**Refuting Olan Hicks’ Position**

**On Divorce And Remarriage**

Like a lot of false teachers, Olan Hicks taught a person can divorce their scriptural spouse for a reason other than fornication and marry another, and stay in that second marriage with God’s approval. Our brother Hicks’ primary argument on Matthew 19:9a (“… Whosoever shall put away his wife, … and shall marry another, committeth adultery …”) can be seen in his book “What The Bible Says About Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage.” On page 177 he states the position he opposes this way – “The condition ‘shall marry another’ is seen as taking place in cohabitation, not at the point of the wedding ceremony.”

Mr. Hicks then is saying the adultery in this verse is divorcing and having a wedding ceremony (breaking the covenant by formalizing a second marriage contract), and has nothing to do with the sexual relations that follow the wedding ceremony. So according to Mr. Hicks, there is no ongoing sin, therefore a person can repent of the divorce and remarriage, and just stay in the second marriage he is in.

But consider I Corinthians 7:9b where Paul said “it is better to marry than to burn.” Does this verse mean having a “wedding ceremony” by itself will help stop lust? Or is Paul using the word "marry" to include the sexual relations led to and authorized by the wedding ceremony? Olan Hicks answers that question for us in his comments on I Corinthians 7:3-5,9 on pages 30,33,73 of the same book – “A marriage contract alone does not prevent fornication. … A healthy and satisfying sexual relationship does. … Thus the New Testament clearly pictures marriage as a deterrent to sexual temptation, … because marriage is the only context is which sexual activity is permitted. … But to those whose control of their natural passions depend on it, marriage is commanded on the basis … that “it is better to marry than to burn.” … This confirms the fact … that a marriage license alone does not prevent temptation. A healthy sex life does.” And again on page 141 of his debate with J.T. Smith – “I simply mean engage in all of the things that a marriage consists of, including sexual activity.”

What can we conclude from Mr. Hicks’ accurate statements? - that “marry” includes sexual relations in I Corinthians 7:9. And if in I Corinthians 7:9, why not the same in Matthew 19:9? In addition, consider three everyday illustrations: First Mr. Hicks states in his book – “If you can understand this: Whoever Aims Gun + Pulls Trigger = Commits Murder, Why can't you understand this?: Whoever Divorces + Remarries = Commits Adultery.” Now notice from even his own illustration that a man is guilty of murder if he aims the gun and pulls the trigger, and assuming what is implied - that the bullet strikes its target fatally. Likewise, a man commits adultery if he divorces and marries another, and assuming what is implied – the sexual consummation of the new marriage, something that happens about 99% of the time. Another illustration: “I am going into the house to take a shower.” Just because it is possible for a house not to have a bathroom, does that imply we don’t normally mean to include a bathroom when we say the word “house”? Of course not. One more illustration: “He that eats food receives nourishment.” Do we mean to exclude digesting the food, or is it included in the word eat? In the same way, the word “marry” includes the sex that follows under normal circumstances. Our brother Hicks admits that it does.

One final point: Luke 16:18b reads “... and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.” If a person commits adultery by divorcing and having a wedding ceremony only, and it has nothing to do with the sexual relations that follow, then why does the woman of Luke 16:18b commit adultery? She hasn't divorced anyone. She has been put away against her will. She hasn’t done a solitary thing wrong even according to our brother Hick’s position. The truth is, the man and the woman in the 'b' part of these verses commit adultery when they have sexual relations with each other because the woman is still "bound" (not married, but obligated) to her first husband (Romans 7:2-3). Meaning even after an unscriptural divorce, she is still obligated to remain sexually loyal to the original husband.

So what have we learned from Mr. Hicks’ own admissions and other? That the second marriage of Matthew 19:9 is adulterous because of the involved sexual relations (Hebrews 13:4 - adultery is something done in “bed”), therefore when a person repents of violating Matthew 19:9, such person is going to have to get out of the censored marriage; those unlawful sexual relations (adultery) must not continue (Romans 6:1ff).