they reveal:

KJV: “*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*” (Rairdin 1992-1994).

NIV: “*I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery*” (Rairdin 1992-1994).

NRSV: “*And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery*” (Rairdin 1992-1994).

NASB: “*And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery*” (Rairdin 1992-1994).

It can, therefore, be said that, since all the above translations refer to the words of Jesus, the exception clause should be considered as the only valid grounds for divorce.

Heth and Wenham elaborate on the exception clause:

It is an inherent illogicality involved in giving an exception that allows a second marriage for a man who has divorced his wife because of her fornication” (Harper 1996: 66).

Matthew 19:3-8 indicates what Jesus taught with regard to marriage. God joins together in marriage, and man is not to separate that which God has joined together. Harper (1996: 66) concludes, “Why would Jesus backtrack by allowing remarriage in cases involving fornication?” Could this be seen as a contradiction? It can conclusively be said that no such a contradiction exists. Harper argues, “The ‘exception clause’ is very much in harmony with verses three to eight and lines up with what Jesus taught on the marriage relationship.”

The covenant relationship is a very important consideration in God’s eyes. God requires that His children at least adhere to its basic teachings. Jesus gives a new command in John 13:34-35, and this confirms the relationship criteria that God requires of mankind.

2.5.2.3 The nature of marriage as a Covenant relationship

The following are five points of comparison between the Covenant of God with His people and marriage:

1. To give the whole person: Giving of the whole person involves a total commitment as taught in Genesis 2:24. Sexual activity cannot, however, be seen as the sum total of becoming “one flesh,” but considered to be the catalyst of the relationship. The other important aspect is that, the new family unit should be held together by the type of love God requires. “Eros” love would be one consideration, but “agape” love would ideally be what God seeks in any relationship. The couple can, therefore, sacrifice each other to afford a better working relationship within the marriage (Booker 1981: 28).

2. To give full protection: When the husband accepts his rightful role in the marriage union, he takes on the leadership role (not the controlling role), that encourages safety and security within the entire family unit (Booker 1981: 28).
3. Be faithful to the agreement: This is based and grounded on an ongoing trust relationship that exists in the marriage. Anything other than trust becomes a tool to break down, not only the communication aspect, but also in the normal functionality of the marriage (Booker 1981: 29).
4. Agree on marital terms: Godly ground rules that are based on Scripture also encourage trust. The specific roles within the unity of marriage must be identified and each person takes on his or her individual identities and responsibilities (Booker 1981: 28).
5. Marriage is for life: God intended from the creation of mankind that the marriage union that be consummated in His presence, and be undertaken as a life-long commitment. This is clearly spelt out in Scripture that, "*what God has joined together, let no man separate*" (Mt 19:6 NIV). Separation can then only be seen to be valid in two cases: 1) in the event that any one of the couple has committed "fornication" or, 2) the death of either partner in the couple. These would be the only valid grounds for divorce. Nothing more, nothing less (Booker 1981: 30).

2.5.2.4 The results of Fornication (sexual immorality) in the marriage

Fornication can be translated to mean, "Every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse." It could also be used in a much broader sense to include a wide range of sexual sins. Harper (1996: 67) elaborates:

Jesus recognises that a married man or woman who engages in sexual intercourse with someone other than within the confines of the marriage has committed the most serious sin possible against the marriage relationship." This is the only reason Jesus gave the questioning party that is considered to be a valid reason for divorce. The other one would be the death of one of the two in the marriage.

- It is grounds for divorce

Fornication is considered to be in violation to the "one flesh" nature of the marriage and is considered the only valid reason for divorce.

Harper (1996: 68) describes marriage in terms of a covenant relationship and the implications of divorce:

When God makes a covenant with people it has a twofold consideration. God makes a sovereign choice in a specific individual or a group. Individual persons are expected to live in a 'responsible covenant relationship' ... When a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to a wife, they enter into a covenant relationship. They are joined into the relationship by God. This relationship is such that they become a new single entity. To divorce this wife and marry another would be to commit adultery. Man is not allowed to separate what God has joined together (Mt 19:6). The man that divorces his wife, without fornication on her part, and marries another is just as guilty of the sin of fornication as he would be if he had sexual relations with another woman before he divorced his wife.

When Jesus taught this exception clause in Matthew 19:9, He intended that this would be the only ground for a valid divorce: anything outside of this would not be considered to be within the divine plan.

- It nullifies a marriage contract

Harper (1996: 69) argues that fornication violates the covenant:

Sexual relations are limited to the context of marriage, to the 'one flesh' relationship. To step outside the confines of that relationship and have sexual relations is to commit fornication, which violates the covenant. Sexual promiscuity is therefore considered a de facto exception.

Eldredge (2002: 35) confirms this:

Since the marriage union is established by a covenant, the breaking (through extra-marital sexual contact) of that covenant will also break the marriage union. The written divorce is then allowed to confirm the couple are no longer united by their covenant as one flesh.

- It nullifies the marriage vows

The blood covenant is one of the most solemn and the most enduring of all agreements (covenants) found in the Bible (Booker 1981: 27). He continues to reveal, "As the sexual union is initially seen as a blood covenant, God sees extra-marital relations as a violation of this very covenant." This is why Jesus shared this very thought with the Pharisees. "... *Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate*" (Mt 19:6, NIV). An extra-marital sexual union is considered as a spiritual violation of the covenant in the spiritual realm, but

performed in the physical. Sexual ties develop between and within the violating parties that are eventually difficult to break. Sexual union outside of the marriage covenant breaks down the covenant and therefore nullifies what God has joined together (Booker 1981: 27).

2.6 Jesus' teaching on eunuchs and the disciple's response (Matthew 19:10-12)

This passage of Scripture is unique to the Matthew narrative and is not in any of the other Gospels. Paul, on the other hand, does share briefly on the topic of celibacy (1Cor 7).

Laney (1990: 38) contends, "It appears that neither Paul nor the Church fathers interpreted Matthew 19:10-12 as teachings of celibacy." A careful study of the above Scripture and studied in the historical context, indicates that the "eunuch passage" should be interpreted when remarriage is considered for the person who has divorced due to fornication (*porneia*). Laney (1990: 38) elaborates:

The one who '*makes himself a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom*' (Mt 19:12, NIV), is a divorced person who chooses the single life, not remarriage, for the sake of Christ's kingdom.

Jesus concludes with this teaching on eunuchs in order to give the Pharisees clearer insight with regard to the terms "fornication and adultery." The disciples, however, respond to this teaching, after having heard Jesus' teaching from the outset of the argument with the Pharisees.

2.6.1 The disciples' response to Jesus' teaching (v10)

In the latter part of the verse Matthew 19:10, the disciples respond to the Jesus' teaching (verse 9) with the words, "...*it is better not to marry*" (NIV). Their response appears to have been as a result of fear, and could be construed as submission to His teaching. France (1994: 929) contends:

In Jewish society it was very unusual to be unmarried, so that this affirmation of voluntary celibacy is important." However, marriage with its demands remains what is considered as the divine intention for those "*to whom it has been given.*"

Harper (1996: 77) argues:

The disciples of Jesus are evidently stunned by His teaching. They sense that there is potentially a serious problem. Life would be difficult if there were no relief from a troubled marriage.”

The disciples, however, continue listening to the teaching for any form of relaxation to this rule, which was not forthcoming. Jesus was adamant that this was the only conclusion (rule) with regard to the issue of divorce. If this rule was violated in any way, the consequences were clearly spelt out.

Analysis of the phrase: *It is better not to marry*

The New American Standard suggests the following translation, “*It is not advantageous to marry.*” It appears that Jesus is indicating that if there were no way out of a bad marriage, it would have been better not to marry in the first place. However, what the disciples were wondering was whether or not celibacy was more manageable than marriage.

Jesus’ demand for marital faithfulness without an ‘escape route’ dismayed the disciples. They were wondering: Who could live up to such demands? Jesus, understanding the thoughts of the disciples, offers the following answer: “*not everyone*” (v11, NIV). Jesus also agrees with them, but only to reveal that some do not have the gift of marriage and, therefore, are called to celibacy. This could have also been either caused due to their physical condition or by their own choice in the light of the role to which they are called in ‘*the kingdom of heaven*’” (France 1994: 929).

In conclusion, in response to the question of the disciples in verses 3-9, Jesus responds by asking another question in verse 10 and in so doing, brings to an end His teaching on divorce. He then concludes His teaching with some thoughts on celibacy found in Matthew 19:11-12.

2.6.2 Jesus’ response to their statement (v 11-12)

Jesus’ response to the disciples’ statement was considered to be a wise answer and well suited to the present circumstances.

It could be inferred from the passages that some have physical limitations that prevent them from marrying, while others choose not to marry, because in their particular situation, they can serve God better as single people. Jesus was not teaching us to avoid marriage, because it is inconvenient or takes away

freedom. That would be selfishness. A good reason to remain single is to use the time and freedom to serve God better (France 1994:929).

Paul elaborates on the issue of celibacy in the book of First Corinthians.

Analysis of the following phrases:

- ***Not everyone can accept this word (v11)***

Atkinson (1963: 795) indicates that *this word* in verse 11:

May refer to the Lord's statement in verse 9 about the indissolubility of marriage. In that case his statement about eunuchs in verse 12 is intended as an illustration.

- **Others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom (v 12)**

In this passage of Scripture the Person teaching the message is a prime example of His own instruction. Jesus was commending a life without marriage.

Jesus introduces a new reason for childlessness, which He described as, 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.' This was totally a voluntary state that individuals inflicted on themselves, as "they made themselves eunuchs." It needs to be noted that the word "castration" is never used either in the English language, or in the original Greek text (Instone-Brewer 2002: 170).

Before concluding this chapter one would need to look at what Paul taught in his different encounters when the issue of divorce was raised. These teachings are important, since they could easily be misinterpreted when seen to conform to the modern day Church structure of understanding.

2.7 Paul's teaching on Marriage and Divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-16)

Paul agrees with Jesus' teaching on what the only valid grounds for divorce are, when he writes: "*To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband*" (1Cor 7:10 NIV).

Eldredge (2002: 128) indicates three main instructions, so that a couple's marriage might be restored:

The Apostle Paul's instructions are clear and actually line up with Jesus' instructions: 1) the wife must not leave her husband, 2) she should not remarry and if she does, she would be considered an adulteress, and 3) the husband should not divorce his wife.

2.7.1 Biblical instructions to married believers (1Cor 7:10-16)

Broadly speaking, Paul's teaching here could be divided up into two main headings, dealing with various aspects of married life.

Firstly, he addresses the believers (v10-11); he instructs them on two issues related to a believer's attitude; 1) Married people, 2) Separation and the laws that govern it. Secondly, he deals with the unbeliever or even the case where one of the unbelievers become a believer; 1) A believer and unbeliever living together within the confines of marriage, 2) The sanctification of the marriage when one of the couple is a believer, 3) The children that are conceived within the marriage, and 4) If the unbeliever decides to separate from the believing partner, the believer should accept this, even though everything should be done to secure reconciliation (v 12-16) (Laney 1990: 42).

What should be noted, however, is that Paul has nothing to say about a second marriage for the believer? It can, therefore, be concluded that Matthew 19:9 should be regarded as the only valid reason for divorce and not desertion.

Paul also gives clear instructions with regard to God's original plan for the marriage, which he does not contest at all.

2.7.1.1 God's instructions against divorce (v 10)

In 1 Corinthians 7:10 Paul indirectly refers to Jesus' teaching found in Matthew 19:1-12 and agrees that believers should not divorce for just any reason. The only possible reason for divorce is found in Matthew 19:9 as this is the only possible grounds for divorce. What needs to be understood from the Pauline writings is that he gives clear commands in this section. France (1994: 1171) elaborates: "The Christian wife is not free to separate from her husband."

Paul also accepts the fact that there are times when divorce will be necessary. In the event of separation there are only two possibilities spelt out in this section: 1) to remain unmarried, and 2) to be reconciled to her husband. Paul in these passages forbids divorce and in so doing, supports the teaching of Jesus laid down in Matthew and Mark.

The reason why Paul prohibits remarriage after a wife has left her husband, is in order for the wife to return with her husband and be reconciled.

The reason why Jesus prohibits remarriage after an “unlawful” divorce is so that the wife can be reconciled to her husband.

Paul also deals with the situation of desertion, when one partner separates from the other.

2.7.1.2 Divorce in instances of desertion (v 11)

In verse 11 Paul instructs that if the unbelieving partner chooses to separate, the believer must accept it. However, everything needs to be done in order to reconcile the couple.

Paul, however, indicates a restriction on the guilty party (no remarriage) that voluntarily separates from the other, thus breaking the unity of marriage. In the same way, Jesus also prohibits remarriage after divorce (voluntary separation) that was not caused by sexual immorality.

Because of the fact that no sexual immorality was committed, means that the marriage covenant is still binding. Sexual immorality (fornication) is, therefore, the only valid reason for divorce. The following implications of Paul’s instruction in verse 11 should be given careful consideration (Heth 1990: 110):

1. In the event that the wife should remarry, it would break the prior marriage covenant and this would prevent her from being reconciled to her husband.
2. In the event that the husband should divorce his wife, this would be considered an unlawful divorce and would be considered a stumbling block for any future reconciliation with his wife.

Paul takes this teaching a step further to include the possibility that one of the married partners is an unbeliever.

2.7.1.3 The case of an unbelieving marriage partner (v 12-16)

- *Living together as believer and unbeliever within the confines of marriage (v.12-13)*

Paul gives instruction in an area that Jesus never taught on, namely, in the area of spiritual incompatibility within the couple. Hodge (2004: 767) illustrates:

Cases that were not specially contemplated in our Lord’s instruction, where one of the parties was a Christian and the other a Jew or Pagan.

- *The Sanctification of the marriage when one of the couple is a believer*

Ryrie (1986: 1574) indicates that due to the sanctification of the marriage a believing partner should have no problem in staying with an unbelieving partner:

The presence of a believer in the home sets the home apart and gives it a Christian influence it would not otherwise have.

- *The children that are conceived within the marriage*

Ryrie (1986: 1574) asserts that although children born into such a home are not automatically Christians, “They are holy in the sense of being set apart by the presence of one believing partner.”

- *If the unbeliever decides to separate from the believing partner:*

In this regard, Ryrie (1986: 1574) explains that:

If the unbelieving partner chooses to separate, the believer must accept it, though everything should be done to prevent the separation. Nothing is said about the second marriage for the believer.

Eldredge (2002: 61) contends that, “Desertion, ‘constructive desertion,’ or a lengthy separation with no hope of reunion, may also be sufficient grounds for divorce.” This appears to be in direct conflict with what Jesus originally taught: The only valid reason for divorce is fornication. On the other hand, if there were sufficient evidence that the deserting person has committed sexual immorality, then the grounds for divorce would be based on the immorality and not the desertion.

1 Corinthians 7 has much the same teaching in the area of marriage and divorce, as what Jesus shared. Paul continued this teaching on marriage in his letter to his friend Timothy, who was an up and coming pastor. It could be argued that Paul’s teaching on this matter was given in answer to Timothy’s request for some directional teaching on marriage, especially when formulating criteria of selecting leaders.

2.7.2 Paul’s teaching on Marriage and Church leadership

- **1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6**

In his article on Church leadership MacArthur contends that, “God requires Elders to be men of integrity, wisdom, dignity and virtue.” God also requires a very high standard from His leaders, but at the same time God knows that a

certain amount of imperfection lies within each one. If God required perfection from His leaders, it is unlikely that anyone would qualify (MacArthur 2005).

James 3:1-2 says:

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

When Paul and James list reveal these qualifications for elders and teachers, it is noteworthy to identify with the specific words that they used in their discussion. For example, they carefully selected the words, “must be.” (must <dei⁴> be <einai⁵>). These words denote something, which is necessary, compulsory, or even fitting. The questions arise: Was the early Church failing to live up to this standard? Was Paul also pointing at the Churches that would come into being after he had documented God’s very thoughts?”

There has been a large amount of controversy surrounding the various meanings of the different qualifications of elders. On occasions these meanings have been taken out of context thus displacing prominent leaders out of their positions unnecessarily.

Lea and Griffin (2001), classify the qualifications of church leaders into the following three areas, which he identified in the books of 1 Timothy and Titus:

- 1) His marriage and family (v6),
- 2) His personality and character traits (v7-8), and
- 3) His devotion to God’s Word and his commitment to teaching and protecting the true gospel message (v9).

1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 reveal the qualifications for Eldership. In particular, the two Scriptures consider the qualification of church leaders relating to marriage, namely, that an elder should be “*the husband of one wife*” (1Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6 NASB). Regarding this qualification, Guzik (2005) indicates

⁴ 3d person singular active present of 1210; also deon deh-on'; neuter active participle of the same; both used impersonally; it is (was, etc.) necessary (as binding):--behoved, be meet, must (needs), (be) need(-ful), ought, should (Stags 2000).

⁵ present infinitive from 1510; to exist:--am, was. come, is, X lust after, X please well, there is, to be, was (Stags 2000).

that, "This is an extremely misunderstood portion when it comes to the qualifications of Elders."

Williams (1988: 203-4) explains this qualification as follows:

When Paul was addressing this issue, he was referring to the polygamous marriages that were evident in the Church. God intended that man would be in a monogamous, heterosexual marriage that will make up the complete union of the two persons.

Jesus, however, adds that this marriage union should be permanent (Mk 10:7-9; Mt 19:3-11).

Walvoord and Zuck (1985) explain that, "This probably means that the elder should have been married only once." France (1994: 1298) elaborates:

Paul was not dealing with those who were polygamists before they became Christians, but that it was a responsibility of the Church that required people to be selected whose examples can be followed.

Lea and Griffin (2001) summarises the meaning of this qualification:

The question in the Scripture concerns the qualifications of whether the elders are restricted to one marriage, to one woman in his lifetime? ...This phrase would eliminate a bigamist or a polygamist from consideration.

It could, however, be argued that within this qualification Paul implied a number of different things:

1. The elder should be a married person

Williams (1988: 204) contends that this qualification implies that the elder should be a married man:

That the elder is to be a married man and with this understanding of how the family unit works. He would then have a better knowledge of how the Churches inner functioning should be performed.

Grudem supports this view, since it reveals how God wants His Church to function. The family unit within the Church is the adhesive that holds the entire Body of Christ together. Husbands are to understand their role. This unity reflects within their own family entity (Grudem 1994: 917).

2. A polygamist should not hold the office of an elder

Grudem (1994: 917) indicates that, "it is best to understand 'the husband of one wife' to prohibit a polygamist from holding the office of an elder." The husband

would then be divided between two separate families and not fully understanding what the term “unity of the family entails.” Williams (1988: 204) agrees:

The elder should not be a polygamist where he is married to a number of wives at the same time discrediting the truth of Scripture.

3. *The elder should be a “one-woman man”*

Williams (1988: 204) argues that this qualification implies that the elder should be a “one-woman man”:

That the elder must be faithful to his own wife within the marriage relationship. The elder should never indulge himself in extra marital affairs outside of his own marriage.

Paul in this passage of Scripture was also reaffirming that polygamy must not be practised within the confines of a Christian marriage as well as in the leadership of the Church. Grudem (1994: 917) elaborates:

Polygamy was possible in the first century. Although it was not common, polygamy was practised, especially among the Jews.

4. *The elder should not be a divorced or remarried person*

Williams (1988: 204) further asserts that this qualification could imply that the elder should not be a divorced person:

Paul could also imply that the elder should not be a divorced person, who has in the interim remarried and then been a husband of more than one wife.

However, Grudem (1994: 917) points out that a man who remarries after his wife’s death should not be disqualified:

The qualification for elders are all based on man’s moral and spiritual character, and there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that a man who remarried after his wife had died has lower moral or spiritual qualifications.

5. *The elder has only married once.*

Williams (1988: 204) indicates that this qualification could imply that the elder has only married once:

This could also have been seen as a man that has never married again, after his wife has died. This would also indicate that he has only been married once.

These five viewpoints can be debated. However, it could also indicate what Paul was actually trying to communicate. He concludes with the

qualification that the elder must be above reproach (blameless). This should also be evident within his marital relationship. With the teaching of 1 Corinthians 7 in mind, one should remember that Paul would never contradict himself by ignoring what he wrote to the Church in Corinth. The teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:1-12 regarding divorce and remarriage, is still valid.

In the application of the qualifications of an elder in the church situation, the following:

- In the selection of a prospective elder, the conditions of his divorce play an important role.
- In the selection of a prospective deacon (under-leader), his qualifications and character traits would also need to be spelt out.

- **1 Timothy 3:12**

A deacon must be the husband of but one wife...(NIV).

Concerning the selection of deacons in the Church it should be noted that the same qualification regarding marriage applies to this office as to eldership, although deaconship is an office in its own right and not necessarily a stepping-stone to eldership. It could, however, be seen as a training ground for Eldership. Whatever applies to the one office, should surely apply to the other.

2.8 A Historical perspective: Divorce and Remarriage

2.8.1 The views of Tertullian on Divorce and Remarriage

Tertullian's writings dating from about 193 to 220 AD indicate how he changed his views the day he became a Montanist. He was an avid follower of the ascetic principles, and his views on marriage became more and more rigid. He is noted to have written the following in an essay to his wife in 206 AD:

Therefore when, through the will of God, the husband is deceased, the marriage likewise, by the will of God, deceased. Why should you restore what God has put an end to? ... For even if you do not "sin" in remarriage, still he says "pressure of the flesh ensues." Wherefore, so far as we can, let us love the opportunity of continence (Instone-Brewer 2002: 245).

The question arises: Why did Tertullian write this essay to his wife? He was permitting her to remarry after his death, though he urged her not to do so. This he did in order to line up with the ascetic interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:39-40. After he wrote this essay he became sympathetic toward Montanism.

Tertullian then wrote what was called “The Exhortation to Chastity,” which contains very much the same kind of opinions. The third paper written by Tertullian was entitled “On Monogamy,” because he had come to believe that remarriage, even after death of a partner, is sinful (Instone- Brewer 2002: 245).

His paper reads as follows:

“What God hath conjoined, man shall not separate,” – for fear namely, that he contravene the Lord: for He alone shall “separate” who has “cojoined” (separate, moreover, not through the harshness of divorce, which [hardness] He censures and restrains, but through the debt of death)... Therefore if those whom God has cojoined man shall not separate by divorce, it is equally congruous that those whom God has separated by death man is not to cojoin by marriage; the joining of the separation will be just as contrary to God’s will as would have been the separation of the conjunction (Instone-Brewer 2002: 245).

A Biblical understanding the content of 1 Corinthians 7 indicates how this essay is in direct conflict with its overall teaching. He did, however, try to justify Jesus’ teaching on remarriage by indicating that remarriage was adulterous and then attempted to show that Moses and Jesus did not completely disagree. Tertullian’s argument implies that he allowed remarriage after divorce, but it is unknown if he actually permitted this practice.

Having an understanding of the views of one of the Early Church Fathers on divorce and remarriage should help one to gain insight into some views in the more Evangelical-Reformed tradition on the given subject.

2.8.2 Views found within the Evangelical-Reformed community regarding Divorce and Remarriage

2.8.2.1 Views of Erasmus and Luther

The Reformation was based on a fresh examination of Scripture that would break all other traditional authority. This sparked a great deal of reappraisal amongst Christians and the studying of the Doctrines was re-encouraged in the Church.

Erasmus was one of the earlier pioneers that encouraged a new insight into Scripture, but his stance with regard to the Sermon on the Mount and especially Matthew 5:32, was interpreted to be less idealistic. He also said that the teaching found in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 was more addressed to the disciples, who were in the ideal kingdom position, than to the rest of mankind.

At the time of the Reformation, virtually every member of society was a member of the Kingdom of God. He did, however, agree to divorce on the grounds of the adultery and desertion by an unbeliever. But these are the only valid grounds for divorce that could be followed by remarriage (Instone-Brewer 2002: 259).

Luther also followed much of the teachings of the Early Church Fathers when matters concerning theology were addressed. However, he departed from their universal teaching by allowing remarriage during the lifetime of a former spouse. Agreeing with the Erasmus' theological doctrine, Luther also had similar views about divorce and remarriage.

2.8.2.2 Summary of the three basic Biblical views on Divorce and Remarriage

- *No divorce, no remarriage*

Because of the lifelong plan God had for marriage it needs to be stressed that divorce did not form part of God's original plan for mankind. According to Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24, God spelt out His will for marriage, which excluded the option of divorce. Death of either spouse would nullify the original plan of marriage. Remarriage would then be regarded as adultery and would not be in God's perfect will.

- *Strictly limited grounds for divorce, and for remarriage*

As this study has found throughout its research, there is only possibility for divorce. This is spelt out specifically in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. Paul in his writings (1Cor 7:10-11) lines up totally with what Jesus taught in Matthew and Mark. Remarriage is only permitted if either of the spouses has contravened the original agreement of the marriage.

- *Broader grounds for divorce and for remarriage*

Paul in his writings found in 1 Corinthians 7, adds an extra clause that was not covered by Jesus in His teaching to the Pharisees. Paul addresses the relationship between the believer and the unbeliever within the marriage and also covers the situation, in which the unbelieving spouse deserts the marriage covenant. Desertion could be considered as a violation of the Biblical principles. This does not mean that desertion is valid ground for divorce, since Jesus only gave one possible ground for divorce. It needs to be stressed that Paul encouraged reconciliation between the believing and the unbelieving spouse,

rather than the option of divorce. He probably had the teaching of Jesus in mind when he wrote to the Corinthian Church on the matter of divorce.

2.9 Conclusion: Summary of findings of this Chapter

In this chapter an attempt was made to gain insight into all the major Biblical passages on divorce and remarriage. The contents of these passages were researched, so that there could be no misunderstanding. It was shown that the differences between the Synoptic Gospels on the issue of divorce could be related to the various times in which these books were written. This should never be viewed as a way of misinterpreting the Gospels. They are still clear enough on the issue of divorce to be fully understood.

Firstly, from a Biblical perspective, it was found that marriage is a covenant, a pure and holy union, and is to be built on a monogamous union.

Secondly, the research findings relating to Jesus' debate with the Pharisees on marriage and divorce can be summarised as follows. The Pharisees tried to catch Jesus out on two important issues:

- God's Law and the Secular Law.
- The Shammai and the Hillel were two diverse Pharisaical groups, each with its own set of beliefs. It should be noted that they could not agree on any issue and then approached Jesus in order to compel Him to take sides. Understanding the complexity of the issues, Jesus was aware of the motive behind their questions. Jesus, however, evaded their questions and provided them with a more solid teaching. Needless to say, they must have been stunned by the power of His words. Jesus appealed to the original structure of what God's intent is for marriage and avoided answering their original question. He emphasises Genesis 2:24 as the basis of marriage and then discouraged anyone from putting asunder what God had put together.
- Once they could not trap Jesus on the Divine Law concerning marriage, they tried to trip Him up with the Mosaic Law dealing with divorce recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Jesus is not lured into the trap by their questions. He then affirms to them why Moses gave them the concession

for divorce. He also confirms that Moses did not give them a command for divorce, but merely gave them permission to avoid polygamy.

- Finally, in Matthew 19:9, Jesus instructs them that there is only valid reason for divorce. He identifies the word “fornication” (*porneia*) to be the only valid reason that God would accept for divorce that would find favour in His eyes. It was also found that divorce is in direct violation of the marriage covenant, but because the covenant was broken due to fornication, it would then be considered to be invalid.

Findings

Firstly, divorce is only valid for one reason and this was pointed out by Jesus in Matthew 19:9. When it comes to the covenant relationship of marriage it needs to be honoured and if the covenant has been violated, this would be the only valid ground for divorce.

Secondly, Jesus encouraged celibacy when the marriage covenant has been broken and been annulled by divorce. He also pointed out that this would be difficult and that not everyone could accept this teaching that He delivered.

Thirdly, it was found that Paul affirmed the teaching of Jesus, but gave further instructions regarding the issue of couples that are not compatible in the area of spirituality. He also covered what should be done when an unbelieving spouse deserts the marriage union. Paul continued to encourage reconciliation above divorce. Paul never saw his teaching on divorce to be superior to Matthew 19:9. He acknowledged what Jesus taught to be the final verdict on the issue.

Fourthly, Paul replied to a question raised by Timothy in which he asks for assistance in identifying potential leaders. One of the answers given was that leaders should be, “*the husband of one wife.*” His answer was in plain language: 1) Polygamy should not be encouraged, and 2) the leader should be a “one-woman man.”

Fifthly, the views of two historical figures from Evangelical-Reformed community (Erasmus and Luther) were given to demonstrate how far Christianity has progressed since the Early Church. These two men took a fresh look at Scripture in order to break traditional authority that had existed from

previous years of writings. Various Doctrines were re-encouraged and even updated so that the Church could progress as the Lord intended. Erasmus and Luther departed from very much of the early Church Father's teachings; one of their findings was that they saw Matthew 5:32 to be less idealistic. They also agreed that the teachings of Jesus found in Matthew 19 and Mark 10, were more aimed at those within the kingdom, than those in the rest of mankind. Erasmus and Luther also supported Jesus' teaching of Matthew 19:9 to be the only valid grounds for divorce.

Finally, a summary of the three basic Biblical views on Divorce and Remarriage are:

1. No divorce, no remarriage: God's plan for marriage is a lifelong commitment. Divorce is not allowed except in the case where fornication was committed. Remarriage would then be classified as adultery.
2. Strictly limited grounds for divorce, and for remarriage: The only possibility for divorce would then be if the marriage covenant has been violated due to fornication. Remarriage would then be permitted if either one of the couple has contravened the original agreement of marriage.
3. Broader grounds for divorce and remarriage: Paul addresses another controversial clause. He identifies the believer and unbeliever within the covenant relationship. The word desertion is raised and Paul regards this as a violation of the Biblical principle for marriage. He also does not support this situation to be a valid ground for divorce and supports Jesus' teaching as the final authority.

From the above research it is clear that the only valid ground for divorce is if the exception clause has been violated. Reconciliation should be encouraged as far as possible, but fornication is the only valid ground for divorce.

Chapter 3

An investigation into the pressure points perceived to be responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst Church leaders in the Bluff area, Durban

3.1 Introduction

In this Chapter an attempt will be made to ascertain the perceptions of Christians in the Bluff area, Durban regarding the main pressure points that are responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst Church leaders in recent years. This will be done by means of an empirical survey, which involves both qualitative and quantitative research: the collecting of first-hand information through interviews and questionnaires.

Due to the nature of this thesis, it is imperative to include empirical data in order to form a conclusion. The means of achieving this is to gather information about what people feel about a particular issue. The main problem that was identified in Chapter 1 is: "What are the main pressure points responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst pastors today?" The aim of this thesis is, therefore, to establish what people perceive to be the most pressing issues that lead to divorce. The questionnaire was designed with this final objective in mind and takes into account the amount of information the respondents have on the given subject, prior to their participation in the survey.

In this chapter the empirical data that was collected is analysed, interpreted and presented. According to Monette, Sulliman and De Jong (1994: 365) data analysis refers to deriving meaning from the observations that have been made during the research project.

3.2 Purpose of the investigation

The purpose this Chapter will be to investigate through interviews and the completion of questionnaires the perceptions of Christians in the Bluff area, Durban, regarding the Divorce and Remarriage of pastors.

The field of Divorce and Remarriage has been widely researched recently. The following sources have proved helpful:

Instone-Brewer D 2002. *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible*. This book reveals a great deal of insight into the above subject and could only be written with historical and current issues in mind. As an example to one of the chapters, Instone-Brewer deals with the “*Increasing grounds for Divorce*” to only give the one example.

Berkley James D 1992. *Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship*. This Handbook gives some interesting solutions, especially in the area relating to Divorce and Remarriage.

Eldredge Sr R 2002. *Can Divorced Christians Remarry*. In this book Eldredge shares some interesting statistics regarding a survey that was conducted in 1937 and then this very same survey was once again conducted in 1995 where the Roman Catholic Church debated around the issues of Divorce and Remarriage. He reveals on both occasions that divorce is banned amongst its members, let alone remarriage. He also shares statistics from a survey that was conducted by a major Protestant denomination, in which they surveyed the results of ordaining ministers that are divorced and contemplating remarriage. He entitled the sub-section of his chapter “Even Theologians Disagree.”

Wayne-House H (ed) 1990. *Divorce and Remarriage, Four Christian Views*. This book consists of four articles written by, Carl J Laney, William Hert, Thomas Edgar, and Larry Richards. Each of these four writers gives his own interpretation of his individual research; at the end each article the other three peers review the writer’s views; the same method is followed for each article throughout the book. These writers show a great deal of insight into what they have researched and then use the information to compile their respective writings.

3.3 Research methodology (Data collection techniques)

3.3.1 Criteria in the Development of the Questionnaire

The following criteria should be borne in mind when developing an unambiguous questionnaire. Engelbrecht (2005: 111-112) gives the following suggestions:

- Any question asked needs to be meaningful.

- A good mixture of open and closed questions needs to be asked.
- No questions asked must have the same outcome. If it is felt that the question might be answered in two ways the question may be asked. These types of questions should be limited to avoid frustration.
- Lengthy questions should be avoided as these could annoy the person answering them.
- Technical language and jargon should be avoided. Plain and simple language needs to be used as the recipients may not be educated enough in order to answer difficult questions.
- Question should never be vague.
- Easy to answer question is what brings result in surveys.

3.3.2 The Development of the Questionnaire

The researcher conducted a pilot study, consisting of a literature study, consultation with experts, feasibility of the study, as well as a pilot test of the constructed Questionnaire.

In particular, the researcher reviewed literature on Divorce and Remarriage in the Church situation and afterwards compiled a questionnaire to ascertain the perceptions of Christians in the Bluff area, Durban regarding the main factors that are responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst Church leaders in recent years.

The following methods were used to collect data. Two separate questionnaires were constructed according to the following format:

1. Section 1

The Questionnaire is composed of 30 items divided into six categories. Each of the six categories contains five items. The six categories are as follows: Personal Issues; Interpersonal Issues; Practical Issues; Marital Issues; Ministry-related Issues and Spiritual Issues (see Appendix 5).

The respondents were required to indicate the top ten pressure points or reasons why Church leaders get divorced.

2. Section 2

The second part of the questionnaire (see Appendix 6) required the respondent to, firstly, place the top 10 pressure points in the order

he/she selected in the space provided on the page (adequate space was left on the page in order to write down his/her thoughts). The following column then required the respondent to give his/her view on why he/she felt it was a pressure point. The last column required the respondent to offer a suitable solution to the problem.

3.3.3 Appendices accompanying the Questionnaire

The complete package of the questionnaire was constructed as follows:

- It starts off with a front page (see Appendix 3) that gives the aim of the study, as well as who is conducting the survey.
- It states the name of the Institution involved in the research – thus giving authentication to the validity of the study (see Appendix 2).
- It requests personal information about the participants – data that will be used in the analysis of the data.
- The cover page of the questionnaire (see Appendix 4) provides a full briefing on how to complete the questionnaire (Sections 1 and 2) in order to avoid confusion.

3.3.4 The Pilot study

A pilot study can be defined as a trial run of the study, using questions and subjects, similar to those in the final survey (Landman 1988: 75). It is similar to the planned investigation, but on a smaller scale (Strydom 2005: 211).

A pilot test of Section 1 of the Questionnaire was done with 5 elders from a church in the Bluff area that did not participate in the survey. Interviews were conducted with them after the pilot test. The feedback obtained from these elders helped to provide a solid base for the final construction of the questionnaire.

The five elders of the Church mentioned above were also requested to provide feedback regarding Section 2 of the Questionnaire in which respondents are required to give semi-structured comments. As a result of feedback received, the questions were changed to open-ended questions that allowed the respondents to elaborate on the questions asked.

3.4. Description of the empirical survey

3.4.1 Procedure

3.4.1.1 Administration of the questionnaires

The researcher personally delivered a total of 34 questionnaires to the following three ministers from the Bluff area, Durban (see Appendix 8), who were requested to distribute them amongst their church leaders:

- Pastor Gary Charlton Trinity Gospel Ministries (12)
- Pastor Johan Marais Jesus Life Ministries (12)
- Reverend David Schooling Bluff Methodist Church (10)

The numbers mentioned in brackets after each church indicate the number of church leaders who participated in the survey.

Conducting a survey of this nature requires at least two letters, not only from the person conducting the survey (see Appendix 1), but also from the institution that it is being conducted through (see Appendix 2). This helps people understand the legitimacy and authentication of the intended area of research and indicates that the institution bears witness to the fact that the candidate is conducting this survey, under its guidance. People are reluctant to just answer any questionnaire, as they might feel that it will implicate them at a later stage, or even bear false witness against them.

Individual covering letters were sent to each pastor requesting that the survey to be carried out amongst their leaders (see Appendix 1). The letter contained certain instructions that each pastor needed to adhere to. Another letter was also sent from the institution under which it was conducted, in support of the survey (see Appendix 2). This letter also served as an authentication of the intended survey.

3.4.1.2 Analysis of questionnaires

The data collected from the Questionnaires was collated into percentages for comparison and comment. The figures were translated into percentages of respondents (indicating which pressure points were perceived as being most responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst pastors today). Some of the additional comments on the questionnaires were noted for inclusion in the analysis, especially when these comments recurred frequently.

Finally, a combined analysis was done of the perceptions of the three Churches in the Bluff area in Durban and the findings were documented. From the combined response the final top ten perceived causes of divorce amongst church leaders were then indicated.

The complete outcome of the survey was documented in the form of various graphs and a conclusion of the entire findings was provided at the end. At no stage of the research was it felt that denominational criteria would influence the outcome of the survey, as all the Churches in the Bluff area seem to teach the same doctrines when it comes to the area of marriage.

3.4.2. Sampling method

Bailey (1994: 83) defines a sample as a subset or portion of the total population. The sample is studied in an effort to understand the population from which it is drawn.

Cluster sampling is a method of sampling in which the members of the sample are chosen from one or several groups (or clusters) rather than at random from the entire population. From a statistical point of view this is less satisfactory than simple random sampling, but it may well be more practical and/or economical (Porkess 2005: 47).

Cluster sampling is a form of sampling which was thought to be the best for this type of survey, as the best information can be obtained when interviewing people in a specific area or people who live and frequent that area. For this argument it would be the Churches in the Bluff area in the greater Durban metropolis.

Using the cluster sampling method all the church leaders from 3 of the churches in the Bluff area in Durban were selected, and requested to complete the questionnaire.

3.4.3 Sample size and response

3.4.3.1 Sample size

Sample size is the number of individuals or items in a sample. Samples are often called small if their size is less than 30 (Porkess 2005: 220).

A population is the sum total of the people in the group from which samples are taken. It is important to have enough members participating in the

survey in order to achieve an accurate result. If the population is too small, the data will lose its value and if the population is too large, unnecessary time and money will be forfeited (Engelbrecht 2005: 109).

For this research three prominent Churches on the Bluff were approached, requesting their participation in the survey. They were selected to ensure that the results would not be affected by denominational influence. A Methodist understanding, a Pentecostal, as well as a Charismatic influence would give diversity to the answers. These three Churches were required to provide answers from not only their pastor, but also from those in leadership with him. Through interviews the wives of these leaders also participated in the survey. The feedback provided by the wives was both interesting, and at times parallel answers to that of the male leaders.

The size of the survey is important in receiving the actual findings and to achieve a suitable solution and understanding to the given area of what is being researched. Too large and it may lose impact and if it is too small, will not give accuracy to the outcome. Careful consideration was given to this area and with deliberation it was felt that the three Pastors mentioned in Appendix 8, including their spouses, together with their leaders, should form part of the survey. The same questionnaire was handed to each of these participants.

The pastors, their leaders, and their spouses represent a reliable source for obtaining a successful outcome of the research project. The outcome will be used to identify appropriate solutions to the revealed areas of marital weakness. Adequate measures can then be proposed and implemented in order to bring biblical correction and instruction. Counselling strategies can then be put in place to help those struggling in making the right decisions surrounding marital issues.

3.4.3.2 Response

Three Churches were requested to participate in the Bluff area. With the commencement of the survey a total of 34 questionnaires were handed to the three Churches selected for the survey.

Each pastor and his leaders were given the same form to complete. These questionnaires were distributed between the 05-06-2006 and 07-06-

2006. The pastors were asked to have these forms available for collection within two weeks of delivery. Leaders then had to return their completed forms to their respective pastors, who would then contact me for collection. All the forms were received back on the 24-07-2006.

Trinity Gospel Ministries has 12 leaders in its team including the pastor and his wife. Out of the 12 forms handed to them, 10 completed forms were returned, giving an 83% response rate. Jesus Life Ministries also has 12 members on its leadership team. All 12 questionnaires were returned, giving a 100% response. Finally, the Bluff Methodist Church has 10 members on its leadership team and a total of 8 questionnaires were returned, giving an 80% return. This indicates that the overall response rate was 88%.

3.4.4 Gathering of survey data and analysing the contents to reach a workable solution

The date of the delivery and collection of the Questionnaires was recorded. Thirty-four completed questionnaires were collected and stored for future analysing. The forms were carefully scrutinised to ensure an accurate conclusion. The questionnaires were consolidated and summarised and any patterns or commonalities that emerged were interpreted and documented. The questionnaires were then sorted into the various categories as part of the sorting process.

Up to this point the data from all the questionnaires collected appeared to be meaningless. However, as the data was analysed and interpreted clear patterns and commonalities emerged. Once the data had been interpreted, the findings were then recorded.

After all the data had been analysed, the results were documented and the findings were presented in the form of a report. The researcher recorded all the findings in the appropriate report format. Reports need to be neat and accurate.

This report is presented in the next section and the findings of the report are later used to reach a final conclusion and to make appropriate recommendations that could help to prevent future marital problems and solve current divorce-related issues.

3.5 Presentation of the data (Results and analysis)

3.5.1 Percentage of participating church leaders

The percentage of leadership from each of the three participating churches are indicated below:

Church Name	Forms delivered Date	Forms received Date	Total leaders	Leaders participated	Total members	Percentage leadership
Trinity Gospel Ministries	6/6/06	19/7/06	12	10 (83%)	150	8%
Jesus Life Ministries	5/6/06	24/7/06	12	12 (100%)	200	6%
Bluff Methodist Church	7/6/06	9/7/06	10	8 (80%)	200	5%
Total			34	30	550	5.45%

3.5.2. Biographical details of respondents

The three graphs included below refer to the gender, marital status, and age groups of the respondents within the core group of people in the survey. The following information was extracted from the covering page of the questionnaire (See Appendix 3):

3.5.2.1 Gender

The respondents were not directly asked to give their gender, but by their names, they could easily be divided into male and female. The males that participated were 13 and the females were 17.

It was also felt that a balance was needed between. It was felt that by not only the male leader, but also his wife participating in the survey, would help to add value to the result of the survey. The survey would then be able to gain insight into the understanding of the wife - what she valued within the marriage relationship. Hence, her insight would have an influence on the final outcome.

Gender

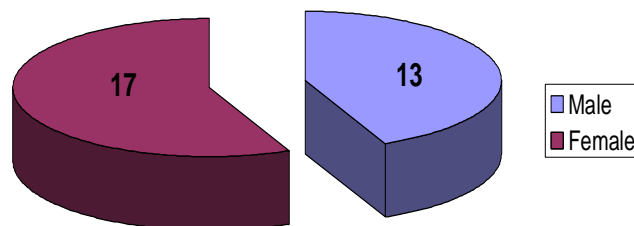


Figure 1: Respondents according to Gender

In this exercise, dividing up the gender groups became an interesting finding. Women are slowly taking up leadership positions in the Church structure. Most of the women did not hold eldership position, but held a position of deaconship. As a direct result of this they could then hold a position of home group leader or even in a serving ministry, which is a Biblical principle. This is also supported in the Scripture found in Romans 16:1.

3.5.2.2 Marital status

Respondents' Marital Status

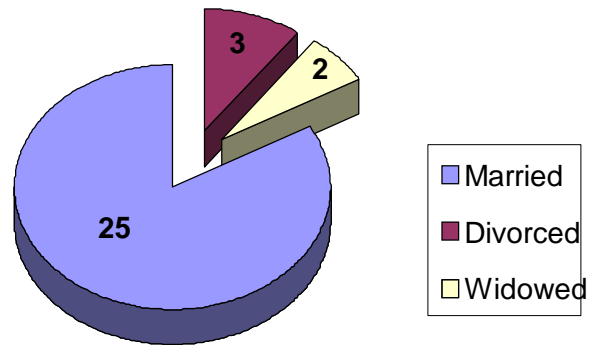


Figure 2: Participants' marital status

The above graph indicates the marital status of those who participated in the survey. 25 out of the 30 respondents were married. It also reveals that it was their first marriage and that they had never been divorced. The divorced respondents were 3 in number. It also indicates that one of the respondents was divorced only once and the other two were divorced for a second time. 2 of the respondents were widowed and never remarried.

3.5.2.3 Age

Respondents' Age Groups

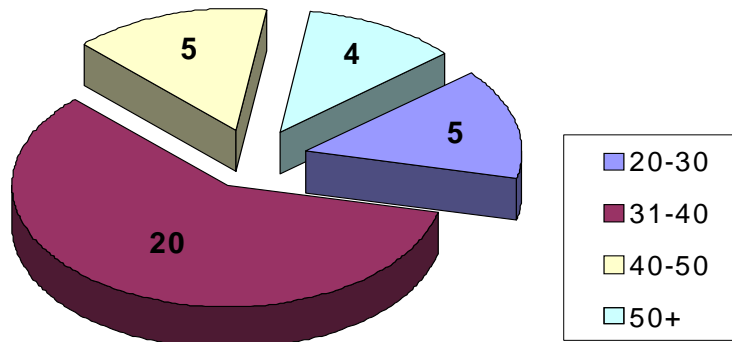


Figure 3 Respondents Age Groups

The above graph indicates that the respondents formed a mature target group where the average age was about 35 years of age. The bulk of the respondents were between 31-40 years of age. 5 respondents formed part of the 20-30 age group, 5 made up part of the 40-50 age group and only 4 in the 50 plus age group. The data also indicates that the respondents had been married for approximately 13 years plus. The 50 plus age group have been married for 30 years plus and one of the respondents has just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary - an incredible milestone that even in this day is hard to achieve.

3.5.3 Findings on the six areas of pressure points

In the survey it was felt that in order to achieve the best result, one would need to break down the reasons for divorce into various areas or categories (see Appendix 5).

The first two areas are directly related to the make-up of man: the area of “Personal” and “Interpersonal Issues.” Secondly, many people face difficulties in the area of the “Practical Issues” covering problems faced in marriages on a daily basis. Thirdly, a survey on marriage would be incomplete without including the area of “Marital Issues,” dealing with intimate questions relating to marriage. Fourthly, a survey dealing with church leaders would need to take into account “Ministry-related Issues” in order to ascertain how church leadership affects the marriage relationship. Lastly, the area of “Spiritual Issues” could not be left out in the church context. The findings of the survey relating to the six areas were interesting and at the same surprising and will be discussed individually.

The following graph illustrates the main areas of pressure points identified by the church leaders as being responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst pastors today.

Six Areas Displayed in Percentages

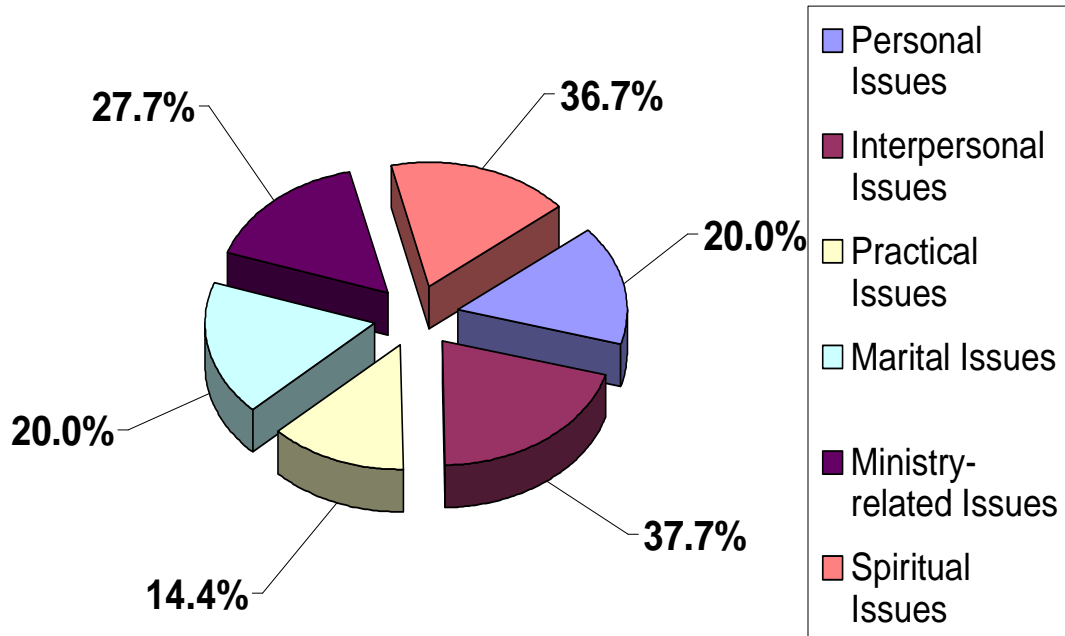


Figure 5 Six Areas Displayed in Percentages

According to the above graph, the most prominent area relating to the reasons for divorce identified by the respondents was “Interpersonal Issues” - 37.7% of the respondents said that this area was the most appropriate ground for divorce. In the area of “Spiritual Issues” 36.7% of the respondents indicated that it was an important reason for divorce. “Ministry-related Issues” brought in 27.7% of the votes. 20.0% of the respondents answered in favour of both the areas of “Personal Issues” and “Marital Issues.” In the area of “Practical Issues” 14.4% of the respondents recorded that this area had some validity for divorce.

3.5.4 Rankings of the Top Ten Pressure Points

The following graph illustrates the top ten pressure points identified by the church leaders as being responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst pastors today:

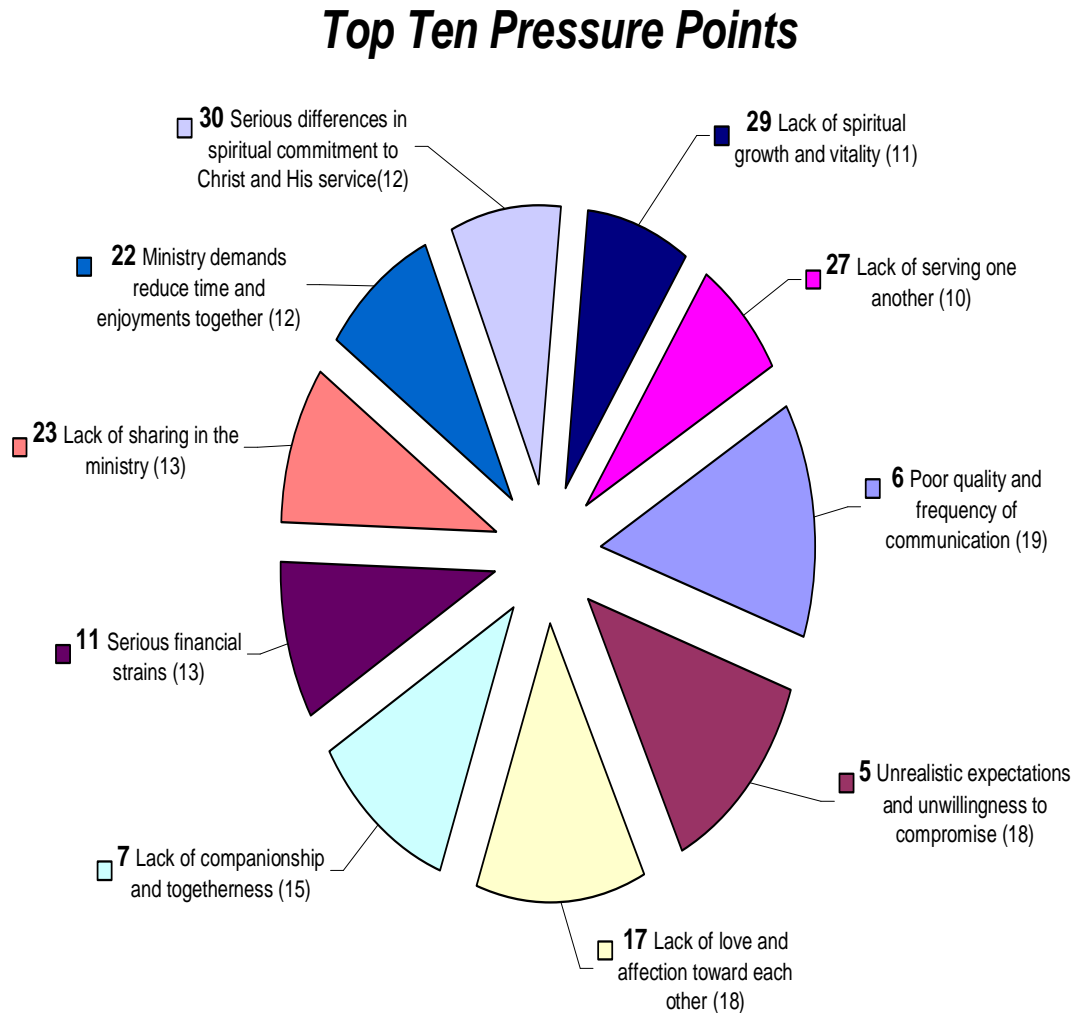


Figure 6 Top Ten Pressure Points

The top ten pressure points in order of priority as revealed by the survey are:

Question No.	Question	Number of acknowledgements	Area
6	Poor quality and frequency of communication	19	Interpersonal Issues
5	Unrealistic expectations and unwillingness to compromise	18	Personal Issues
17	Lack of love and affection toward each other	18	Marital Issues
7	Lack of companionship and togetherness	15	Interpersonal Issues
11	Serious financial strains	13	Practical Issues
23	Lack of sharing in the ministry	13	Ministry-related Issues
22	Ministry demands reduce time and enjoyment together	12	Ministry-related Issues
30	Serious differences in spiritual commitment to Christ and His service	12	Spiritual Issues
29	Lack of spiritual growth and vitality	11	Spiritual Issues
27	Lack of serving one another	10	Spiritual Issues

3.6 Themes related to the top ten pressure points

Without going into too much detail, this section will focus on providing a brief summary of the top ten findings. The following themes and sub-themes emerged from the responses recorded on the questionnaires:

1. The **sixth** question under the sub-heading Interpersonal Issues, reads as follows: “*Poor quality and frequency of communication (e.g., too much TV watching).*”

Views of some who answered in this area:

- “Communication is the priority in any marriage.”
- “The pressures of work seem to reduce communication at home and TV seems to become the way out.”
- “If communication breaks down, most of the other areas tend to follow.”

- “Not available for important family issues or just healthy parenting/spouse communication.”
- “This is most important as one communicates less, the divisions between each other will grow greater.”

Solutions recommended:

- “Less TV and more together time.”
- Communication shows the health of the marriage.”
- “Sacrificial love toward each other can repair this area.”
- “Always have at least one meal together where the family can sit together at the table and not just talk, but also just to listen to one another.”
- “The marriages that are caught up in this trend should start to express themselves at the dinner table and so start building a healthy relationship.”

2. The **fifth** question under the sub-heading Personal Issues, reads,
“Unrealistic expectations and unwillingness to compromise.”

Views of some respondents who answered in this area:

- “All is well when one is just married, but as the years go by, so too does this area of commitment.”
- “If God is not in the relationship, then worldliness creeps in.”

Solutions recommended:

- “Young couples need to be encouraged through the years to keep their love for each other the highest priority.”
- “Council from marriage corrosion is essential. The problems need to be corrected as soon as possible.

3. The **seventeenth** question that was asked was in the area of Marital Issues. It read as follows: *“Lack of love and affection toward each other.”*

Views of some respondents who answered in this area:

- “Many people have a tremendous amount of time for everyone else, but not for their own families.”
- “Constant irritation with people is often draining and at the end of the day one has nothing left to give to one’s spouse.”
- “It is vital to keep a marriage alive.”
- “Women constantly need to be told that they are loved.”

- “Affection leads to a good sexual relationship also.”
- “We so often take each other for granted.”
- “We have become blind to each other’s body language.”

Solutions recommended:

- “Make a specific day in order to spend time with the family. This should only be for the husband and wife.”
- “Be aware of your spouse’s language of love and make a daily effort to show that affection in a way that is pleasing to them, even if it is just making a cup of tea.”
- “Men and women need to always learn through wise council.”
- “Men also need to understand what makes a woman feel worthy.”
- “Quality time is of the essence in a quite evening or dinner together.”
- “Just being together remembering the good old days and looking toward the future.”

4. The **seventh** question was in the area of Interpersonal Issues. The question read as follows: “*Lack of companionship and togetherness (selfishness).*”

Views of some who answered in this area:

- “We are too busy with other people’s concerns that we have no time for our own families.”
- “We neglect each other completely, discussing everything around us and the Church.”
- “The Church leader and his spouse should always serve the community together.”

Solutions recommended:

- “To make time during the day/evening to discuss the day’s events.”
- “More together time is needed in order to build this part of the relationship.”
- “The Church leader should make sure that his leaders and their wives do tasks together.”

5. The **eleventh** question in the survey was in the area of Practical Issues and read as follows: “*Serious financial strain.*”

Views of some respondents who answered in this area:

- “Sadly, if needs are not met due to overspending, it will put pressure on the marriage.”
- “Bad spending habits, places unnecessary strain on the relationship.”
- “Money can be a problem because there are always bills to pay.”

Solutions recommended:

- “Tough steps need to be taken in order to correct wrong spending habits.”
- The Church should ask if there is a financial advisor, and ask for his help to correct this bad behaviour.”
- “Correct budgeting.”

6. The **twenty-third** question was in the area of Ministry-related Issues. The question read as follows: “*Lack of sharing in the ministry (serving together).*”

Views of some who answered in this area:

- “If there is no sharing in the ministry, this will cause division that will build into resentment.”
- “My first husband was very worldly and involved himself with his friends and sport.”
- “This should never be a problem.”

Solutions recommended:

- “A broader assignment of duties in the ministry is needed.”
- “Faith and prayer will eventually change the way our spouses react in various situations.”
- “The couples should always serve together so that they can spend time together, even in the ministry.”

7. The **twenty-second** question was also in the Ministry-related Issues. It read as follows: “*Ministry demands reduce time and enjoyment together (fun and leisure).*”

Views of some who answered in this area:

- “Vast amounts of time and energy are demanded from members of the congregation.”
- “Too much paper work, office work and so few helpers in the Church.”
- “The work load needs to be spread out more.”

- “Many destitute families these days need to be ministered to.”
- “We are inclined to push ourselves to the limit, to determine of our own families.”

Solutions recommended:

- “Correct delegation of the various tasks is important.”
- “A good healthy balance between work and leisure.”

8. The **thirtieth** question was in the area of Spiritual Issues and read as follows: “*Serious differences in spiritual commitment to Christ and His service.*”

Views of some who answered in this area:

- “The level of maturity in the walk with God.”
- “No commitment shown by my spouse.”
- “No responsibility toward the ministry at all.”
- “My spouse is cold toward God.”
- “Married couples often differ in their spiritual belief.”

Solutions recommended:

- “One should not be restricted from taking up leadership positions.”
- “Full commitment to Christ is what brings the change.”
- “Knowing who God is, brings that all important commitment.”
- “Couples should make time to sit together and talk about their different beliefs.”

9. The **twenty-ninth** question was also in the area of Spiritual Issues. It read as follows: “*Lack of spiritual growth and vitality.*”

Views of some who answered in this area:

- “If one spouse is hungry to grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord and the other is not.”
- “If you don’t grow, you are dead.”
- The closer you are to God, the more dangerous it gets, as the devil wants to destroy you.”

Solutions recommended:

- “The only solution is for the spouses to pray for the other’s commitment to be increased.”

- “Stay in contact with God. Put on your armour every day.”
- “Pray for God’s blessings and discernment.”

10. The **twenty-seventh** question also concerned Spiritual Issues. It read as follows: “*Lack of serving one another* (a spirit of servant-hood).”

Views of some who answered in this area:

- “Lack of spending time in the Word of God and encouraging one another can have breakdowns.”
- “A wife is sometimes expected to be her husband’s personal servant, to be there for all his needs, without any gratitude and thanks shown.”

Solutions recommended:

- “Spend more time with each other in the Word and this will also increase the level of communication.”
- “Spouses should be extremely sensitive in this area.”
- “The various roles in the marriage must be clearly defined.”
- “The purpose of the wife’s role must be understood by her husband.”

These top ten issues will be further dealt with in chapter 4. Since the people on the Bluff have revealed what they consider to be the most important factors that will contribute to divorce, it would be appropriate to conclude this thesis with the recommended solutions. It is the author’s intention in Chapter 4 to do a literature survey in order to provide solutions and to make proposals regarding an appropriate counselling strategy for pastors contemplating divorce.

3.7 Key findings, conclusion, recommendations and further research

The primary aim of this section is to give a summary of the main findings from the data analysed in the previous sections. The data analysed in the preceding sections was collected on the basis of biographical data and general insight into the reasons for divorce amongst church leaders.

In this section the researcher will restate the aims and the research question of the study for the purpose of reviewing the findings, drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

The main goal was to investigate the perceptions of Christians in the Bluff area, Durban regarding the main pressure points that are responsible for the increase in divorce cases amongst Church leaders in recent years.

Other main objectives of the research also include:

- What pastoral guidelines can be afforded in order to counsel pastors considering divorce or remarriage?
- What guidelines can be given in order to help them to resolve these ongoing problems?

3.7.1 Key findings

From the data presented and analysed in section 3.5, the findings revealed that the most prominent area relating to the reasons for divorce identified by the respondents was “Interpersonal Issues” (37.7%). The next was the area of “Spiritual Issues” (36.7%). This indicates that people consider the area to contribute greatly towards divorce cases. “Ministry-related Issues” (27.7%) play a big role in the eventual breakdown of marriages. “Personal Issues” and “Marital Issues” (20%) have a fair effect on the breakdown of marriages. “Practical Issues” (14.4%) are perceived to have the least effect as a reason for divorce.

3.7.2. Conclusion

From the above findings and the solutions recommended by the respondents, it can be concluded that church leaders considering divorce or remarriage are in special need of pastoral counselling in the areas indicated above, especially in the area of “Interpersonal Issues.”

Solutions to the current problems found in the marriage relationship that were highlighted in the survey, will be dealt with in the next chapter. An appropriate counselling strategy using biblical guidelines will be highlighted and possible solutions encouraged.

3.7.3 Recommendations

The recommendations generated in this study are directed at church leaders in the Bluff area, Durban, where the research study was conducted, as well as to pastors in other areas.

With regard to church leaders in the Bluff area, Durban, the following recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that Churches in the Bluff area review current strategies for dealing with church leaders who might be contemplating

divorce. Strategies such as peer counselling, mentorship, and a minister's fraternal need to be investigated.

- Once these strategies are in place, it is important to organise regular Marriage Seminars at churches in the Bluff area to provide biblical guidelines for church leaders and other Christians on how to enrich their marriages.

3.7.4 Further research

A topic of this nature definitely requires further research. The reasons for divorce are so diverse that society devises new reasons for divorce on a yearly basis. Researchers in the area of divorce need to constantly be ahead of modern trends. Understanding some of these reasons for divorce will help to address issues that lead up to separation and the breakdown in the marriage relationship. If the research on divorce is effective, it should help to build a strong society with strong marriages, where break-ups are not considered as the answer, and where partners are determined to make marriages succeed. Besides divorce, other areas of marriage also need to be researched in order to provide insight into current situations.

Chapter 4

Biblical guidelines for counselling couples on Divorce or Remarriage: A pastoral perspective

4.2. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to propose Biblical guidelines for the counselling of couples considering Divorce or Remarriage. In addition, the aim is to use the findings of Chapter 3 to formulate Biblical guidelines for understanding and preventing marital problems. The empirical survey would be futile if the information received were not used for helping to provide appropriate solutions to marital problems. For example, the findings of Chapter 3 reveal three alarming areas: reasons for divorce, which require serious consideration.

In pursuit of the above aim, the following aspects relating to a pastoral perspective on Divorce or Remarriage will be discussed:

- Special attention will be given to the following three identified areas: Interpersonal Issues, Spiritual Issues, and Ministry-related Issues.
- A brief review of the findings of Chapter 2 relating to Matthew 19:1-10, relating to divorce.
- Prevention strategies for marital problems. Direction in this area will help with solutions prior to divorce being considered. This will include the understanding of Biblical guidance on how to solve serious marital issues.
- Pastoral counselling for encouraging the reconciliation of marriage partners in the various areas where problems have been identified.
- Biblical disciplinary procedures may be necessary to bring about the necessary reconciliation. If the Pastor has stepped out of line, he might need to be disciplined according to the Scriptural principle taught by Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17.
- The pastoral counselling for children of divorced leaders. On many occasions the children of pastors need to be counselled, as they are the victims of their parent's selfish attitudes and lack of consideration. These

offspring sometimes bear the scars (emotionally) for many years after the divorce has taken place.

- Finally, this chapter will look into what involvement the Church should have and what the Body of Christ should do when faced with the issues of divorced and remarried leaders.

4.3 Divorce and Remarriage: a brief review

Reformed believers hold the view that the Bible neither condones, nor commands divorce. They simply see that it rather permits divorce because of sin. Eldredge (2002: 36) says: “Divorce is always the result of sin, but the act of divorce is not necessarily a sin.” However, what needs to be emphasised at this point is that God loves divorced people, but He hates divorce.

Eldredge (2002: 35) shares this thought:

He allows divorce only because of the hardness of our hearts. Although the act of divorce itself is not a sin, it is caused by the sin of at least one of the partners.

The Westminster Confession of Faith contends:

...nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, if the cause is sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage (PCA Digest 1992:25).

Stott (1985: 177) elaborates:

Only if a person divorces his partner on the grounds of marital unfaithfulness is his remarriage not adulterous. Only if the unbeliever insists on leaving is the believer not bound.

The above three statements clearly reveal the only valid grounds for divorce.

4.3.1 Findings from Matthew 19:1-10 regarding the grounds for divorce

From the findings of this study it is evident that the only valid grounds for divorce is marital betrayal/disloyalty as declared by Jesus in Matthew 19:9.

In His reply to the questions asked by the two opposing schools of thought, Jesus gives clear guidelines with regard to divorce. He, firstly, reveals God’s perspective of what the original plan for marriage was in Matthew 19:4-6. He then indicates the world’s view (Matthew 19:7-8; Deuteronomy 24:1-4), and concludes His teaching on divorce with the only valid reason that there is for

divorce (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9). Paul, in his writings never once opposes the already documented teaching of Jesus on divorce, but merely supports what Jesus has already established as the final truth on the matter (1Cor 7:10-16).

Scripture clearly indicates that God instituted marriage from the very beginning of creation (Gen 2:24). The instruction was given in the Garden of Eden and was to be considered as a life-long covenant commitment. In Matthew 19, Jesus refers to this very institution of marriage and directs His enquirers to the passage found in verse 9: "... *Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate*" (NIV). When Jesus addresses the opposing points of view, He never once considers the issue of divorce, but keeps emphasising what God expected from marriage. When Jesus answers the second part of their question, He does not refer to divorce, but points them to the only valid cause for divorce (Matthew 19:9).

4.2.2. When remarriage is not allowed

With regard to remarriage, Eldredge (2002: 135) makes the following important statement:

The general rule is that you should not remarry if the vows of your marriage covenant have never been broken by sexual immorality or by desertion.

It was previously discussed that there are only two considerations when remarriage holds no validity. They are: (1) Sexual immorality that nullifies the marriage contract and, (2) It also nullifies the marriage vows. Remarriage should, therefore, never be considered when:

1. No sexual immoral act was committed.
2. If there is a possibility of reconciliation.

Other complications regarding remarriage that need consideration are:

1. If a man unlawfully divorced his faithful wife, would he cause her to commit adultery if she is to remarry another man? (The reason being that she is still legally and Biblically bound to her original marriage covenant).
2. If a man were to marry an unlawfully divorced woman, would the same rule apply?

The following Scriptures affirm the above statements: Matthew 5:31-32, 19:9, Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18.

The question arises: Does this principle regarding remarriage apply to all of mankind, whether saved or unsaved? In this regard the following should be taken into account: (1) When a person becomes a believer, one's marital status remains the same; (2) The rules of marriage were ordained by God from the very beginning and for that reason will always prevail.

Robert Eldredge (2002: 139) summarises the situation:

As long as your spouse remains faithful and does not want to leave you, it would be an act of adultery if you divorced your spouse and married someone else.

4.4 Understanding the main causes of marital problems

4.3.1 The main causes of divorce in the empirical survey of Chapter 3

The following top ten causes of marital problems were identified in the survey conducted in the Bluff area, Durban in Chapter 3:

1. Communication
2. Unrealistic expectations
3. Lack of love
4. Lack of companionship
5. Financial strains
6. Lack of sharing in ministry
7. Ministry demands
8. Differences in spiritual commitment
9. Lack of spiritual growth
10. Lack of serving

It should be noted that of the above ten reasons for divorce, 1 was a personal issue, 2 were interpersonal issues, 1 was a practical issue, 1 was a marital issue, 2 were ministry-related issues and, finally, 3 were spiritual issues. Participants in the survey were selected from the leadership core of three churches from the Bluff area, Durban, and, therefore, each of them might have experienced one of these ten marital problems either in the past or presently.

The above findings correlate to a large extent with the research of the many other specialists in the field of marriage counselling. In particular, the above findings will be compared with the findings of Gary Collins.

4.4.2 The main causes of divorce as identified by Gary Collins and others

Gary Collins in his book on *Guidelines to Christian Counselling* (1988: 410-413) lists five very prominent reasons for divorce. In order to understand them better, one needs to look at each of the causes individually and then make some form of comparison with those identified in the survey in Chapter 3.

4.4.2.1 Faulty Communication

It should be stressed that this issue, "Poor quality and frequency of communication" (Item number 6) was the top issue (cause of divorce) selected in the survey in this study.

Collins (1988: 410) confirms this:

In all professional literature, this probably is the most commonly mentioned cause of marital discord.

Lawrence Crabb (1982: 64) elaborates:

Communication problems inevitably result when people pursue self-centred goals, but sometimes problems also come because individuals have not learned how to communicate clearly and efficiently.

Communication involves the sending, as well as the receiving of messages. Communication can come in many different ways, verbal (with words) being the most common form. Non-verbal communication, which includes gestures (body language), tone within one's voice, facial expressions, actions, gifts, periods of silence, etc. Collins (1988: 410) explains:

When the verbal and nonverbal contradict, a double message is sent ... This leads to confusion and a communication breakdown.

Good communication, however, always demands a good verbal message that is sent and then becomes the same as the message that is received (tone of voice and attitude). Collins (1988: 410) rightly points out that, "Occasionally miscommunication between spouses is inevitable" and issues the following clear warning:

When miscommunication is more common than clear communication, however, the marriage begins to have serious problems. Poor communication tends to breed more of the same.

Smith (2005) elaborates on the “*secret of communication*.” He uses a passage of Scripture found in Amos 3:3 in support of his following statement.

“*Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?* (NIV). He argues:

Communication has always been a major problem in most homes. It is often the missing link in unhappy marriages. Through extensive studies, it has been proven that the happiest couples are those who talk most with each other. Communication is, therefore, not a dispensable luxury in a successful marriage; it is an indispensable necessity. Ability to communicate is a fundamental to a successful marriage because it is the means by which a husband and wife relationship or parent – child relationship is established and maintained. It is your ability to communicate personal thoughts, feelings, experiences and preferences that will allow your marriage to pass through the changing seasons. There can be no unity and happiness in a home where there is a lack of communication.

Finally, what must be remembered is that communication is a learned skill and includes interaction, so that even if it were poor, one could learn from mistakes and press on to improve.

4.4.2.2 Under-integrated or Over-integrated Relationships

It should be pointed out that the area, “Unrealistic expectations and unwillingness to compromise” was placed second in the top ten pressure points revealed in the survey. This pressure point in the marriage relationship is closely related to “under-integrated or over-integrated relationships.” Collins (1988: 410) elaborates as follows on this particular cause of divorce:

Getting close to another person is risky. We open ourselves to criticism and possible rejection when we let another person know us intimately, become aware of our insecurities, or see our weaknesses. Since most of us have learned the value of fending for ourselves, it is not easy to trust another person – even when that other person is a marriage partner.

In order to better understand this particular cause of divorce, the two aspects “under-integrated” and “over-integrated relationships” will be discussed below separately.

Under-integrated marriage relationships is best explained when the partners grow apart over many years of marriage. No indication of time is afforded, only that the breakdown may occur steadily and without prior warning.

Collins (1988: 410) elaborates:

There is little willingness to share confidences, to be valuable, or to develop mutual life goals. Instead each seems to be moving through life independently of the other, with differing needs and goals.

In this kind of marriage relationship there is a tendency for couples to be critical and at other times have the ability to put each other down, even using these subtle forms, in order to manipulate. Collins (1988: 411) describes the outcome of such a relationship as follows: "Defensive, self-centred attitudes create tension and push the husband and wife apart."

Over-integrated marriage relationships are best seen in a couple that is over engulfed in such a way that the two partners have lost their own identities. In such a relationship each party has a grip on the other; hence they feel trapped.

Collins (1988: 411) explains:

If you suggest that one person's harshness may be creating marital difficulties, the response might be, 'That could be right, but I'm not the only one who is guilty.' Both partners blame the other for their problems and neither is able to stand back, look at individual needs, and evaluate one's own faults that may be contributing to the tension.

The over-integrated relationship could cause verbal or even a physical abuse. Collins (1988: 411) elaborates: "...Both partners try to tear away from the confinement of such a stifling relationship."

4.4.2.3 Interpersonal tension

In the survey conducted on the Bluff, Durban items relating to Interpersonal issues were rated as number one and four on the top ten pressure points.

Collins breaks down this area into the following categories: personal, interpersonal, practical, marital and spiritual issues. The only area not specifically dealt with by Collins is the area of Ministry-related issues. However, this area is closely linked with some of the other areas, where it receives attention.

Before analysing the seven points identified under the heading “Interpersonal Tension,” Collins (1988: 411) introduces this section with the following statement:

When two people marry, each comes to the marriage with approximately two or more decades of past experiences and ways of looking at life. Each has perspectives that are not shared by the other and sometimes, even when there is a sincere desire for compromise or synthesis, couples still have difficulty resolving their differences.

The basic problem that can be identified in this statement is that neither is willing to change. Insensitivity to various issues, as well as the other person’s viewpoints and even the refusal to acknowledge differences in opinions, often lead to tension that more than often point to other important areas. Collins deals with the following seven areas individually:

(a) Sex

Marriage couples at some stage of their relationship will encounter difficulty in the area of sex. There are many causes for sexual breakdown.

Collins (1988: 411) elaborates:

...The lack of accurate knowledge, unrealistic expectations, fear of not being able to perform adequately, differences in sexual drive, inhibiting attitudes about sex and insufficient opportunities for privacy.

It can then be assumed that the three most common causes are: Impatience, frigidity and, lastly, infidelity. These can then be regarded as the three most popular hindrances that will cause tension and will also disrupt any further smooth functioning in this area of the marriage relationship.

Collins (1988: 411) concludes as follows:

Exceptional busyness, insensitivity in one or both of the partners, or nonsexual marital conflicts can also interfere with sexual functioning.

Finally, if these problems surrounding sex were not resolved, the marriage relationship would surely suffer the pressure.

(b) Roles

Collins (1988: 411) indicates the following regarding the male-female roles in a marriage:

We live at a time when traditional male-female roles are being re-evaluated. This often leads to conflict over what it means to be a husband or wife.

What needs to be remembered here is that the Bible is extremely clear on the various roles of the man and the wife within the marriage relationship. Christians endorse these roles given within clear Biblical guidelines, which prevent them from making decisions based on purely secular views of marriage. If these roles are ignored it places the marriage outside of God's original plan for a godly marriage relationship. This would then place the marriage relationship into further jeopardy, when outside influences are allowed to compromise other important areas in the marriage.

Collins (1988: 411) confirms the explicit nature of biblical guidelines of husband-wife roles:

The Bible, in contrast, is much more explicit, but Christians differ in their interpretations of the scriptural passages that outline husband-wife roles. As a result there is disagreement, accompanied by both competition and feelings of threat.

Other problems in this area of roles revolve around the issue of career goals. What always needs to be remembered is that the attitudes displayed in this area should never be contrary to Scriptural teaching. If this area is overlooked and the position of roles is an issue of contention, pride and selfish attitudes are not far off.

(c) Inflexibility

Because of the diversity of the two people in the marriage relationship, they both bring uniqueness to the marriage.

Collins (1988: 411) elaborates:

Sometimes the personality differences complement each other and blend into a mutually compatible relationship.

What is also true is that many marriages take on a personality of their own and this involves the complementing of both the partners. Sometimes this relationship develops its own strengths and weaknesses.

Collins (1988: 411) indicates some of the problems involved in such a relationship:

There can be difficulties, however, if one or both of the partners is rigid, unwilling to give, or strongly resistant to change.

In couples that have just got married one commonly finds enthusiasm, excitement and even youthful idealism. This does not always remain, but as couples age, their marriage goes through various changes. Either they grow together into maturity or one of the partners seeks to retain the excitement of youth. Many times the necessary adjustments are done and the relationship grows healthier as it matures.

Norman H Wright (1982) describes the problem of rigidity in marriage: Marriages must grow through stages if they are to remain stable and fulfilling. When couples are too busy or too rigid to work at building and enriching their marriages, problems are likely to develop.

(d) Religion

Paul in his letter to the Corinthian Church (2Cor 6:14) warns them about marriages that are unequally yoked. Christians should heed this warning and never consider such a marriage. It should also never be regarded as a passage that was only applicable to the marriages of those times, but when mentioned in Scripture it becomes valid for all Christians even into this present age. Paul also motivates his statement, "...*what fellowship can light have with darkness?*" (2Cor 6:14, NIV). In the survey that was conducted on the Bluff, Durban, one of the areas of concern was with regard to Spiritual Issues. One item in this area was ranked in eighth place of the top ten pressure points. The item's question reads: "Serious differences in spiritual commitment to Christ and His service." Twelve people out of the thirty respondents interviewed supported this item.

Collins (1988: 412) explains the following about the spiritual commitment of marriage partners:

Counsellors have observed tensions when a husband and wife differ from each other in their denominational preferences, degree of commitment to spiritual things, interest in religion, or even expectations about the religious education of children... Sometimes these differences create tension in other areas such as choice of friends, views on ethics, whether and to whom charitable donations will be given, or the use of time on Sundays.

It is clear from the above that religion can either strengthen or weaken a marriage. Extreme differences in religious understandings can also have a destructive effect on the relationship.

(e) Values

Couples often ask questions such as: What priority should money play in our relationship? How should we spend our time? What should be our preferences in life? Where do we see ourselves in five or ten year's time? What are our goals?

Collins (1988: 412) describes the role of values in a marriage as follows:

When a couple has similar values, the marriage is often healthy and growing. When values are in conflict, however, the relationship may often be one of tension, power struggles and mutual criticism. Value conflicts are at the heart of many marital problems.

Collins (1988: 412) indicates some of the areas that could cause conflict when evaluated under the umbrella of values:

Value	Vs	Value
Credit card should never be used		Credit cards can be used on occasion to get over financial crisis
Divorce is never right		Sometimes divorce is the best solution to marital problems
We should never miss Church on Sunday		Sometimes it is okay to skip worship services
Succeeding in one's career is of major importance in life		Building a family is more important than building a career
Abortion is always wrong because it is murder		In some circumstances abortion is OK
Children should be taught spiritual beliefs and values		Children should be given the freedom to find their own beliefs

When considering the above differences in values, it is evident that people are often influenced by secular value systems. This influence either dictates how we relate, or even how we act, not only in a specific situation, but also in our relationships toward others. These value systems either cause tremendous conflict, or are duly accepted by the other partner.

(f) Conflicting Needs and Personality Differences

All humans need their physical needs to be fulfilled, i.e., air, shelter, food, rest and freedom from pain. People also need their psychological needs met. They need to be loved, have security, and have their personal and interpersonal relational met. People also have their own personal needs and this will include the need to dominate, to control, to possess, to achieve, to help and also the need to rescue others. In the marriage relationship, Collins (1988: 412) states that, "If one spouse has a need to dominate while the other wants to be controlled, then there may be compatibility."

Another area of conflict is that of personal differences. Collins (1988: 412) elaborates:

When one spouse is open (Freely sharing about one's needs, temptations, attitudes, and feelings) but the other spouse tends to hold things in, these differences can create problems.

Collins (1988: 413) continues with this argument:

In one long-term study of several hundred marriages, researchers found that neurotic traits, especially impulsivity in the husband, frequently led to marital instability, distress and divorce.

From the above it is evident that the problems relating to conflict or personal differences are sure to arise in a premarital counselling session.

(g) Finances

The issue of finances is one of the most obvious conflict areas in marriage. In the marriage situation the following questions often arise: Who will control the finances? Will they be joint or individual accounts? Are the financial resources combined or separated? How will the money be spent? Will the couple work on a strict budget system?

Regarding such questions Collins (1988: 413) indicates the following:

Answers to questions like these reflect one's financial values and attitudes.

Many times in marriages, one finds that the husband and wife have different ideas of how the family finances are to be managed. This area will always be open to conflict and abuse if firm guidelines are not in place and adhered to. The couple comes into a marriage as one, but their finances are

divided. God always moves where unity is present, but, if there is disunity in any area of the marriage, harmony cannot be achieved.

4.4.2.4 External Pressures

Because human beings naturally have the ability to control and even at times dictate, external pressures on the marriage sometimes influence its joy and even the harmony.

Collins (1988: 413) points to the following six external pressures points in a marriage:

1. In-laws, who criticise, interfere or otherwise make demands on the couple.
2. Children, whose needs and presence often interfere with the depth and frequency of husband-wife contacts, and sometimes drive a wedge between the two spouses.
3. Friends, including opposite sex friends, who make time demands on the couple and sometimes involve one or both spouses in infidelity.
4. Crisis that disrupt family stability and create stress for all who are involved.
5. Vocational and career demands that put pressure on the husband and/or the wife create fatigue and take time from the marriage.
6. Financial reverses that put pressure on the family budget and lead to worry and sometimes disagreements about spending patterns.
7. Boredom puts pressure on a marriage.

Collins (1988: 413) gives a good description to what becomes evident when boredom sets in:

As years go by, husbands and wives settle into routines, get accustomed to each other, and sometimes slip into self-absorption, self-satisfaction, or self-pity, each of which can drain any remaining excitement from a marriage and make life boring. When marriage is dull and routine, couples sometimes begin to look elsewhere for variety and challenge.

From Collins' above comment it is evident that boredom creates marital tension and if problems exist in other areas it might drive the marriage into divorce as a means of escape.

It is clear from the above that couples should be careful to prevent external pressures from dictating the pattern of their relationship. Integrity obviously plays a tremendous role in a healthy marriage.

4.5 The prevention of marital problems in the context of the church

It is the author's contention that the Church of Jesus Christ should never relinquish its position as a pillar in the community, where people can come and meet with their Saviour. People see the Church as a safe refuge in times of trouble. Members and the community members should feel free to walk into the Church for solid Biblical wisdom, in all areas that life offers not only if their marriages are in question. Marriages should always be seen as top priority, since the unity of the family depends on the harmony and success of the marriage.

When couples understand the principles and purpose of the marriage, they have a better understanding of the requirements their commitment. In this regards, De Bruyn (1993: 172) indicates the three primary purposes of the marriage commitment:

- 1) To be each other's helper, 2) to have children and raise them, and 3) to form a stronghold against immorality.

Once these three purposes are fully understood, it is the task of the Church to assist in the education of their members in the prevention of marital problems. Even though teaching about these three primary purposes of marriage might appear to be a small subject, there is an urgent need for many different facets of this topic to be taught in the church situation. In particular, the Church needs to teach their members in accordance with the following guidelines:

4.4.1 A prevention rationale

A document issued by the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA Digest 1992: 50) encourages the development of the following mindset in the prevention of divorce:

The proper nurturing of the couple in the life of the congregation before and during marriage is a part of supporting Biblical faithfulness in marriage. The prevention of divorce is not only possible, but also probable when the problems, which lead to

divorce, are addressed and resolved in a Biblical manner at early stages of development.

The prevention rationale can be stated as follows: Putting out the spark before it becomes a raging fire, helps to develop a mindset within couples that prevention is better than cure. Ongoing encouragement from the pulpit and in study groups could help to eliminate any misunderstanding in the marriage and help with growth.

4.4.2. Prevention guidelines

The development of guidelines for the prevention of marital problems is a vast area that needs to be explored. Churches need to be actively involved in this area, out of a deep concern for people. In particular, the following groups need to be involved in an effective teaching programme: The Church, Para-church groups (home cells), debating groups and mini-topics in Sunday school classes. The following topics should be considered:

(a) Teaching of Biblical Principles

The Bible says, *“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. ‘Because you have rejected knowledge...’”* (Hos 4:6, NIV). It is evident from the high divorce rate amongst believers, that they lack solid Biblical teaching as to why God considers marriage to be a life-long commitment.

Collins (1988: 420) indicates what needs to be taught about marriage in the church and home situation:

Christians believe that God, who created both male and female and who initiated marriage, also has given guidelines for marriage in the passages of Scripture. These guidelines need to be taught clearly at home and Church and modelled constantly by Christian leaders.

Since Christians live in a society that encourages non-biblical values in all various facets of marriage, including sex, it is essential that Biblical values on these matters be constantly taught in the church context.

(b) The importance of Marriage, Enrichment and Commitment

In the area of marriage man needs to constantly spend time and effort to keep the excitement of marriage alive, always keeping God’s original plan in mind. This in turn helps to keep the fires of marriage burning strong and avoids boredom from raising its head. Three of life’s greatest pressures are constantly

challenging mankind: work, church and community demands, commitments, and responsibilities. The challenges and pressures that face people today place the family into a lesser priority. However, what needs to be remembered is that all marriages take time, constant effort, and solid commitment in order for them to grow strong.

(c) The importance of Marriage

In view of the importance of marriage Collins (1988: 420) advises the following:

Encourage people to make marriage a high priority item in terms of the expenditure of time and effort.

(d) Marriage enrichment

Collins (1988: 420-421) maintains that the following strategies would be helpful in the prevention of marital problems:

Marriage enrichment seminars can help and so can discussion groups, the reading of helpful books, videotape programs that discuss marriage, and Biblical sermons dealing with marriage... Try to stimulate couples to do things together and for each other. Help them establish priorities, work toward mutual goals, and think of ways to bring variety into their marriage.

4.4.3 Understanding Communication and Conflict Resolution

In the concluded survey of this study, "Poor quality and frequency of communication" was found to be the top pressure point. Nineteen of the thirty respondents identified with this all-important item. Lack of communication is not restricted to marriages, but is evident in all facets of life. As mentioned previously, this is a learned skill and not one that is acquired at birth.

(a) Communication:

Communication should not only be seen in terms of talking. Married people should be shown the importance of listening, self-disclosure, mutual acceptance and understanding. Collins (1988: 421) elaborates:

Empathy, warmth and genuineness do not need to be limited to counselling sessions. These attributes can be learned and practised in marriage and throughout the Church.

(b) Conflict Resolution:

Healthy communication never leads to conflict. When faced with communication that will cause damage and ill feelings the selection of words and mannerism plays a big part in avoiding conflict.

(c) Counselling may be needed from time to time

Most couples that are faced with pressing marital issues leave the counselling till the last minute. On many occasions the damage is irreparable, but on other occasions conflict resolution is favourable and reconciliation is easy. Many couples are reluctant to seek counsel as they may feel that with a little effort they can find the solution themselves. The Church needs to encourage couples with problems to attend marital counselling sessions. Some may feel embarrassed and others may regard it as an admission of failure.

People need to be encouraged that counselling is most effective when it is sought early. When the problems have grown out of proportion, the counsellor finds it difficult to help the couple reach compromising solutions. Often the damage has been done in more sensitive areas that might have direct bearing on the problem.

4.4.4 A premarital counselling strategy

Collins (1988: 402 – 404) provides the following guidelines for premarital counselling that could be beneficially used by the local church:

The premarital counselling sessions are designed as six one-hour sessions. The aim is to assist couples to understand God's original purpose for marriage and the meaning of the term covenant. Commitment is also discussed. The idea behind these sessions is to help individuals who are contemplating marriage to obtain better insight of the entire picture.

The sessions are designed for individuals, couples, and groups, to help them prepare for the building of happy, God honouring and fulfilling, successful marriages. The goals of the sessions are as follows:

- Assessing readiness for Marriage.
- Teaching the Biblical guidelines for Marriage.
- Guiding Self-Evaluation.
- Stimulating Effective Communication Skills.

- Providing Information.
- Planning the Wedding.

The format of each of the different sessions is indicated below:

Session 1

The aim of this session is to allow us to get acquainted with each other.

- Each person is encouraged to talk about him or herself. It does not matter who starts. This also acts as a good icebreaker.
- This is not a correction session; it is only a listening session. The counsellor takes notes whilst the couple is sharing, as these could prove valuable later on in the counselling session. The counsellor will have the opportunity to address problem areas, as and when the time arrives.
- Address a specific question to them. “**Why do you want to get married?**” Take specific note of their answers: Is it because of love, living together, sexual freedom, etc.?
- Ask them what they see as their expectations of marriage. Take specific note of their answers: Deal with them as they are pointed out.

Having obtained this information to start off with, the counsellor can now begin with the first session. The contents and target areas are as follows:

- Explain to them the purpose and goals of this type of counselling.
 - Awareness.
 - Understanding of the commitment.
 - Support for one another.
 - Love and its entire meaning.
 - Compatibility toward each other.
 - Trust.
- Its benefits
 - Life long security.
 - Support.
 - Trust.

- Its goals
- Counsellors normally give a specific task for them to do as homework. Normally they need to reflect on what was discussed and also do so to encourage healthy communication.
- Ask them about their relationship they have (individually) with the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Are they born-again?
 - Are they Spirit filled? (This is a good foundation to start off from).
 - Are they committed to any Church?
 - Is Christ going to be the central figure in their marriage?
 - Is He going to remain the central figure?
 - Are they going to build on that relationship in the future?
 - Do you pray together or as individuals?

Session 2

The purpose of this session is to help couples understand what the Bible says about marriage, headship and submission. The counsellor should familiarise himself/herself with what the Scripture states about these issues of marriage.

- Ask if there are any questions that they would like to discuss with reference to session 1. Try not to linger too long, but do not ignore important questions.
- Explain what a covenant is.
- Discuss Genesis 2:18-24 with them. Allow them to participate if they need to. This will allow them to understand the seriousness of the covenant relationship. Always stick to the topic. It is very easy to lose the impact and importance of this part of the relationship. The couple needs to understand what God expects from them in the marriage.
- Discuss the following topics with them:
 - Companionship (have a definition on hand).
 - Sexual union.
 - Child rearing.
 - God's relationship with His Church (we are the bride of Christ).
 - Discuss its permanence. Matthew 19:3-9.

- The Law of God as opposed to the Law of Moses (Deut 24:1-4).
- Be practical and at the same time specific.
- Try not to lecture them.
- Try not to preach salvation to the converted. Allow them to participate where needed. If committed they should know a certain amount about the subject. You need to do the following:
 - Get their observations, questions, if any, and discomforts.
 - Discuss headship and submission.
 - Homework: Meditate on what was discussed in the session.

Session 3

The purpose of this session is to deal with some of the practical day-to-day issues that arise. This is thought provoking, yet very relevant and should not be taken lightly.

Ask the counselees if there are any questions from the last session that they need to discuss.

Start the counselling session:

- What are the couple's expectations about marriage that a single life would not provide?
- How would one explain the differences between them?
- Are they the same? Gen. 2:24.
- How would you live with these differences?
- What will be the first thing to do when your first crises or difference of opinion arises?
 - Do you get into your car and race off, or
 - Do you communicate through the problem like adults, asking God for His wisdom? Prayer is important at this time.
 - How do your parents feel about the intended marriage?
 - How would each individual deal with his or her in-laws after the marriage?
 - Who would they consult in a crises situation?
 - Will the wife run back home to her family for advice? or

- Will the man run back to his family for advice?
- What are some of the bad qualities of the respective in-laws?
- What are some of the good qualities of the respective in-laws?
- When it comes to Christmas, where will you spend the day?

Their homework will be to meditate on what was said and reflect on possible actions to alleviate any possible stress between them.

Session 4

The purpose of this session is to deal with some of the practical day-to-day issues that arise.

The counselees should be asked if there are any questions that they need to discuss from the last session.

One can now start the counselling session:

Social:

- How do you feel about each other's friends?
- If you intend making friends after they are married, on what grounds will they be made?

Compatibility:

- Do you have the same interests?
- Do you enjoy the same type of recreation?
- Do you have the same hobbies?
- Where will you go on vacation?
- What is your stance on the boy's night out scenario, as well as the girl's night out?

Accommodation:

- Where will you live once you are married?
- Was this a joint decision?
- If furniture is not yet bought, how will you decide on these issues?

Finances:

- Who will run the financial aspect of the home?
- Will you be using a budget system?

- Will you pool your money, or work on separate budgets?
- What are your feelings regarding credit cards and a cheque account with an overdraft facility?
- How are your spending habits? Shop until you drop or conservative? There are two ways of looking at these aspects, “need to have” or “nice to have.”
- What is your attitude toward money and possessions?
- Do you place emphasis and value on your belongings? (Live with the Jones’ type attitude).

Family:

- What is your attitude toward children?
- Have you agreed on how many?
- Separation age of the children?
- Schooling. English or Afrikaans?
- Will you make provision for their future education?
- Home language

Their homework will be to reflect on what was discussed.

Session 5

The purpose of this session is to discuss the issues around the sexual union within the marriage relationship.

Ask the counselees if there are any questions that they need to discuss from the last session.

You can now continue with the counselling session:

- Ask the couple what are their views on the word “love”?
- **Eros love**: This is the love that is normally shown between married couples.
- **Agape love**: This is the love that is shown between God to man.
- Discuss with them 1Cor. 13:4-8.
- There is an urgent need for our marriages to be taken into the “*agape*” love (Self-sacrificial love).
- How do you view sex?

Sex was given to us by God for both people to enjoy. The couple should endeavour to fulfil each other's needs on every occasion. Selfish attitudes in this area will only bring unnecessary strain that will result in unnecessary marriage problems. Consider each other as we all have different needs.

- How would you stimulate your wife to orgasm?
- Do you know how to use a contraceptive?
- Discuss the different methods of having sexual intercourse.
- What will your expectations be on the honeymoon?
- The nature of the clitoris.
- The nature of the hymen.
- Different sexual timings of men and women, as well as the different phases.
- How to meet the different sexual needs of the man and the woman.
- Discuss the spiritual and moral interpretations of the sexual relationship in marriage.
- Do you have any fears or misconceptions about sex?
- Responsibilities of the sexual needs.
- Time is needed for a healthy sexual adjustment.

As a counsellor in this area you need to be well informed and comfortable in discussing these very important issues.

Session 6

The purpose of this session, is to discuss the wedding arrangements and if needed, the rehearsal times.

Ask the counsellees if there are any questions that they need to discuss from the last session.

You can now start your counselling:

- Discuss the dates and time of the wedding.
- The ceremony. This must be done without reciting the vows, as this might create confusion.
- The legal aspect of the wedding. This will be to look at the "Anti-nuptial Contract" or "Community of Property" aspect of the marriage.

- The reception.
- The cost. Utilising finances in other areas rather than on an elaborate reception.
- The honeymoon plans. Where will you spend it and what will the duration be?

This will conclude the six, one-hour sessions.

Arrange a follow-up meeting with them approximately three months after the wedding as a post marriage session.

Please note that all the above information is only a skeleton and will need to be taken into depth when counselling a prospective couple.

4.5 Pastoral counselling for couples with marital problems

What really becomes very disturbing is that many Churches have marriage licences, their pastors are Commissioners of Oath, but when asked if they have premarital counselling sessions in place, the answer is: No! The Church may marry the couples, but when problems occur, the pastor is nowhere to be found. This is extremely disturbing, considering the value that God places on marriages and the covenant commitment to the marriage.

The counsellor needs to understand the following about the couple:

4.5.1 Need for understanding the couple

The document issued by the PCA Digest (1992: 73) indicates that the following three important areas need to be clarified:

1. Knowing the times

PCA Digest (1992: 73) indicates that counsellors should be aware of the times we live in:

Marriages difficulties are a given. There is no way to escape them. Whenever two people (both have fallen natures) cohabit for any length of time, the negatives in each other's character will rise to the surface and cause conflict in the relationship.

Most of these factors are due to the decay within the family unit. If left unchecked this deterioration will continue and divorce will be inevitable.

2. Knowing the people

PCA Digest (1992: 56) encourages counsellors to get to know the people and the reasons why they want to get married:

Most people marry for the wrong reasons. They think it to be God’s will, but when the reason is analysed and compared with the Biblical reason for marriage, selfishness normally surfaces.

Most couples when asked the question on their reason for marriage, will identify with the term “lust” as opposed to love. Sexual freedom will then be the underlying commitment. In the PCA Digest Document (1992: 57) the writer contends that, “After two years saying, “I do”, when the emotional and sexual part of love has weaned, conflicts surface and character flaws are clearly seen.”

Comparing the findings of the survey conducted on the Bluff, Durban, four of the items identified in the PCA document, were also part of the top ten pressure points identified by the respondents of the survey. They were:

PCA Document	Survey conducted on the Bluff, Durban
Lack of communication.	Poor quality and frequency of communication.
Divergent personal growth patterns (i.e. selfishness).	Unrealistic expectations and unwillingness to compromise.
Sex, adultery, or lack of affection (i.e. sexual sin or failure to understand other’s sexuality).	Marital infidelity and lack of love and affection toward each other.
Money.	Serious financial strains.
Lack of understanding	<i>Not identified in the survey</i>

If these areas have been identified by two separate documents, then the counselling sessions of the Church would need to include these topics.

As the PCA Digest (1992: 57) states:

Complaints by husbands and wives against the other are universal.

The truth of this statement is evident from the table above. The complaints are common and are not only unique to one region, or nation; it is universal.

An interesting finding of this document, however, is the comparison of the major complaints of each sex (PCA Digest 1992: 57):

When the wife was asked she reported:

- a) Lack of leadership in the home
- b) No sensitivity
- c) No understanding of who we are
- d) Doesn't listen
- e) Takes me for granted
- f) Thinks he knows it all
- g) Not affectionate (only wants sex)

The husband revealed:

- a) Seeks to control the relationship (manipulation)
- b) Nags
- c) No understanding of who we are
- d) Lack of respect
- e) Demands too much
- f) Doesn't like sex

If any of these areas surface in a counselling session, they need to be addressed before they fester into greater conflict. If unattended, they will strain other areas, which will leave the couple with no alternative, but to divorce.

3. Knowing one's ministry

It has been found that about half of all damaged relationships will seek some sort of pastoral counselling. What is important, however, is that all pastors acquire the relevant knowledge when it comes to marriage counselling. Pastors often approach marriage counselling with deep wounds already inflicted on each member of the couple. People don't normally seek counsel during minor differences, but what has become evident is that most couples fail to identify their major problems. It becomes difficult when trying to resolve problems when the couple are facing crisis upon crisis. Pastors also need to devote long periods of time with couples, depending on the extent of the problems that need to be resolved. PCA Digest (1992: 75) concludes with this statement, "Pastors do need to recognise their limitations so that counselling doesn't overwhelm their other pastoral responsibilities."

4.5.2 A marital counselling strategy

The PCA Digest document (1992: 58-59) guidelines for marital counselling: provides the following:

1. Recognise the danger zones

What must always be remembered here is that a pastor should never counsel any female alone. Pastors have fallen into sexual sin because they have become involved with their female counselees. Here are some guidelines:

- a) Never counsel a female alone: Always have someone nearby, in another office, or preferably sitting in with you. The pastor's wife will be a good candidate for this protection. Counselling should be restricted to office hours only and by appointment.
- b) Driving with another woman in a car or having a meal at a restaurant could have negative implications. Remember, gossip spreads rapidly and the pastor's reputation is on the line.
- c) Females are emotional beings so the pastor will need to be aware of situations that will encourage involvement. The counsellee may become emotionally attracted to the pastor and vice versa. If this is detected then the pastor should use wisdom and refer the counsellee to another counsellor.
- d) Understand one's own hurts. Struggling with hurts of one's own, will not help in trying to solve another's problems.

2. Knowing when to refer

- a) The pastor's prime responsibility is to care for those the Lord has put under his charge.
- b) When the pastor feels that he is making no headway with the couple, he should then be responsible enough to refer the couple to another counsellor.
- c) When to refer:
 - i. If the issues are beyond the pastors capacity, or
 - ii. If the pastor is not trained fully in a particular area of ministry, or
 - iii. If the pastor is not able to sit through lengthy counselling sessions, where the other parts of the ministry are being neglected.

3. Referral list

- a) Meet with other counsellors in the area in order to find out if they are competent, have Biblical foundation, and if they are available to counsel if needed.
- b) Determine the specialised areas of each counsellor.
- c) Gather information from other pastors with regard to these counsellors, i.e. check their reputation.
- d) Most importantly, each Church should be training lay counsellors in most of the conflict areas.

4. List of all crisis intervention centres

- a) Understand the procedures of social services or abuse facilities in the area.
- b) Understand what the law has to say on issues such as, domestic abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, etc.

5. Availability of another person when a crisis should arise

6. Rules for the office

- a) Have regular times for counselling each week.
- b) Counselling after hours or on weekends should always include one's wife.
- c) Never counsel a female alone.
- d) Compile a form: have the couples fill in a form that is unique to the Church.
- e) Always supervise lay counsellors under one's care.

7. Counsellors must always be included in all Church activities, especially a small group and other Bible study groups.

4.5.3. Practical considerations

The PCA Digest document (1992: 59-60) provides the following valuable guidelines:

1. Monitor one's own marriage

- a) Continue dating one's wife.
- b) Spend time in meaningful conversation.
- c) Take trips together.
- d) Always receive criticism and change any negative habits.

- e) Seek counsel if needed.
2. Develop a lay counselling programme
- a) Select interested people to train them as lay counsellors.
 - b) Offer counselling courses each year.
 - c) Occasionally offer seminars that would deal with problematic and hurting marriages.
 - d) Have men disciple men and women disciple women.
3. Follow up with those that have been counselled
- a) Once the counsellee has been referred, the Church's ministry to that person never ceases until all is resolved.
 - b) The lay counsellors need to be in constant contact with the pastor, sharing their findings.
 - c) If at all possible keep sessions on tape in order to prevent legal action. Counsellees can turn your words so the necessary caution needs to be taken.
4. Start formal disciplines when appropriate
- This area will be dealt with in paragraph 4.6 of this chapter.
5. Institute family ministries
- a) Have yearly couples' retreats.
 - b) Have family retreats.
 - c) Sponsor family seminars and marriage workshops.
 - d) Have Sunday school classes on marriage and the role of the husband and wife.
 - e) Develop a premarital counselling program.

4.6 Disciplinary procedures for couples considering divorce

Disciplinary procedures and its process should be done strictly according to Biblical guidelines. If this area is done in a haphazard manner, it will cause even more damage. The Church, therefore, needs to exercise extreme care when disciplining Church members in various problem areas. Even more care should be taken with those who are not part of the Church membership, as it could be felt that the Church is a place of discipline and constant correction.

The main goal of discipline is acceptance and reconciliation. Without this, the person might feel empty and unloved. Jesus is in the healing, reconstruction and reconciliation ministry and He expects the same from His leaders.

To fully understand Biblical discipline, one first needs to consider all the relevant passages of Scripture. For example, Jesus' teaching on this very important topic forms part of the disciplinary/reconciliation dynamic. The passage is found in Matthew 5:21-26 and reads as follows:

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca, ' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Jay E. Adams (1973: 52) clarifies another Biblical principle in the disciplinary/reconciliation dynamic:

The next important step is the Biblical principle that provides a basis for hope by spelling out the Biblical dynamic that leads to change. The principle may be stated simply as follows: interpersonal problems between Christians must be solved.

Jay Adams (1973: 52) then indicates the Scripture, which describes the format of the disciplinary/reconciliation dynamic:

Perhaps the principle is best exemplified by the reconciliation/discipline dynamic. This dynamic is described in Matthew 18:15-20. The reconciliation/discipline dynamic puts an end to loose ends in Christian relationships.

This will be dealt with in greater detail in the next paragraph.

4.6.1 Disciplinary guidelines

Discipline should always be carried out in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20:

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along,

so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them (NIV).

Adams (1973: 53) elaborates on the following three steps in the process of discipline (“What if one of the parties refuses to be reconciled? Christ also anticipated this question in Matthew 18”):

1. The couple must then approach each other and try to reconcile their differences privately. Common ground needs to be established in order to rectify any future misunderstanding.
2. If all attempts have been made to rectify any differences, Jesus recommends that two others need to be called in, in order to help resolve any differences.

Adams (1973: 54) describes the two spoken of here as follows: “These others become arbiters or counsellors who then try to persuade the parties to be reconciled.” They share wisdom, which leads to reconciliation. The two parties, however, also need to work at the reconciliation process.

3. Adams (1973: 54) then clarifies the third step:
Reluctantly, if they have failed, at this point they become witnesses, and the whole matter must be brought officially before the Church. Then formal discipline must take place.

This is where the entire Church helps to bring about reconciliation. Jesus anticipated that on occasions members would not conform to any disciplinary process. He then prescribed the following procedure: “...*and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector*” (Matthew 18:17, NIV).

Adams (1973: 54) elaborates:

At this point the matter has moved over the line from mere reconciliation to formal discipline. But even the discipline has

reconciliation in view. Excommunication is not an end in itself, but at least temporarily, it settles matters.

By applying this formal discipline, it is hoped that the serious stance the Church has to take, would result in the two parties being reconciled and that repentance is offered to the Church and to each other.

Reconciliation and constant encouragement also helps. Paul gives excellent guidelines for the reconciliation process. Scriptures such as 1 Timothy 1:20, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 9, 11, and 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, also need to be utilised in the process.

4.6.2. The local church's responsibility

Adams (1973: 55) explains manner and purpose of the church's discipline:

Discipline must be carried out in a loving way; it is done to preserve the honour of God's Name, to ensure the purity of the Church (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7), and to reclaim and reconcile the offender. Unless all three of those elements are present, the discipline exercised is not Biblical.

Churches need to practice Biblical principles when they explain God's will to the people. Adams (1973: 55) elaborates: "It is not possible to seek the glory of God in discipline by failing to give heed to His aims and methods." The Church should not adopt the attitude of selfishly eliminating people as they wish, but it should encourage the process of reconciliation amongst the Body of Christ.

Finally, Churches should also ensure that the reconciliation/discipline dynamic provides great hope.

4.6.3 Guidelines for reconciliation

Reconciliation should be the highest priority that the Church should strive for in any counselling situation. There will be times that this will not be achieved, but Jesus gave the Church clear guidelines on how to perform this process. With the increase of divorce in South Africa, and especially within the Church of Jesus Christ, pastors are likely to be confronted by marital issues to an increasing extent.

The Biblical reconciliation dynamic is found in Matthew 18:15-20, and also forms part of the disciplinary procedures. When this dynamic is followed it usually leads to reconciliation. Adams (1973: 61) explains:

By following the reconciliation dynamic, hopefully there will be reconciliation in most cases. Whenever the principles of Biblical reconciliation are followed faithfully, discipline rarely reaches the highest level of excommunication.

It should be understood that reconciliation is not always achieved. If all the avenues have been tried, then excommunication will have to follow its course. In most of these cases when sin (adultery) is present, no solution will ever be achieved.

4.6.4 Formal disciplinary measures

Formal disciplinary measures were covered in paragraph 4.6.1 (See Matthew 18:15-20).

4.7 Pastoral counselling for pastors/elders seeking remarriage

Careful consideration needs to be exercised when a couple is seeking remarriage. Eldredge (2002: 135) elaborates: "The general rule is that you should not remarry if the vows of your marriage covenant have never been broken by sexual immorality or by desertion." What also needs to be remembered here is that the commandments of God or the teachings of Jesus on this particular subject were never intended to condemn mankind. Without Christ mankind is doomed already. The reason for these teaching was that humanity would know how to live more abundant lives:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10 NIV).

Eldredge (2002: 135) elaborates:

In our present time, any limitation of our right to remarry is sometimes considered to be a curse and not a blessing, but these restrictions were given to help prevent frivolous divorces and to restore troubled marriages.

To further this discussion, one would need to understand the reasons why people seek remarriage. In particular, the counsellor needs to understand the following about those seeking remarriage:

4.7.1 Understanding those seeking remarriage

The document issued by the PCA Digest (1992: 67) indicates that the following areas need to be clarified:

1. Know the times

The counsellor needs to take note of the times in which we live. He needs to understand what different cultures dictate, and identify what challenges these cultures face. Persons, who want to remarry, need to understand the consequences of their actions before making wrong decisions.

For example, people should be made aware of the following:

With first time marriages ending in divorce at a fifty percent (50%) rate and second marriages facing at a much higher rate, the Church cannot avoid the resulting issues and problems (PCA Digest 1992: 67).

Couples seeking remarriage are bound to approach the Church in order to facilitate the marriage ceremony. The pastor should be very cautious before agreeing to conduct the ceremony prior to spiritual guidance. Spiritual direction in the form of premarital counselling will need to be given in order to establish solid ground, on which the new couple can build their relationship.

2. Understand the couple

When those seeking remarriage approach the Church, the pastor should look out for any tension that might be evident as these can influence the marriage at a later stage. Other areas that need to be carefully considered are the emotional state of the couple, struggles that might be evident, anxiety within their speech, fear, anger, guilt that might have come from previous experiences, and stubbornness. The counsellor needs to look at the cognitive state of the couple, compatibility, etc. For example, what can be observed in their relational state?

3. Know the ministry

The pastor is the shepherd of his sheep and should know his flock:

As difficult as it may seem, the shepherd is to have an understanding of counselling his sheep. If he doesn't, he must seek training, and have others in his congregation aid in the shepherding (and train them), or refer to the people skilled in the field of counselling (The PCA Digest 1992: 69).

The pastor's main function is to equip the saints for ministry (Eph 4:12-13). With this training the counsellors will be equipped to make the Bible relevant to all who seek the necessary guidance, especially when seeking marriage and remarriage.

4.7.2 Guidelines for remarriage

All churches should establish guidelines for their own purpose. Any position that the church takes will clear up any confusion.

When a prospective couple approaches the Church for remarriage they could be handed a brochure on the guidelines for remarriage. Pastors should never haphazardly marry couples a second or third time just for the sake of marriage. Counselling and careful thought is essential.

Relevant questions that each of them needs to be asked are:

1. Is your former spouse deceased? (Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39).
2. Was the previous marriage annulled prior to the couple's conversion? (2 Corinthians 5:17).
 - Some questions that may arise from this question:
 - a) When considering the new birth spoken of in the above Scripture, is all sin forgiven and all condemnation removed? (Romans 8:1).
 - b) Does divorce before conversion prevent a remarriage of a Christian mate?
 - c) Is remarriage of the former spouse required after conversion?
 - Some questions arising from Jesus' ministry of reconciliation:
 - a) As disciples, should Christians not reflect His ministry?
 - b) Is repentance not adequate to receive forgiveness from past errors?
 - c) Shouldn't there be a healing of past hurts relating to the former spouse caused by ignorance?
3. The Church should establish whether the divorce occurred on Biblical grounds; then remarriage will be permitted for the party who was sinned against (Matthew 19:9).
4. The marriage of the former spouse will then be permitted if the other spouse has remarried, and only if the couple are both born-again.
5. If the Christian causes his or her marriage to end in divorce on non-Biblical grounds, the PCA Digest (1992: 71) document argues as follows:

“Remarriage may be permitted only if the former spouse has remarried or has died, and the future spouse is born-again.”

Pastors are also encouraged to have their own basic Biblical list of criteria when counselling those seeking remarriage. This list is, however, not exhaustive and many other areas can be explored.

4.7.3 Congregational involvement

Many questions surround the area of congregational involvement and the Church would do well in establishing foundational guidelines for this area of the ministry. The PCA Digest (1992: 71-72) offers the following suggestions:

1. Will the pastor allow a remarried couple to participate in the various ministries of Church activities?
2. Will the couple be restricted from holding leadership positions in the Church?
3. Will there be a stigma placed upon any divorced person?

These are very relevant questions, and pastors would do well in establishing clear guidelines where these issues are concerned.

4.7.4 Practical considerations for those seeking remarriage

It is always good ethics to encourage premarital counselling. Couples that are not open to any form of counselling should never be considered as candidates for Christian marriages. However, if the couple is open to premarital counselling, the PCA Document (1992: 72-74) indicates that the following question should be considered:

1. The discussion needs to be frank when discussing issues pertaining to previous marriages.
2. Discuss sexuality openly and honestly.
3. Temperaments and personalities need to be looked at.
4. The couple's Biblical responsibilities need to be considered.
5. The different kinds of love and their importance need to be taught.
6. Teaching the vows said at the wedding ceremony must be expounded on and understood by both parties.
7. The practice of communion needs to be taught to the couple.

8. Discuss the blending of the two families and the complication that may arise with the integration.
9. Reconciliation of hurts from previous marriages must be encouraged.

All areas need to be strictly dealt with and none overlooked. The welfare of the marriage hinges on the success of these important sessions.

4.8 Pastoral counselling for children of divorced leaders

Divorce normally has damaging effects on the children involved, as they are never consulted for their opinions; not that these opinions would have made any difference to the decisions made. Emotional scars sometimes run deep and are rooted within the child and can only be seen later on in their lives.

However, the children are important in any marriage. They at times feel responsible for their parents break-up and are sometimes never told the actual reason for the divorce. This no doubt leads to confusion and frustration.

The counsellor needs gain a better understanding of what the child is going through and what he/she is experiencing. The following aspects need to be explored:

4.8.1 Understanding the children

The PCA Digest document (1992: 75) provides the following statistics:

The single-parent family is the most rapidly growing family form in America. Since 1960 the female-headed family has doubled and is outgrowing the typical husband-wife family at a rate of two and a half times faster. Furthermore, it has been estimated that as many as fifty percent (50%) of all children born in the next ten years will experience the loss of a parent (mostly the father) through divorce. For most affected children, divorce will be experienced as a personal, familial, and socially accepted.

The survey conducted on the Bluff, Durban did not cover this area, as it concentrated on divorce amongst the church leadership core. Nevertheless, if these statistics are relevant in America, it could safely be said that it would be just as high in South Africa.

When premarital counselling for those seeking remarriage is considered, this should include what the couple sees as potential risks for the future where the children are concerned. The PCA document (1992: 75) indicates that, "Most remarriages have not given adequate consideration to the psychological, social,

or familial effects upon the children.” If it is felt that a child psychologist needs to be approached, then this should be encouraged.

1. Understanding of the people

Pastors should never fail to seek expert help with regard to children. If the pastor has been adequately trained in this area it would be to the Church’s advantage, but it is normally not the case.

As previously mentioned, the children have little or no say with regard to their parents divorce. But what always needs to be considered is the enormous hurt they experience. The PCA document (1992: 76) elaborates: “Studies are showing that the emotional scars from the trauma still remain years later.” The following are some reactions and feelings by children to the divorce of their parents (The PCA document 1992: 76-77):

- a) Resentment
- b) Anger
- c) Guilt
- d) Fear
- e) Depression
- f) Lack of love
- g) Loss
- h) Confusion being different

Many children experience isolation because they are from broken families even though their parents have remarried. These children on many occasions feel lonely and even helpless.

2. Understand the ministry:

In this regard, the PCA Digest document (1992: 78) recommends that the following programmes be introduced:

To help single parents and their children cope with their situation and to foster a better relationship for families of the remarried, the Church must provide services and programs that meet the special needs of children and the parents. Possible programs are single-parent support groups, children’s peer support groups, parenting classes, youth programs, counselling referrals, counselling programs, divorce recovery workshops, adult home Bible study groups and service-orientated projects.

Parents need to encourage single-parent families to get involved with these groups and programmes, as these social and physical activities can be very beneficial. Many single parents withdraw because they lack energy, motivation, etc. Remarried couples need to involve themselves with activities in the Church that could help to encourage them.

4.8.2 Considerations for counselling the children if the parent is seeking remarriage

Counselling in this area is of utmost importance. If these children have problems it could lead to complications later in life when the marriage is on a high note. The PCA Digest (1992: 78) recommends the following practical considerations for ministering to those contemplating remarriage when children are involved:

The parent/parents (if other children are involved from another marriage) should make a list of all the problems they think each child is experiencing at present as a result of the divorce, or loss of parent.

1. The parent/parents should make a list of what they could foresee as future conflicts that may result after the intended marriage.
2. The children may be required to meet with the pastor.
3. The parent/parents should encourage their children to get involved with the local youth group, including Sunday school.

These areas should never be overlooked, as they will help in the couple's relationship, if they have been worked through prior to the marriage, taking place. Tremendous joy, acceptance and harmony will take priority if these areas have been dealt with thoroughly.

4.9 The church's responsibility regarding the ordination of divorced ministers

Much confusion amongst Church leaders prevails in this area. The question that needs to be asked is: Should the Church show rejection, leading to demotion, if a leader re-marries after being caught up in a divorce that was not entirely his accountability? Many Church groups shun leaders that have been divorced whilst they are actively involved in the ministry.

The Bible states the following in this regard:

For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable (Romans 11:29 NIV).

The Church needs to remember that there is a process of discipline that needs to be followed that is clearly defined in Scripture. However, to pre-judge any situation without having prior knowledge of what actually happened, could cause the Church leaders to make bad decisions on tenuous ground.

4.9.1 Remarried Christians can be ordained

Eldredge (2002: 155) gives the following guidelines regarding remarried ministers:

Divorced and remarried ministers and leaders may be ordained into any ministry for which they are qualified. The requirement for a bishop, deacon, or elder to be 'the husband of one wife' was intended only to exclude from Church leadership those who continued to participate in polygamy.

It would seem incomprehensible for a leader, who had experienced the emotions of divorce, to be excluded from being ordained into ministry. However, it would depend on the grounds for divorce, whether or not it was Biblical.

Eldredge (2002: 155) explains:

...many Churches still do not allow divorced and remarried persons to be ordained into Christian ministry. They base their doctrine primarily upon the following letters written by the Apostle Paul to the Churches.

These reasons will be considered in the next paragraphs.

4.9.1.1 Reasoning of 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6

- *"Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife ..."* (1Tim 3:2 NIV).
- *"An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife..."* (Titus 1:6 NIV).

Because of the practice of polygamy in New Testament times, Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus gave strict instructions to the Church that their prospective leaders should not be involved in polygamy. This, however, had nothing to do with divorce and remarriage. This is still a common misunderstanding amongst Churches today, as they fail to interpret the Scriptures from a cultural perspective, and according to the meaning of the original Greek words used in the text.

Eldredge (2002: 159) explains why so many ministers have been refused ordination:

The discrimination against divorced and remarried people in ministry first began during the fourth century. At that time the newly formed Church hierarchy was very strongly influenced by various writers who believed, 1) that divorce was always a sin, 2) that remarriage after divorce was always a sin, and 3) that celibacy, was equated with greater spirituality.

It should, however, also be remembered, that divorce is not always a sin, as God Himself divorced Israel when they committed "*spiritual adultery*" (Jer 3:8). Remarriage is not a sin as Moses and Jesus allowed remarriage after the divorce that was caused by "*sexual immorality*" (Deut 24:1-2; Mt 5:32, 19:9).

4.9.1.2 Branded for life

Many Churches practise prejudice against those who have remarried. Eldredge (2002: 164) confirms this and indicates the dilemma of the divorced person:

No other sins, or presumed sins, carry stigmas that last for a lifetime. All of the other requirements for offices in the Church can be met with genuine repentance, but how can you repent of "being" a divorced person? You can repent of any sins that may have caused the divorce, but it is impossible to change what has already happened.

After Jesus' resurrection He tells His disciples: "*Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (Luke 24:46-47, NIV). The word "*remission*" literally means the "*complete removal*" or the "*sending away*" of sins. The writer of Hebrews 10:17 confirms this: "*Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more*" (NIV).

In conclusion, 1John 1:9 (NIV) is a Scripture, which finally seals the above argument: "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*"

4.9.2 Common reasons for refusing to ordain divorced ministers

Refusing to ordain divorced ministers is often done out of ignorance and misinterpretation of key passages in Scripture. The whole Bible needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting passages relating to divorce. Taking

a single passage out of context and forming a doctrine on this basis usually leads to theological errors and has harmful consequences.

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter attention was given to the main causes of marriage breakdowns, as revealed in the survey were looked into for more understanding. The findings of Gary Collins' were discussed comprehensively, which confirmed many of the findings of the survey on Chapter 3. Collins deals with the following areas of marital problems: faulty communication, over and under-integrated relationships, interpersonal tensions, including sex, roles within the marriage, inflexibility of either party, religion, values, conflicting needs of the couple, personality differences and finances. Other breakdown areas dealt with include: external pressures and boredom within the marriage.

In the church situation the prevention of divorce should receive the highest priority. The following Biblical guidelines were provided to raise awareness of the importance of marriage: 1) Teaching Biblical principles for marriage, 2) The importance of marriage, Enrichment and Commitment, and 3) Understanding of Communication and Conflict Resolution.

A six-session premarital counselling programme was discussed, which included: marriage benefits, goals, awareness of various pitfalls, and trust. Guidelines for marriage counselling were also provided for couples that were married without premarital counselling, and were now facing problems.

Disciplinary procedures for couples seeking divorce were discussed. In particular, guidelines were provided for the correct application discipline in accordance with principle suggested by Jesus mentioned in Matthew 18:15-20. It is the responsibility of the leadership of the church to effectively implement good, sound Biblical discipline, especially with regard to couples seeking divorce.

When dealing with this section, it was found that the couple seeking remarriage would need to be understood. A set of guidelines for counselling pastors/elders seeking remarriage was also discussed, including further referral and practical, everyday issues such as discipline. The pastor should detect any existing problem areas before allowing the marriage to continue.

The children of any second marriage play a significant part in the success of the marriage. The emotional scars that they need to deal with in the previous break-up, lingers on in their minds. The pastor needs to understand the children and be compassionate toward their feelings. Trust plays an important part in marriage, especially from the child's perspective.

Divorce and remarriage within the ranks of the Church has always been a point of contention. Understanding the original plan and purpose for marriage, helps people to make a sound decision when divorce is contemplated. Eldredge provides valuable insight into the reasons why remarriage is not allowed in the churches today. He uses the teachings of Jesus to reach his own conclusion: that remarriage should be allowed under certain conditions.

Lastly, guidelines were given regarding the responsibility of the church in the ordination of divorced and remarried leaders. In particular, two Scriptures dealing with the qualifications of leaders found in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, were found to shed light on the questions surrounding the "...*husband of one wife*" issue. The section concluded with common misconception of today's churches with regard to the ordination of leaders.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In the concluding chapter an attempt will be made to capture the findings and provide a summary of the entire study. This chapter will demonstrate that within the bounds of Scripture, God values marriage and that He has, on many occasions, given only one reason for divorce.

In addition, this chapter will indicate how this study contributes toward a specific area in Practical Theology. Recommendations based on the findings of the empirical data will also be provided.

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

It was found that within the ranks of the Church, the social issue of divorce has become a major concern. Once the problem was identified, and the initial statistics presented, a hypothesis was formulated, indicating a specific direction for the study. A Biblical exposition of Matthew 19:1-10 taking the context of the passage into consideration revealed the following:

1. The first question posed by the Pharisees regarding divorce, gave Jesus the opportunity to indicate God's original intention for marriage. He used Genesis 2:24 to clarify this matter and also to afford the correct insight into the way humans should view marriage (cf. section 2.4).
2. The verse Genesis 2:24 contains three important words/phrases, in which God define the ideal marriage union. The words, "leave, cleave and become one flesh," indicate that marriage is a covenant relationship, which is knitted together, and that the strength of the marriage is based on these three principles, with God at the centre (cf. section 2.4.2.2).
3. The nature of the marriage union was also considered. It was found that marriage is both a covenant and a commitment and that these characteristics serve as the cement that holds the relationship together. Marriage is also characterised by purity and holiness, and is always a monogamous union (cf. section 2.4.2.4).

4. The second question posed by the Pharisees regarding the motive for divorce, was an attempt to neutralise Jesus' reply, by implying that one could get divorced for almost any reason. However, Jesus indicates that they are blind to the motivation behind the teaching of Moses, failing to see that it was only a consent given by Moses. Jesus reveals that a certificate of divorce was given, because of the hardness of their hearts (cf. section 2.5.1.3).
5. The response to the second question takes Jesus to the only true and valid reason for divorce. The original Greek word used, was taken into consideration, so as not to misinterpret this important passage of Scripture. It was found that "*porneia*" fornication is the only valid reason for divorce (cf. section 2.5.2.2).
6. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, gives another reason for divorce, where "*desertion*" is evident, but strongly encourages reconciliation (cf. section 2.7.1.2).
7. The Scriptures - dealing with the qualifications for leadership found in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 - reveal that the, "...husband of one wife" simply means that "polygamous" married leaders should never be considered eligible for leadership positions, and that the practice of polygamy is strongly condemned.

Following the historical and Scriptural section (Chapter 2), an empirical survey was carried out to ascertain the perceptions of Church leaders in the Bluff area, Durban, regarding the main pressure points that are responsible for marital breakdown and divorce. The findings revealed the following:

1. The survey revealed that the following six major causes of marital breakdown were: Interpersonal issues, Spiritual issues, Ministry-related issues, Marital-issues, Personal issues and Practical issues (cf. section 3.5.3).
2. Most respondents felt that a "lack of communication" was the most important cause of major marital problems. They felt that "serious differences in spiritual commitment to Christ and His service" was another major factor in the eventual breakdown of marriages. It was also found that a "lack of sharing in the ministry" was another important

pressure point in a marriage, especially for those persons involved in church leadership positions, since sharing ministry tasks is much easier when both partners are committed to Christ. "Serious financial strains" was also found to be a major cause of divorce. However, the respondents did not select any other items under "Practical issues." Several respondents indicated that "marital infidelity," as a betrayal of the marriage relationship, was a major factor cause for divorce. It was found that "Personal issues" was not an important factor in the breakdown of marriages, since only a low percentage of the respondents selected items in this category (cf. 3.5.4).

In Chapter 4 the following specific counselling strategies were proposed as solutions to the problems revealed in the empirical survey:

1. The question that prompted this study was dealt with in the first section of Chapter 4. It was found that the whole issue of divorce revolves around Matthew 19:9, in which Jesus taught that the only valid reason for divorce is fornication (adultery) (cf. section 4.2.1.1).
2. According to Matthew 19:9, remarriage of leaders should then be confined to those cases, in which adultery was evident in the breakdown of the first marriage (cf. section 4.2.1.2).
3. The findings also identified various shortcomings in the marriage relationship. In particular, Collins provided several valuable counselling strategies for solving many of these pressing issues (cf. section 4.2.2.1).
4. Prevention methods were also proposed in order to curb the high rate of divorce amongst church leaders. It was evident that not enough consideration had been given to the couple prior to marriage. It was felt that premarital counselling would help to meet this need (cf. section 4.3).
5. Pastoral counselling methods were proposed, including suggestions on marital counselling (cf. section 4.4).
6. Another important area that was identified was the area of church discipline, especially with regard to divorce and remarriage. It was found that church discipline is often avoided and hardly ever discussed (cf. section 4.5).

7. Pastors and leaders seeking remarriage after divorce were the main inspiration behind including this section in Chapter 4. Those seeking remarriage after divorce revealed that on many occasions they had been misunderstood because of their intentions (cf. section 4.6).
8. Guidelines for the counselling of children involved in divorce were also provided (cf. section 4.7).
9. Finally, it was proposed that all church leaders, who have been caught up in the sting of divorce should never be treated as a pagan. God has a specific plan for each one of His children, even those who have been subjected to divorce. However, what should be kept in mind is Jesus' teaching on divorce (cf. section 4.8).

5.2 The contribution of the findings to Practical Theology

The area of marriage, divorce and remarriage is a vast area, and cannot be confined to this study alone. There are many other facets of marriage that need to be explored in order to give the Church a better understanding of how to identify and strengthen existing marriages. However, the findings of this research clearly indicate the major pressure points in the marriage relationship, and its implications for the Church as well as for Practical Theology, especially in the area of marriage counselling.

5.3 Recommendations to the Church

It is recommended that Churches should provide the following programmes:

Guidelines for programmes that teach the Biblical Principles of Marriage

1. Teaching Biblical principles of marriage will bring greater awareness.
2. God's views on the marriage covenant and its life-long commitment need to be enforced as a point of understanding.
3. Couples need to be taught God's requirements for the marriage relationship.
4. Churches need to prioritise teaching in the area of marriage in order to prevent divorces and promote stable relationships.

Guidelines for Marriage Enrichment programmes

1. Commitment and unity in marriage are very important in the sight of God.
2. Marriage enrichment seminars should be held on a regular basis.

3. Churches need to encourage these programmes, since a healthy family develops into a healthy Church.
4. Pastors need to encourage greater commitment from their church members, especially for those already in the marriage relationship.

Guidelines for programmes that teach principles of Communication and Conflict

Resolution:

1. Communication is one of the areas, in which most marriages fail.
2. Inviting married couples to social evenings, where communication is encouraged, is of utmost importance.
3. Churches should also promote communication by having tea/coffee after services to encourage people to stay behind and enjoy fellowship with others, but more important, with their spouses.

Guidelines for Marriage Counselling programmes

1. Couples constantly need to be encouraged to seek advice or counselling before problems get so out of hand, that they become difficult to repair.
2. Pastors need to adopt an open-door policy in order for people to have freedom and seek counsel without feeling intimidated.

The author of this study believes that the only valid reason for Divorce is when “*sexual immorality*” has been the major contributing factor in the breakdown of the marriage relationship. Jesus in Matthew 19:9 was specific about this issue and it is supported by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 in his writings to the Church. Paul also gives an additional reason for divorce, namely, “*desertion.*” In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul also encourages “*reconciliation*” to be a top priority as opposed to divorce. Concerning a leader that has inadvertently been caught up in Divorce, and where the other partner has committed sexual immorality, the leader (as the the innocent party) should then be free to accept ordination as a minister. The Church should not shut the door to such a candidate. What, however, should be encouraged, is that the person accept a period of restoration prior to his ordination. If, however, the church leader has already been ordained in the ministry, and has faced this same dilemma, the congregation should then be encouraged to help him through his period of restoration.

Appendices

Appendix 1

C. A. Du Plessis
PO Box 16150
Bluff, 4036
Date

Pastor/Reverend

Re: Questionnaire/Survey with regard to Divorce and Remarriage.

Dear

I greet you in the wonderful and marvellous Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My studies in theology have taken me in the direction of the various practical aspects relating to the workings of the ministry. Therefore, I felt the need to study a subject that is in these times affecting the Church more and more each day. The ministry is facing the pressures of worldly influences, as well as the various traditional understandings. As part of my MTh studies with SATS on the issue of Divorce and Remarriage, I am currently conducting a survey, which specifically deals with pressure points in a marriage as reasons why Church leaders get divorced. Because of the practical nature of this study it is important to collect empirical data in order to establish how different people interpret various aspects that relate to the given topic.

My gratitude is extended to you and your leadership in showing your willingness to participate in this survey, which includes the completion of a questionnaire. May the Lord richly bless you!

I shall personally deliver the questionnaires to your office on the appointed date as per our telephonic agreement. It would be greatly appreciated if you could arrange the following:

1. Please record and indicate to me the date when the initial leadership meeting took place, at which time the questionnaire was handed out to the various individuals (Church leaders).
2. Please request the Church leaders to return the questionnaires to you after fourteen days.
3. I shall personally collect them from you once all the questionnaires have been received, so that the data can be analysed and correlated.

Any further questions can be discussed with me directly.

Yours in Christ

Dickie Du Plessis (Pastor)

Appendix 2



SA THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

1 June 2006

SURVEY RELATING TO PRESSURE POINTS IN A MARRIAGE TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Pastor Dickie Du Plessis is presently involved in doing research towards his MTh degree under the South African Theological Seminary, entitled:

***Biblical guidelines for the counselling of pastors in the Bluff area,
Durban on Divorce and Remarriage with special reference to Matthew
19:1-10***

As part of his MTh studies with SATS on the issue of Divorce and Remarriage, he is currently conducting a survey, which specifically deals with pressure points in a marriage as reasons why Church leaders get divorced.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could assist him with his empirical research, by participating in the survey and encouraging your Church leaders to complete the Questionnaire (Sections 1 and 2) relating to pressure points in a marriage. It would make a large contribution towards the success of his research.

Kind regards,

Dr Noel B Woodbridge
MTh Supervisor
SA Theological Seminary
Bible-based, Christ-centred, Spirit-led

Skype Name: noelbwpretoria
email address: noelbw@telkomsa.net
Tel: 012-361-5319

Appendix 3

QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey amongst the Ministers and Church Leaders in The Bluff area, Durban on

The main reasons for divorce

Conducted by C. A. (Dickie) Du Plessis

In association with the South African Theological Seminary (SATS)

as part of a Master in Theology Thesis.

Surname:.....

Given Name:.....

Age:.....

Gender:.....

Church Name:.....

Position Held/Area of ministry (e.g. Youth Leader):.....

Marital Status:.....

Have you ever been divorced before?

Date or year of Ordination:.....(*Ministers only*)

How many times a year do you take leave?(*Ministers only*)

Do you take days off during the week?(*Ministers only*)

Secular Occupation (if any):.....(*Ministers only*)

Date (Completion of Questionnaire):.....

Please note:

- The answers reflected in this questionnaire are for research purposes only, and will be kept in strict confidence. To fully understand the complications that can arise from broken down marriages, surveys of this nature need to be conducted in order to identify where common weaknesses occur. As soon as the data has been analysed, all the questionnaires will be destroyed in order to ensure that the information reflected remains confidential.
- If you so wish, you could remain anonymous. Simply leave out your name, but fill in the rest of the data required.
- Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey.

Appendix 4

Instructions on how to complete the Questionnaire (Sections 1 and 2)

Pressure points in a marriage or reasons why Church leaders get divorced

Questionnaire (Section 1)

1. Select 10 out of the 30 pressure points in a marriage listed below, which, in your opinion, are the main reasons why Church leaders get divorced. When making your selection, please be as honest as possible.
2. Simply place a tick next to the 10 pressure points in a marriage or reasons for divorce, which you have selected (in the column marked, "Top Ten").

Questionnaire (Section 2)

1. Once you have selected what you regard as the 10 main pressure points in a marriage or reasons why Church leaders get divorced, please rank them in order of importance (1 to 10) in the spaces provided in the Questionnaire (Section 2). Remember that a number 1 ranking refers to the most important pressure point in a marriage or reason for divorce. Again, please be as honest as possible, and rely on your experience as a Church leader in placing the 10 selected pressure points in rank order.
2. Briefly explain in one or two sentences in the space provided in Column 3, why you believe it to be a major pressure point in a marriage or reason for divorce; if necessary, provide an example from your own experience as a Church leader.
3. Make a brief suggestion in the space provided in Column 4 regarding a possible solution (Biblical and/or practical). In other words: In your opinion, how could the problem of the pressure point in a marriage be solved?

Appendix 5

Questionnaire (Section1): Pressure points or reasons why Church leaders get divorced
Please select 10 out of the 30 pressure points in a marriage listed below, which, in your opinion, are the main reasons why Church leaders get divorced. Simply tick the 10 relevant boxes in the column marked, "Top 10."

	Personal issues	Top Ten
1	Incompatible personal or ministry goals.	
2	Spouse desires more freedom and independence (Unwillingness to submit).	
3	Spouse's improper behaviour (e.g., immorality, abuse, unhygienic habits)	
4	Refusal to sacrifice in the best interest of one's spouse.	
5	Unrealistic expectations and unwillingness to compromise.	
	Interpersonal issues	
6	Poor quality and frequency of communication (e.g., too much TV watching)	
7	Lack of companionship and togetherness (Selfishness).	
8	Unresolved conflicts over core values (Lack of understanding and forgiveness).	
9	Immaturity of one or both partners (Including excessive emotional baggage).	
10	Interfering relationships with other people (e.g., In-laws or close friends).	
	Practical issues	
11	Serious financial strains.	
12	Family pressures (e.g. misbehaviour of children).	
13	Physical illness in the family.	
14	Severe substance or alcohol abuse in the home.	
15	Spouse disregards responsibilities around the home.	
	Marital issues	
16	Lack of sexual intimacy and satisfaction (Sexual breakdown).	
17	Lack of love and affection toward each other.	
18	Marital infidelity (Sexual affair).	
19	Lack of commitment to stay married.	
20	Inability to trust spouse's fidelity.	
	Ministry-related issues	
21	Serious differences in doctrinal beliefs, values and practices.	
22	Ministry demands reduce time and enjoyment together (Fun and leisure)	
23	Lack of sharing in the ministry (Serving together).	
24	Lack of spouse's moral support in the ministry.	
25	Spouse obstructs personal development of leader's ministerial gift.	
	Spiritual issues	
26	Lack of family devotions (Bible readings and prayer).	
27	Lack of serving one another (A spirit of servanthood)	
28	Lack of praying together.	
29	Lack of spiritual growth and vitality.	
30	Serious differences in spiritual commitment to Christ and His service.	

Appendix 6

Questionnaire (Section 2): Pressure points or reasons why Church leaders get divorced

Rank your Top 10 pressure points in a marriage (that you selected in Section 1) in order of importance (1-10) in the spaces provided in Questionnaire (Section 2) below. Then answer the questions posed in Columns 3 and 4 (in one or two sentences) for each of the 10 pressure points (see example of pressure point no. 22 provided below).

The Top Ten items selected and ranked	Brief description of the pressure point in a marriage (as described in Section 1)	Briefly explain why you think that this is a major pressure point in a marriage; if necessary, provide an example from your experience as a Church leader.	What would you then propose as a possible solution to this problem?
<u>Example</u> Sixth No. 22	<i>Ministry demands reduce time and enjoyment together</i>	<i>As a church leader one often has to spend a vast amount of time and energy on members of the congregation to the detriment of one's family.</i>	<i>A good healthy balance between work and leisure needs to be established, as marriage is the first area under attack by the enemy.</i>
First			
Second			
Third			
Fourth			
Fifth			
Sixth			
Seventh			
Ninth			
Tenth			

Thank you for your participation in this survey. My prayer is that the Lord would bless you mightily, both in your marriage, and in your ministry; that through your ministry His Kingdom will be extended.

Dickie Du Plessis

Appendix 7

Data Capturing Form

Church	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
TGM (10)	3	2	1	1	6	5	5	2	3	4	1	1	1	2	5	6	4	2	4	1	4	6	1	1	2	3	1	2	5	
JLM (12)	2	4	5	10	9	9	3	4	3	7	2	5	2	1	7	2	2	4	2	5	5	4	2	1	5	6	6	5		
BFC (8)	1	3	1	2	5	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	5	3	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	
Total	6	7	9	2	18	19	16	7	7	5	13	4	1	9	7	8	18	9	5	6	5	12	13	7	6	5	10	8	11	12

Question No	Area	Total number	Rating	Percentage	Questions answered per area
1-5	Personal Issues	18	5	20.0	1
6-10	Interpersonal Issues	34	2	37.7	2
11-15	Practical Issues	13	6	14.4	1
16-20	Marital Issues	18	4	20.0	1
21-25	Ministry-Related Issues	25	3	27.7	2
26-30	Spiritual Issues	33	3	36.7	3

Church	Leaders	Forms received	Percentage	Leaders vs Members	Percentage Leaders per members
Trinity Gospel Ministries	12	10	83%	12 leaders @ 150 members	8%
Jesus Lives Ministries	12	12	100%	12 leaders @ 200 members	6%
Bluff Methodist Church	10	8	80%	10 leaders @ 200 members	5%

Total Churches that participated in survey: 3

Total questionnaires handed out to Churches: 34 total received back completed 30 which equated to an 88% rate for the survey.

Gender Participation: 13 males, 17 females.

Marital Participation: 25 married, 3 divorced and 2 widowed.

Top ten pressure points for this research will then be: 6;5;17;7;11;23;22;30;29;27

Appendix 8

Profiles of Pastors and Leaders of participating churches in the Bluff area

Pastor and Leadership of Trinity Gospel Ministries

Pastor Gary Charlton has been a friend of mine for approximately six years. His leadership comprises of twelve members and this includes the leader and his wife. His Church membership is approximately one hundred and fifty. A small family Church within the community of the Bluff, but one that is stable. TGM as it is commonly called is committed to the specific task that God has appointed it to accomplish. The Church is growing steadily, but obviously draws a particular type of person to its fellowship. Those within the greater structure seem to be content of what the Church is teaching, and the style of the ministry.

Pastor and Leadership of Jesus Life Ministries

Pastor Johan Marais has been involved in the Ministry for approximately 30 years. A student of the Dutch Reformed Church where he obtained his BA at University Port Elizabeth, BA (Hons) in Philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, as well as a B.Th. at the University of Stellenbosch. He was also ordained as a Dominee through the ranks of the Dutch Reformed denominational system. Later on he was drawn into the political arena under the banner of the, then National Party. After some years he again felt the call of God back to the ministry. Johan started the above Church out of the prompting of the Holy Spirit. His trust in God was prominent in his walk to such an extent that in two years the Church has grown to a healthy 200 members. This Church specifically caters for the Afrikaans speaking community of the Bluff, alongside the AGS Church. I have known Johan for approximately 18 years. His leadership comprises of twelve members. Johan has a very sensitive heart toward marriages and the effects that divorce has on the community as a whole. This gave me freedom to share some ideas with him and he encouraged me to complete this intended research.

Reverend and Leadership of The Bluff Methodist Church

Reverend David Schooling has only been on the Bluff for approximately one year. His predecessor Reverend Jeff Mills was known to me for approximately five years. David has a beautiful Church on the Bluff and caters for those

seeking that form of ministry. The total Church membership is around 200 members. He has ten members in his leadership team.

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