

MUST THEY SEPARATE?

Gary McDade

One of the most emotionally stirring questions faced by Bible teachers is suggested in the title regarding the subject of marriage, unscriptural divorce, and remarriage. The following response to an article posted on the Getwell website was received via E-mail.

Attention: Brother Gary McDade

Dear brother in Christ,

I read your article "It Is Not Lawful For Thee To Have Her." Needless to say, it is a good article explaining the reasons why John the Baptist could not keep quiet about the personal and private lives of those in power in his day.

We here in this part of Mexico (the States of Durango and Zacatecas) and other parts as well have this problem. Many of the gospel preachers used to have a wife or a mistress before they were Christians. Later on when they were preaching [they] remarried again, as nobody told them they were wrong in doing so. Now, I have several questions to ask to you in this regard.

- 1. Do you think they are doing good? I mean,*
- 2. Is it lawful for them to preach while having another companion, even when some of them have raised children with their former wives, mistresses, or companions?*
- 3. They say they were pardoned of all their sins when they were baptized, and I believe they are right. But, can they scripturally continue living with their present "wives" or companions and still [continue] preaching the gospel? I do not think so. I do not think baptism sanctifies an anti-biblical relationship. What do you have to say in this regard?*

Sincerely, your brother in Christ,

Luis Arroyo

Brother Luis Arroyo and I share the same conviction on this point. Everyone, whether preachers or otherwise, must submit to the gospel of Christ in order to be saved. Romans 6:16 makes this clear, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." However, it was to the young

evangelist Timothy that Paul wrote, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (I Tim. 4:12). And, the life of a Bible teacher lived inconsistently with what the Bible teaches is the subject of inspiration in Romans 2:21-24, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.”

In light of Ezra 9:1-10:44 and Nehemiah 13:23-31, no one should consider the separation of unscripturally married couples unreasonable. Like Ezra the faithful of God today ought to say, “. . . O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens” (Ezra 9:6). Perhaps if preachers today stood up like Ezra did, the people would respond with similar determination to do the will of God. The Bible says, “And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do” (Ezra 10:10-12).