

TWO FELLOWS: EACH WITH HIS “ABSOLUTE ARGUMENT”  
(BUT WHICH SHALL I BELIEVE?)  
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One brother tells me that a faithful wife may put away her fornicator-husband provided that she beats him to the courthouse (legal process) to get the divorce. (Some may object to having their position described as one that requires one person to “beat” his mate to civil action. However, by equating biblical putting-away with civil divorce procedure, and then saying that no put-away person is authorized to marry another, this representation is valid.) But if he beats her to the courthouse, she may not. Why may she not repudiate the fornicator-husband to whom she is still bound by the marriage bond? The brother tells me: “Because she is a put-away woman.” “That is an absolute,” he says. He cites Lk. 16:18b for his proof. (Of course he doesn’t believe his own “absolute,” because he admits exceptions to it. For example, if the husband, who beats her to the courthouse, later dies, this put-away woman may remarry).

But, then comes along another brother with his “absolute.” He tells me that there is no divine permission for any remarriage at all for a married couple. I ask him why a faithful, innocent husband may not put away his fornicator-wife and remarry. He presents his “absolute,” saying that “if a husband puts away his wife and marries again he commits adultery, and that’s an absolute.” He cites Lk. 16:18a for his proof. “If he is a putting-away husband, he commits adultery if he marries again. So, there is no divine permission for any putting-away husband to ever remarry!” Well, I ask him, what if the husband has a case of fornication against his wife; may he divorce her and remarry? “No,” he responds, “because he is a putting-away husband, and Jesus says that he commits adultery if he marries again. There simply is no divine permission for remarriage, period!”

These two fellows leave me confused. Both cite their absolute but each one rejects the conclusion or position of the other. Kind of like the Mormon claiming that an angel spoke to Joseph Smith, and the Muslim claims the same thing for Mohammed, but each one rejects the claim of the other!

Now, which of the two “absolutes” that the two brethren present me am I to accept? Each fellow sets forth his absolute and tells me that the case is simple, easy to understand, Jesus said it, and it is still true

today as it was when Jesus spoke it, and that all they know is what the Scriptures say! (Does that sound familiar?)

Both brethren have created a classification of person, a box, if you will, into which they have cast their woman and the husband. (Bro. Joel Gwin in the Hopkinsville, KY debate of 2003 said that it is Jesus' box!). She is a put-away woman, and he is a putting-away husband. Neither may remarry, we are told, because of their being so classified. It is herein that these brethren make their mistake.

Jesus didn't classify anyone; what he did was give the consequences of a man putting away his wife for any cause, except fornication, and remarrying, and of a man who marries a woman so put-away, and that is adultery! The reason why such is so is not because of a man-made classification of person, but the simple fact that God does not release for repudiation and remarriage any spouse who does not have the divine cause for so doing.

Actually, in context, what Jesus states in Lk. 16:18, in both parts, is absolute. Where there is no cause of fornication for acting, no putting-away husband may remarry, and no man may marry such a put-away wife. That is absolutely true, with no exceptions, because absolutes don't and can't have exceptions!

Bro. Joel Gwin, in our debate in 2003 in Hopkinsville, KY, argued that Lk. 16:18b is absolute, but that 16:18a is not. He argued that there is an exception to Lk. 16:18a and so it is not an absolute, but, he claimed, there is no exception to part "b" of the passage. He gave Matt. 19:9a as his exception for part "a" of Lk. 16:18. No, what Matt. 19:9a says implies that if there is the cause of fornication for putting away a sinful wife, the husband does not commit adultery upon remarrying. But Lk. 16:18a does not treat of a case where there is a putting-away for fornication. If there is the cause of fornication upon which to act, the vow-keeping one, whether the husband or the wife, may exercise the divine right to repudiate and remarry. This is what is implied in the language of Matt. 19:9. What is implied in Matt. 19:9 is not an exception to either part "a" or part "b" of Lk. 16:18. Implied is that if there is fornication in evidence for the repudiation of a spouse, there is no adultery committed upon remarriage by the vow-keeping mate. (If Matt. 19:9 were an exception for Lk. 16:18 a, it also would be for 16:18b).

Brethren need to learn the simple lesson of both staying with the context and of not switching scenarios when dealing with the words of

Jesus. Otherwise, we will not be found rightly dividing the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15). Furthermore, when one of these zealots makes his case, in this current issue of putting-away, a matter of disfellowshipping, he makes himself a divisive brother and faces the Judgment with heresy against him (Gal. 5:20).