

or for Christians who are just personally convinced of the sinfulness of this practice, a more personal dilemma may surface. For example, what do you do if a friend or family member is involved in homosexuality, or if you are homosexual yourself? While this may seem like a daunting problem, especially for those involved, it must be remembered that, as for virtually every other transgression mentioned in the Bible, 1 John 1:9 applies: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Furthermore, as mentioned above, although Paul clearly condemned homosexuality in several of his letters, when writing to the Corinthians, he noted, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you.* But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Clearly, then, homosexuality is a sin that can be overcome. Fortunately, a number of ministries and other resources are available for those who are trying to break away from homosexuality.⁸³

SEPARATING WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER: DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

WHILE THE BEAUTY OF God's plan for marriage is plainly laid out in Scripture and many long to experience the kind of intimacy and love found only in biblical marriage, the sad reality is that marriage relationships are often broken and fall short of the biblical ideal. This is recognized in the Mosaic stipulations regarding divorce in the Old Testament (Deut. 24:1-4) and is acknowledged also in the New Testament. While both Jesus and Paul strongly upheld the biblical ideal of a lifelong, monogamous marriage relationship, both also addressed the possibility of divorce and remarriage. As will be seen below, however, while there is consensus that lifelong monogamous marriage is the ideal, there is no universal agreement among Bible-believing Christians on whether or not Scripture permits divorce and remarriage in certain circumstances.¹

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Before investigating the New Testament teaching on divorce and remarriage, it will be helpful to look briefly at the Old Testament background. The most important text, which, as will be seen below, featured prominently in Jesus' debate with the Pharisees on the subject, is the Mosaic provision for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.² As Jesus made clear, the passage should not be construed as a divine endorsement of the practice but reflects an effort to regulate and mitigate existing practices (Matt.