

# “Spiritual Adultery”?

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Just when I think I have “heard it all,” something else comes along to prove that I had not. This is particularly true of the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The weird positions that have surfaced in recent years range everywhere from granting the fornicating spouse the right to remarry to redefining *adultery* as merely divorcing one’s mate, and **almost** everything imaginable in between.

I now find that I underestimated the fertility of the human mind for giving birth to novel doctrines to justify ungodly behavior. A brother (once a preacher) is now justifying divorcing his wife on grounds of “spiritual adultery” (translation: she did not support him in his work and in other ways was not spiritually strong). Surely, a preacher’s greatest asset is a wife who will faithfully support his work. Indeed, **every** Christian should faithfully support the kingdom in every way. However, it is all but incredible that one (a preacher, even) would use spiritual weakness (granting its existence) as Scriptural grounds for divorce (and likely for remarriage as well).

This brother bases his “spiritual adultery” premise upon Israel’s numerous Old Testament lapses into idolatry. Clearly, God’s prophets called such “adultery” (Jer. 3:8; Eze. 23:37ff). *Spiritual adultery* aptly describes their practice since it involved a “spiritual” union with illicit partners (idols). However, it is quite a different matter to use such as a pretext for divorcing one’s mate.

Note the following about this perverted position:

1. The “spiritual adultery” applied only to the “spiritual union” between God and Israel (they were figuratively likened unto a husband and wife, respectively).
2. A Christian has no right to divorce his/her **unbelieving** mate merely on the grounds that she/he is an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:13-14). It follows therefore that a lack of spirituality in one’s **Christian** mate is by no means a ground for divorce.
3. The “fornication” which Jesus allowed as the **only** ground of divorce and remarriage (Mat. 5:32; 19:9) refers **only** to literal, physical sexual sin, not to a subjective judgment of something alleged to be a modern form of “spiritual adultery.”

This brother has a bad case of “loopholeitis” – he is looking for a “loophole” in God’s marriage law. We cannot restrain him from doing what he wants to do, but he should not try to justify it with such a ridiculous excuse as this, pretending that it is thereby Scripturally

sanctioned. I do not know about this man's wife, but for sure, one who would concoct such a bizarre theory as this is guilty of "spiritual adultery."

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, September 7, 2014, of which I was editor.]

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