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**Family Law**

**By Johnette Duff**

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A frustrating lack of permanence plagues modern relationships. Approximately one of every two marriages ends in divorce and the average length of a marriage before divorce is only five years. Many couples today chose cohabitation over traditional marriage. What happened to the idealized family depicted in Father Knows Best, Leave it To Beaver, The Donna Reed Show and Ozzie and Harriet?

No simple answer exists to this question: our intimate relationships have been affected by the industrialization of society, urbanization, continued changes in the traditional roles of the sexes and greater economic independence for women, a rise in the percentage of the population pursuing a college education, a lessening of social pressure against couples who cohabit, the recognition of legal rights for illegitimate children, a decreasing birth rate, improved birth control methods and a longer life expectancy. All these factors contribute to our alarming divorce rate.

Is it any wonder the state ( literally, the state you live in and as, generically, any form of government) must pass laws that affect our personal relationships as we struggle for answers?

You can take opposing views of the laws in our country. One argument is that they protect society and its members, but the flip side contends they are a means of oppression. The laws that impact our intimate relationships are not necessarily harmful or intrusive in and of themselves. However, forming a relationship without a working knowledge of these laws and without considering all the ramifications can lead to situations where the end result is both.

The state's role in romantic relationships has often been justified by "public policy" interests. The term "public policy," though vague, is used to justify laws or actions that would injure the public welfare or be contrary to public decency, sound policy and good morals.

## Family Law

Understanding the necessity of laws that impact on our personal relationships starts with the recognition that our society is not the first to regulate love and the law. The efforts of governments throughout history to control the couplings of its citizens illustrates why and how our own laws were created and why and how, inevitably, they will adapt as society changes.

The one form of marriage permitted under our laws is the only option for couples who want a legal relationship. Happily, the single status is only a temporary situation for most Americans. Few will stop looking for love, trust, companionship and sexual and emotional fulfillment with another person. However, couples wanting to remarry, parents with ready-made families, couples over 65 looking for companionship without legal complications, all seek answers from the same legal relationship.

Although divorce laws have undergone radical changes in our lifetimes, the marriage laws have remained relatively static. Unfortunately, because couples considering marriage have many different needs, it is not uncommon for the laws that govern marriage to conflict with these needs. Too often, couples learn too late that financial penalties come attached to the marriage license. Marriage may be

the only means of forming a legal and financial relationship under the law but, for many, legal marriage simply implies that they must suffer penalties to legalize their relationship.

As traditional marriage has proven less and less capable of living up to its potential in our society, alternatives such as unmarried cohabitation have arisen. The increase in couples who choose to cohabit can be traced to the fact that the marriage laws are not meeting the needs of these citizens in forming their personal relationships. Although there are a variety of reasons why couples choose to "just live together," financial disadvantages are a major factor.

If you are previously married and considering a remarriage, you know that the older bride or groom has different needs than the young couple entering a first marriage. The responsibilities and obligations from prior marriages, particularly when children are involved, cannot be ignored. Men and women over fifty who have minor children fight the same uphill battle as younger couples do in defining and fulfilling their obligations of visitation, custody, support, and inheritance. These problems create stress for the old family, as well as the new, upon remarriage.

Even without children, it is possible that obligations to former spouses can impact a new marriage. Older couples must consider the potential loss of private pensions, alimony, social security benefits or tax advantages because of a remarriage. Also important is the issue of inheritance of assets that may have taken a lifetime to accumulate. Older couples may want to limit their financial obligations to each other in the areas of support, medical costs, insurance, and pension benefits.

If you are a refugee from the marital wars, you learned the hard way about precautions that could have been taken the first time and should be taken the next. The happily married couple doesn't need to learn from experience; they, too, can benefit from the information in this book. If you are one of the lucky couples who has beat the odds and stayed married, we want to show you how to continue to protect and preserve your relationship...and your money. Check out

to discover

what you need to know about your relationship.

Ms. Duff has been featured on Today, Good Morning America, in The Wall Street Journal, Self, New Woman, Smart Money and Modern Maturity and has been a guest on hundreds of radio talk shows.

## **Christ and Covenant**

**By Aleck Cartwright**

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The Covenant and Christ

All are under sin, whether under the law or barbarians, and apart from the Law we are all in need of righteousness. Not one of us can stand before God righteous apart from Christ in us as our righteousness. God does have a covenant with Israel as His chosen race and we as believers are grafted onto the chosen race by grace. This is where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free for we are all in Christ, and there is a level playing field for all mankind who are made partakers of divine nature.

We as Gentiles never become Jews, except in the spiritual sense we become circumcised in our hearts having the law of God written on our hearts and in our minds. In Christ we realise the fulfillment of the law in our lives. We cannot attain to it and neither can the Jew, so whether we are under the law or not, we are all facing the wrath of God towards sin. Where God will judge us for what we have done according to Paul's gospel, which is Christ in us, the hope of Glory.

We as gentiles do by nature that which is required by the law because we have Christ the fulfillment of the Law at work within us. What a wonderful position to be in before God. Israel is still God's chosen people and as such they have the protection and covenant of God.

Sin is what all men have and righteousness is what all men need.

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Aleck is a missionary and author, to learn more go to [www.god-life.com](http://www.god-life.com).

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