

God's Plan for Marriage

We live in a society where the understanding of marriage has become all but lost amid various personal explanations. There is therefore a need to have a deeper discussion in the family, so to speak—the Christian family. In the midst of widespread confusion regarding the definition of marriage, it's easy to lose sight of what we believe. We have been blessed with the truths revealed to us in God's Word. The Scriptures generally, and Jesus in particular, teach us truths about marriage that we could ever figure out by human reason alone.

The first thing we need to understand is that in the Bible; marriage is a central theme of God's Word. In the beginning, the account of creation climaxes with the creation of Eve, the Bride, in Genesis 2:18-22, followed by Adam's "wedding vows" in Gen 2:23, forming the first marriage ever and establishing the pattern of marriage for the rest of human history.(Gen 2:24) In the middle of the Bible we find the Song of Songs, the love poem in the Bible. This book through images and descriptions, describes the relationship between the Messiah ie Christ and people of God as a courtship and marriage based on love.(Song 8:6) And the prophets describe God's relationship to Israel as a marriage. At the end of the Bible all of human history comes to an end with the announcement of the "wedding feast of the Lamb"(Rev19:7), followed by the revelation of the "Bride of the Lamb" who comes out of heaven from God (Rev21:2), is the Church triumphant, pictured as the New Jerusalem. Scripture's final words are an invitation from the "Spirit and the Bride" to "come" to the wedding feast.(Rev 22:17) And the Bible ends with marriage and Jesus tells parables portraying himself as a Bridegroom come to wed his Bride(Mat22:1-14;25:1-13)

Marriage is a covenant between a man, a woman, and God. But the procedure, in order to be valid, must be consistent with divine law. A "covenant" is the extension of kinship by oath. In other words, it's a way of swearing someone into your family. God offering covenants to mankind, because God is always inviting us to become his family. Jesus came to make the New Covenant, where we become God's family by ingesting his flesh and blood, so becoming the very "flesh and blood" of God, members of his family. Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman. It symbolizes the covenant between God and his people. Marriage is celebrated by two persons becoming one flesh in the marriage. The New Covenant is celebrated by God's people becoming "one flesh" with Christ. Marriage has to be lifelong, and to one person, because it is a holy icon of the relationship between God and his people. God is always faithful to his people. He is wedded to one Body, which is the Church ([Eph 5](#))

Marriage is tied up with what it means that human beings are "made in the image of God." Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, Genesis 1:27 describes it this way: "So God created the man in his own image, in the image of God he created *him*; male and female he created *them*." God created *Adam*; but as both *male* and *female* he created *them*. How can the one be two and the two one? The answer comes at Genesis 2:18, 24: For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Notice that being created male and female is united to being created "in the image of God." Both maleness and femaleness have their role in imaging God. The Bible teaches Adam and Eve, as husband and wife, were created in the image of God and, therefore, were meant to bear God's image—to be in his likeness. Marriage was meant to model and display God's glory to all of creation. Husband and wife image God by representing his permanent, exclusive covenant relationship with his people. Marriage demonstrates two individual people becoming "one" for the rest of their lives while maintaining their individuality. God planned for marriage to be a life-giving relationship. With this understanding, the couple sees the need to pray together, to seek God's will in their lives at every turn, and to find ways in which they can draw closer to each other while also drawing closer to God—thereby entering into the union of God's love for humanity.

When God made man and woman in his image, there was meant to be order in the relationship. 1Corinthians 11:3 says: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" In the same way that the head of Christ is God, so the head of the wife is man. God made the husband and wife relationship to mirror the God specifically in the area of authority. Therefore Ephesians 5:24 calls for wives to submit to their husbands in everything. It's just that the defining characteristic of wife submits to the husband and the husband loves his wife. This is part of the way we see the image of God in the marriage relationship. Ephesians 5:25 gives us a picture of what the husband's love should look like. It should reflect Christ. The husband is called to love his wife as Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He died for her, and he also teaches her the Word of God. The husband must love his wife sacrificially and lead his wife spiritually. In Christian marriage, a husband should makes daily sacrifices for his wife and actively leads the home spiritually. The wife honors him as her head and submits to him in everything.(Colossians 3:18)

Marriage should demonstrate the perfect love and submission in the God. It should also reflect the perfect sacrificial love of Christ for the church and the church's submission to Christ. People should be encouraged and challenged by watching a godly marriage. They should see something of the glory and the greatness of God. Therefore, when a marriage is not functioning correctly, it displays a marred image of God and distorts its anticipated message. With so many marriages ending in divorce or continuing in disarray, the glory of God has been greatly dimmed. It is no surprise that so many people doubt God's existence or are falling away from him. The light in marriages has often become darkness, which in turn pushes people away from God. In marriage, it should be our desire to reflect God and bring glory to him since that was his original plan.

Raise Godly Children: God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Genesis 1:28. Raising children was considered the pinnacle of marriage and revered by all. However, when a couple give up the prospect of having children for job, hobbies, freedom, etc., they are missing out on one of the awesome desires of God for marriage. "Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.(Malachi 2:15) This passage clarifies God's command for people to be fruitful and multiply. It is not just children He wants but godly children. He wants children who are holy and driven to see the kingdom of God. A home sanctified by marriage affords the ideal environment for the rearing of children. One of the parents' highest purposes is to teach their children the Bible, to help them grow in character, help them find their spiritual gifts and calling in serving the Lord. Having children should be considered as a way of obeying God and building his kingdom. We should pray about it, plan for it as we do with any ministry.

Establish and Build His Kingdom: God blessed them and said to them... fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.(Genesis 1:28) After telling Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, God told them to subdue and rule over the earth. They were to be co-rulers over his creation and to be stewards of it. This is expanded in marriage described as a spiritual gift given to build up the body of Christ and to advance his kingdom. They build the kingdom through raising godly seed, corporate prayer, service to God's church, and evangelism of the world. Each couple must discern the way God has uniquely called them to build his kingdom. How is God calling you to uniquely build his kingdom?

Companionship: The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'(Genesis 2:18) God has put an innate desire in mankind for intimate companionship. Companionship requires that marriage be a permanent relationship. Your partner is with you for life. One man, one woman, for life--that's God's design. "Cleave" means to cling to. It means to be joined to something--so when you get married, you're fixed! After Jesus quoted this verse, He added, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt. 19:6). This means that the marriage relationship must be built primarily on commitment. It is a covenant before God.(Mal. 2:14; Prov.2:17) Commitment is what will hold a couple together through the difficulties that invariably come. A Christian couple should never use the threat of divorce as leverage in a conflict. Solomon gave several reasons that companionship is good. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Solomon said that a companion is helpful when one falls down because a friend can help him up. Life has many ups, downs, discouragements, trials, and even mountain-top experiences. A good spouse will speak words of encouragement and faith to her mate, enabling him to get up when he has fallen down. She will make him strong when he is weak and vice versa.

Marriages that are not functioning properly will actually wear one another down instead of building one another up. Be careful to never speak words of discouragement over your spouse. Decide to always speak gracious words over their lives to edify them, Ephesians 4:29 Marriage also has many other practical benefits such as keeping oneself warm and providing for daily needs, but one of the greatest benefits is *protection*. Solomon said two can defend themselves (Ecc 4:12). This is especially important in a Christian marriage because of the attacks of the enemy in spiritual warfare. Satan realizes the tremendous potential in every marriage, and consequently, he always attacks them. Expect warfare in marriage. Satan will do everything he can to keep a couple out of the Word of God, out of prayer, away from commitment to the church, and fighting with one another. He does this because he realizes that two people unified and on fire for the kingdom of God. Therefore, it is important for couples to use their spiritual weapons to protect one another. These weapons are praying over one another daily, consistent Bible reading, speaking the Word of God over one another, commitment in serving the body of Christ.

Married couple to Make a New Family Unit: For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.(Genesis 2:24) After God made a woman for Adam, he said that a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. This means that in marriage, a couple is starting a new family unit. This does not mean that they are no longer their parents' children, but it does mean that the priorities of a man and woman have changed. Their priority must now be their marriage. This is very important because one of the top reasons for divorce is in-laws. Married couples must be very careful of this. They are always called to honor their parents and even care for them in old age (1 Tim 5:4, 8), but they must honor their spouse first. The fact that a man is called to leave his father's house also implies that he must be able to support himself and his new wife financially. Couples should consider if they are ready to leave their families and cleave to their mate and also if they are ready to make their mate their primary focus after God.

Let us always remember God's plans for the marriage union so that we can honor them and fulfill God's purposes. If you're single, and content to remain single, "and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.(Mathew 19:12) then use your single state to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord and His work.(1 Cor. 7:35) If you're single, but desire to be married, Be growing in godliness and purity and look for a mate who is committed to do the same. Your lifelong relationship must be centered on God, so that it will reflect to the world a picture of Christ and the church. If you're married, Are you growing deeper in companionship with your mate? Is your marriage relationship growing in the way it reflects Christ and the Church.

God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden as the first married couple. Marriage is ordained and established by God. For a marriage to be happy and successful for life, the husband and wife must include God as a partner in their marriage. They must acknowledge God as Supreme in their lives and together yield to what God instructs in the Bible about marriage. (Malachi 2:14) Marriage is a covenant that includes God! Keep Christ in the centre of your home. This is the greatest rule. It really covers all the others. Put Christ first, hearts be filled with Christ's love. With Lord Jesus Christ in your hearts and home, marriage will be successful.

Continue your courtship: Continue the considerations of engagement in your married life. Successful marriages do not just happen they must be developed. Keep love growing by expressing love for one another or it will die, and you will drift apart. So spend as much time as possible doing things together if you would get along well. Learn to greet each other with enthusiasm. Given a chance, love always wins. Beyond the romance, the marriage relationship should also be a close and growing friendship. "Enjoying your spouse as both friend and marriage partner will help override many marital disagreements, whether financial or social. Couples who remain in love almost inevitably must also be good friends. They will share the ups and downs that are common within the marriage relationship. True love will want to give and serve the other, regard for the desires of your spouse. A husband should treat his wife like his queen, and a wife should treat her husband as her knight in shining armor.

Establish your own private home: A place the angels of heaven enjoy visiting. A married couple must leave father and mother and establish their own home. Remember that God joined you together in marriage. Matthew 19:5, 6. The marriage union was intended to be a lifelong arrangement. Husband and wife are to "cleave" to one another (Gen. 2:24). Jesus emphasized that what God "hath joined together" man is not to separate (Mt. 19:6), because, ideally, the husband and wife are bound together by law until the death of one of these parties (Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39)

Guard your thoughts: Don't let your senses trap you. The wrong kind of thinking can destroy your marriage. The devil will trap you with thoughts like these: "Our marriage was a mistake." Stop thinking thoughts like these.

Never retire for the night angry with each other: To remain angry and upset over hurts and grievances is exceedingly dangerous. (Ephesians 4:26) This is why God says to let anger cool before retiring at night. Be big enough to forgive and to say with honesty, "I'm sorry." After all, no one is perfect, and you are both on the same team.

Pray together: Kneel before God and ask Him for true love for one another, for forgiveness for strength, for wisdom--for the solution to problems. No family ever breaks up while sincerely praying together for God's help.

Forgiveness is always better than divorce: Agree that divorce is not the answer even in the case of a moral fall. The ties of marriage are meant to be permanent and enduring. Divorce is permissible only in the case of adultery. Thoughts of divorce as a solution will destroy any marriage. This is one reason Jesus ruled it out. Divorce is always destructive and almost never a solution to the problem. "I hate divorce," says the Lord (Malachi 2:16)

Keep the family circle closed tightly: Family intimacies must never be shared with others--not even with parents. A third person to sympathize or listen to complaints is a tool of the devil to estrange the hearts of husband and wife. Solve your home problems privately. No one else should ever be involved. Always be truthful each other.

Remember that criticism and nagging destroy love: Colossians 3:19 Stop criticizing, nagging, and fault-finding. Your husband or wife may lack much, but nagging won't help. Overlook faults, and hunt for the good things. A sense of humor, a cheerful heart, kindness, patience, and affection will banish two-thirds of your marriage problem

Do not overdo in anything be temperate: Overdoing will ruin your marriage. So will underdoing. Work, love, rest, exercise, play, worship, meals, and social contacts must be carefully balanced in your marriage. Overwork and the lack of sleep, proper food, or exercise make a person critical. Don't let greed wreck your marriage.

Respect each other's personal rights and privacies. Do not tamper with each other's wallet or other personal property without permission. The right to privacy and quietness when preoccupied should be respected.

Be clean, modest, orderly, and dutiful: Laziness, disorder, dirt, and slovenliness are the devil's weapons to destroy your respect and affection for one another, and thus ruin your marriage. Neat, modest attire and clean, well-groomed bodies are essential for both husband and wife. The meals should be wholesome, attractive, and served on time. The home should be clean and orderly, because this brings peace, calmness, and satisfaction to all.

Determine to speak softly and kindly: Proverbs 15:1 Force yourself to speak softly and kindly to your spouse. Silence, when one is attacked, is often the best method to cool wrath. And when you do speak, let it always be quietly and lovingly with grace. Harsh, angry words crush your spouse's desire to please you.

Be reasonable in money matters: Discuss and agree in money matters. All possessions and income in marriage should be "ours," not "yours" and "mine." A miserly husband usually angers his wife into being a spender.

Talk things over and counsel together freely: Few things will strengthen your marriage on all major decisions. Changing a job or purchasing a home. Talking things over together will avoid many blunders that could destroy your marriage. If, opinions still differ, the wife should submit to her husband's decision. "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4)