



The Harvester

*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*

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Must Widows Who Remarry, Only Marry Christians? (Part 2: Objections)

Brian R. Kenyon

Before answering a few of the objections this writer has come across concerning the view presented in Part 1 of this study (that “only in the Lord” means a widow is free to marry anyone who is Scripturally eligible), it must be emphasized again that the issue is not whether or not it is *better* for Christians, widows or not, to marry other Christians. Rather, the issue is whether or not it is *inherently sinful* for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. Given the application of God’s universal laws of marriage applied in Part 1, the view that all Christians must *always* marry other Christians—no matter what the circumstance—or they always sin is binding a law that God did not bind. This writer is hesitant in devoting so much space in answering the objections below because he does not want readers to think he promotes Christians marrying non-Christians as the ideal situation. However, in a study on the expediencies of marriage, a detailed analysis is of great value in order to guard against our binding what God has not bound. With this in mind, note five objections.

Old Covenant Law

Some object by making a faulty comparison with God’s covenant law under Judaism. They would argue that since God forbade Israel to marry outside their tribes (Deut. 7:3; Josh. 23:12; Ezr. 9:12), God likewise today does not allow His people to marry outside the church. On the surface, this may seem

reasonable. However, people must realize we are not under the old covenant (Rom. 10:3; Gal. 3:24-25; Col. 2:14). There are no explicit statements or examples under the new covenant that limit Christians to only marry other Christians. To be sure, there are certain statements that have a huge bearing on marriage (Mt. 6:33; Col. 3:1-2), but, again, the question is do these statements render a Christian marrying a non-Christian inherently sinful?

The “Knows Better” Assertion

Some may object by turning to James 4:17, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin,” and argue if a Christian “knows” it is better to marry a Christian, then he or she sins by marrying a non-Christian. To answer this objection, we must consider the total teaching of the Bible, especially as it relates to First Corinthians 7. In discussing whether or not fathers should allow their daughters to marry, Paul said, “So then he who gives



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her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better” (1 Cor. 7:38). Because of the circumstances particular to each case, which may override the generally preferred state of being single, either option is Scriptural. How would James 4:17 apply to this scenario? The first man would sin by not allowing his daughter to marry (1 Cor. 7:36), and the second man would sin by forcing his daughter to marry (1 Cor. 7:37)! Yes, it is sinful for a person to violate his or her conscience (Rom. 14:23 cf. Jas. 4:17), but what this objection fails to prove is should a Christian marrying a non-Christian always violate a person’s conscience? It begs the question by assuming that a Christian marrying a non-Christian is inherently sinful! James 4:17 is just as much applicable to marriage as is First Corinthians 7:2, 9, which authorize marriage in certain circumstances, even in a context where it is generally better for one not to marry (cf. 1 Cor. 7:26, 28, 38). It is not the case that either one passage or the others have to be obeyed. All these verses can (and must) be obeyed!

To further answer this objection, if a Christian marrying a non-Christian were inherently sinful under the new covenant, why then does the inspired record speak of Christians being married to non-Christians without inspired disapproval? In First Corinthians 7:12-15, Christians married to non-Christians were explicitly told to stay married! Even if the non-Christian leaves the marriage, the Christian was “not [to] divorce [put ... away, KJV] ... [nor] divorce [leave him,

KJV]” (1 Cor. 7:12-13)! Consider also the marriages in First Peter 3:1-6. Not only were these wives married to non-Christians, the original language suggests they were married to men who actively opposed Christianity, yet these wives were never told to repent of their marital status. Rather, they were told to behave in such a way so that their husbands, “without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives” (1 Pet. 3:1). Finally, consider Timothy’s mother, Eunice. She was a “Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek” (Acts 16:1), who obviously did not believe (Acts 16:3), yet Paul speaks highly of her “genuine faith” (2 Tim. 1:5). Would Paul commend the faith of a woman living in sin (if it were true that a Christian married to a non-Christian were inherently sinful)? Certainly not (cf. Rom. 6:1-2)! Most will try to harmonize the “marry only a Christian” view here by insisting these people were already married before they became Christians. While such may very well be true, where is the inspired statement that demands it? This also seems to involve begging the question!

A final answer to this objection is seen in the “marry only a Christian” view’s answer to the question, what must Christians married to non-Christian do to repent of their sin? Surprisingly, the answer

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would be simply to repent of the bad decision. Imagine that! To what other sinful lifestyle would that apply? Could a person repent of a homosexual or an adulterous marriage by simply repenting of, what amounts to, the wedding ceremony? Can a person in those marriages just repent of saying, “I do,” and continue in the relationship? Of course not! Proponents of the “marry only a Christian” view would respond that because the relationship is not based on adultery, repentance does not have to involve separation. They would further state that one need only repent of the disposition that led him to marry a non-Christian and then set his mind on seeking first the kingdom of God. Is there not a glaring flaw in this reasoning? If marrying a non-Christian inherently hinders a Christian’s ability to seek first the kingdom of God, then would not remaining married to a non-Christian inherently continue to hinder a Christian from seeking first the kingdom of God? If it does not, then why, again, is a Christian married to a non-Christian inherently sinful?

Original Language “Nonsense”

Some object to the use of the original language in Part 1 as it relates to First Corinthians 7:39. One brother states:

While it is good to know the Greek and to be able to use it correctly, the average man and woman in the pew know absolutely nothing about the language. ... To speak of an “adjectival phrase” and an “adverbial phrase” before most any audience is mystifying to them. One might as well be addressing them in Chinese. Many more do not know the difference in a verb and a noun, a preposition or a conjunction, to say nothing of a simple adjective or an adverb. The whole thing is sheer nonsense except in rare occasions. (Bruce R. Curd, *Marry Only in the Lord* [Marion, NC: Bruce R. Curd, 2002]. 242-243)

While it is true people do not have to know Greek in order to go to heaven, it sure does help in “rightly dividing [handling aright, ASV] the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Why would anyone be opposed to studying and applying the original language that God chose to communicate the New Testament? Could First Corinthians 7:39 be one of those “rare occasions” that applying the original language would not be considered “sheer nonsense”? Whatever a person’s view of using the original language, this writer’s conclusion in Part 1 is mainly supported by the context of First Corinthians 7 and the total teaching of the Bible. Such an attitude toward original lan-

guage studies as quoted above seems out of place among those who seek to know the truth.

The Volume Of Commentaries

Some might object by piling up commentaries, ancient and modern, and concluding that since all the commentaries in the stack, without exception, teach that the widow (and thus every Christian) must *always* marry only another Christian or else he or she sins, then it must be true. While no scholarship should ever flippantly be dismissed, it is not “scholarship,” in the final analysis, that determines truth. The overriding factor in determining truth is what harmonizes with the immediate and remote context of the Bible, regardless of what the commentaries say! For reasons given above, the position that states a Christian marrying a non-Christian is inherently sinful does not harmonize with First Corinthians 7 nor the total teaching of the Bible.

Paul’s Right To Marry “A Sister”

Some might object by referring to Paul’s statement that he had a right to “lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles” (1 Cor. 9:5). This statement, however, must be considered in the context of Paul’s right to be supported by the church as he labors in the gospel, though he did not exercise that right in Corinth. It would be inappropriate for the church to support a non-believing wife to labor in the gospel. Only the faithful can teach the faith faithfully! Again, it is best for a Christian to marry a faithful Christian when possible, but such may not always be possible, and marriage is better than some alternatives (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2, 9, 28, 38).

Conclusion

Marriage is an important subject and must be taken seriously. As we noted, Paul gave the general principles of marriage, including its intended permanency (1 Cor. 7:1-7), and, even though, because of the present distress, it was better not to marry in first century Corinth, expediency determined the exceptions to that general rule. Because a man and a woman have a Scriptural right to marry does not always mean that it is best to marry. More needs to be considered than just “loving” one another. Outward circumstances must also be factored into the decision (cf. 1 Cor. 7:26, 28). May we love God enough to do what is best according to his will, and may we likewise only bind where God has bound (Mt. 18:18)!

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Monday, January 19, 2026

What Is Evangelism?
Zackary Williams

The Gospel's Built-in Evangelistic Mechanisms
Aaron Cozort

Using Jesus... Model for Evangelism
Jason Ridgeway

Forum: Intentionality
Evangelism Must Be Deliberate
Cary Gillis

Evangelizing Different Ethnicities
Rico Brown

Evangelism Must Include Discipleship Training
James Colwell

Ladies Evangelistic Insights: Samaritan Woman
Kelcey Grimes

Q&A on Intentionality
4:30-5:00 - Alumni Reception - RSVP online

Teaching Belief in Evangelism
C. J. Grimes

Spiritual Renewal
Sidney Moore

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Jesus Must Be the Center of Evangelism
David Pharr

Is Salvation Outside of Christ or Only in Christ?
George F. Beals

Evangelizing Those Captured By Calvinism
Stephen Atnip

Forum: Importance of Local Church
The Strength of the "Jerusalem Model"
David Stearsman

Internal Local Church Evangelism
Dylan Johns

How Busy Preachers Can Still Evangelize
Hiram Kemp

Q&A on Importance of Local Church
4:30 Banquet - All welcome! RSVP online

Teaching Repentance in Evangelism
Kurtis Leaks

Jesus' "Make Disciples" Commission
Jimmy Clark

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Flipping the Script on Evangelism
Lance Mosher

Debunking Evangelism Stereotypes
Rick Kenyon

Evangelizing the "Unchurched...Atheist Types"
Jimmy Clark

Forum: Mobilizing the Membership
What Can Youth Do to Evangelize?
Ty Rhymes

What Can Elders Do to Evangelize?
Don Garner

What Can Families Do to Evangelize?
Byron Chapman

Ladies Evangelistic Insights: Tabitha & Lydia
Stephanie Kenyon

Q&A on Mobilizing the Membership
4:30 Dinner

Teaching Confession in Evangelism
Forest Antemasaris

Jesus' "Preach the Gospel" Commission
B.J. Clarke

Thursday, January 22, 2026

Using Technology in Evangelism
Joey Ferrell

Aquila's Role in Working with Priscilla
Steven Ford

The Soul's Value Is Worth...Training Evangelists
Chris Graham

Forum: Cultural Necessities
Evangelizing People with Addictions
James Eaves

Meeting People Where They Are
Lance Mosher

Using Social Media for Evangelism
Paul Mays

Ladies Evangelistic Insights from Priscilla
Carlisa Ford

Q&A on Cultural Necessities
4:30 Phoebe Group Fundraiser Dinner

Teaching the New Birth in Evangelism
Hiram Kemp

The Macedonian Call
Melvin Otey