



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of  
civilization's most significant institution

**By Stan Key**

Answer Guide



©2016 Stan Key. Reproduction of all or any substantial part of these materials is prohibited except for personal, individual use. No part of these materials may be distributed or copied for any other purpose without written permission.

Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Some scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Some scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

For information about these or other study materials, contact:

**Francis Asbury Society**

PO Box 7

Wilmore, KY 40390

859-858-4222

800-530-5673

[fas@francisasburysociety.com](mailto:fas@francisasburysociety.com)

[www.francisasburysociety.com](http://www.francisasburysociety.com)





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDEN: THE GARDEN VARIETY OF MARRIAGE.....	4
SINAI: A COVENANT OF LOVE.....	9
CANA: GLIMPSE OF GLORY.....	14
THE WEDDING OF THE LAMB: HAPPILY, EVER AFTER.....	20
WHEN THE SIZZLE FIZZLES: WHAT SIN DOES TO MARRIAGE.....	26
MARRIAGE: A PROFOUND MYSTERY.....	31
THE NAKED TRUTH ABOUT SEX.....	36
STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY.....	41
THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY.....	46
AGAPE AND EROS.....	50
MARRIAGE MATTERS!.....	55
ANSWERS.....	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	62

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers  
only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)*



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## EDEN: THE GARDEN VARIETY OF MARRIAGE

Genesis 1:26–28; 2:18–25

- I. Putting Humpty-Dumpty Together Again.
- A. It's really hard to put a jig-saw puzzle together without the **box top / picture**. And it's really hard to put marriage together without the original model. And if someone has given you the *wrong* box top, the job may be impossible!
  - B. Until recent years, few people questioned the meaning of the word "marriage". For example, the *American Heritage Dictionary* (1971) simply says that marriage is "the state of being **husband and wife**."
  - C. And yet today, the Supreme Court has chosen to change the dictionary! The psalmist's question applies to what many are feeling today: "If the **foundations** are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).
  - D. Writing about the traditional family, G. K. Chesterton famously said that one should never tear down a fence until he learns **why** it was put there in the first place. "People do not know what they are doing; because they do not know what they are undoing."<sup>1</sup>
  - E. But who has the right to define marriage? Government? Courts? Popular vote? Church? For Christians (and those rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition) the answer to this question is obvious: **God** is the author and thus is the only one qualified to define marriage<sup>2</sup>. As the traditional English wedding ceremony says:  
*Dear Beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of **God** and in the presence of these witnesses to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted by **God** and signifying to us the mystical union which exists between Christ and his Church....<sup>3</sup>*
  - F. To discover God's definition of the family the best place to begin is in the beginning. Long ago, in a universe far away, before there was sin, abuse, and manipulation, when all was peaceful and loving.... God created a family. Note it well:
    - Human history **begins** with a marriage (Gen. 1–2).
    - Human history will **end** with a marriage (Rev 19–22).
    - Jesus began his earthly ministry at a marriage (John 2:1–11).

---

<sup>1</sup> Chesterton, 173–82.

<sup>2</sup> The Bible indicates that, when it comes to human society and culture, God has instituted three basic institutions: the family (Gen. 1-2; etc.), the church (Matt. 16:18; etc.) and the government (Rom. 13:1-7; etc.). But the family comes first... and last. Those who tamper with redefining what God has established do so at the risk of offending God himself!

<sup>3</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, .423.

## II. Marriage in Eden (Genesis 1–2; especially 1:26–28; 2:18–25)

### A. Man (mankind) is *not* like the animals.

Though man is similar to the animals in some respects (created by God, terrestrial, etc.), the Genesis account puts the emphasis not on the similarities but on the **differences**:

1. The last thing God created was man (then, woman!): the **pinnacle** of creation. In Genesis 1 man is the top of the pyramid. In Genesis 2 man is the center of a circle. It is as if everything else had been created for man (anthropic principle).
2. Men and women are given **dominion** over the animals (1:28–30; 2:19–20). Adam names them, demonstrating his superiority.
3. Only man (and woman) is created in the **image of God** (1:26–27). Note the plural pronouns for God. Man is not God but man is *like* God. Sin (Gen. 3) damaged this image but did not erase it. In Christ, this image can be restored (Col. 3:10).
4. The animals were created by a spoken word (“Let the earth bring forth...” 1:24). But God created man with his own hands—out of dirt. God **breathed** into him the breath (Spirit) of life (2:7).
5. Man **speaks** and thus can talk with and have a personal relationship with God (who also speaks). There are no talking animals in the Bible (except Balaam’s donkey).
6. Only man is given a command (2:16–17), indicating he is a **free moral agent**.
7. We could add that in all the animal kingdom, only man: stands erect, wears clothing, buries his dead, has an opposable thumb, worships...

*Therefore*, using animal analogies of **mating** to help humans better understand marriage, is a very faulty way of thinking. We are comparing apples and oranges.

### B. Male and female.

1. The prototypical marriage is composed of **one** man and **one** woman. Polygamy made its ugly appearance in Genesis 4:19–24 with Lamech. Just because the Bible mentions polygamy (Abraham, David, etc.) doesn’t mean it approves it.
2. **Gender** distinction goes to the core of marriage. Gender is *not* a matter of personal choice but is providentially assigned. Every marriage is thus by definition a union of differences and therefore “incompatible” (even *before* sin enters the picture!). Ruth Graham was famous for saying that if two people agree on everything, one of them is unnecessary. Becoming one does not erase the differences but enhances them! <sup>4</sup>

### C. Though **equal** in value man and woman are **different** in function (similar to what is found in the Trinity!). According to Genesis 2, the male is created first but after Eve every other male is born out of a female (I Cor. 11:8–12). Woman is called man’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Notice how the Bible emphasizes boundaries and distinctions: Creator and creation, God and man, male and female, man and animal, good and evil. Other religions (paganism) tend to blur these boundaries.

“helper” (2:18, 20). Far from being demeaning, the word (Hebrew, *ezer*) is used in Scripture to denote God himself (Deut. 33:7; Ps. 46:1; Heb. 13:6; etc.).<sup>5</sup>

D. Procreation.

Part of the image of God relates to man’s ability to (pro)create. “Be fruitful and multiply....” This is God’s first commandment. We learn that sexual intimacy and children are profoundly related to marriage.<sup>6</sup> Intimacy means **fertility**. The two become one then the one becomes three. The purpose of marriage is children.

E. Intimacy; face to face.

1. “The two become one...” (2:24).<sup>7</sup> Sex, within its God-ordained boundaries, is clean and beautiful. But sex is only one aspect of intimacy (oneness). Studies consistently show that **emotional** intimacy is the primary determiner of a happy marriage.
2. “Naked and not ashamed...” (2:25). Lack of shame was not because their bodies were perfect but because they were totally **unselfconscious**. They had nothing to hide. Only when sin comes is there a need for clothing.<sup>8</sup>

F. Leave and cleave.

For marriage to work, a man must leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife (2:24). Thus marriage **trumps** every other human relationship. This “leaving” is not just a geographical reality.

G. A reflection of God.

“It’s not good for the man to be alone...” (2:18). But why? Alone, Adam cannot obey the first commandment and **reproduce**. Alone he cannot **reflect the image** of his triune Creator (“Let us make man in our image...”). Note: The Bible does not say that man is *lonely* and needs a *companion*; it says that man is *alone* and needs a *helper*.

H. The Fall (Genesis 3) certainly damaged marriage but it did not destroy the model.

1. Sin introduced four destructive realities into marriage:
  - **Shame** (3:7). Suddenly, Adam and Eve realize they are naked. They sew fig leaves together for clothing. Let the games begin!
  - **Guilt**. They hide from God because they broke his commandment (3:8). God is now excluded from their relationship.
  - **Fear**. Because of their guilt and shame, they are afraid of exposure (3:10).
  - **Blame**. “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit... The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (3:13).
2. Sin turned male headship into **domination** (coercion, abuse) and female submission into **manipulation** (deception, seduction). Husbands tend to become either bullies or wimps. Wives tend to become either manipulators or empty shells.

---

<sup>5</sup> Eve is made from Adam’s rib. Matthew Henry comments: “... not made out of his head, to rule over him, nor out of his feet, to be trampled upon by him but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be loved.”

<sup>6</sup> The sexual revolution separated sex from marriage (by introducing “free love”) and then separated sex from having children (by introducing the pill). The implications were catastrophic.

<sup>7</sup> The original model for unity and oneness is the Trinity: one God, three Persons.

<sup>8</sup> Notice that in heaven we will not return to some Eden-like nudist colony! We will be clothed in white robes. Though we can be pure we can never again be innocent.

3. Sin caused the union of differences to become **competitive**, a constant battle for control.

III. Summary: Marriage Can Best Be Understood by Realizing Its Purpose.

- A. To reflect the triune **image of God**. We know God through marriage. We know marriage through God.
- B. To provide the deepest and **most important** human relationship. Husband-wife relationships trump parent-child relationships.
- C. To provide a safe environment for face-to-face, bare-all **intimacy** can occur. This involves much more than sex. Gender distinctions are best learned in the context of marriage.
- D. To have **children** and provide a safe and nurturing environment for them to grow.
- E. These purposes are for all humanity, not just Christians. Neither the Church nor the State created marriage. They only recognize what God has established.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What is the most important thing you learned from this lesson?
2. How is human marriage different from animal mating?
3. The lesson states that marriage is a “union of differences” and thus every marriage is by definition “incompatible.” Do you agree? Discuss this.
4. Though our American culture is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Biblical creation account, we have reached a point where we no longer have consensus on the meaning of marriage. How did this happen?
5. How does marriage relate to the Trinity? Why is this important?
6. According to Genesis, is gender a personal choice or a biological fact?
7. Discuss what it means for a man and woman to be equal in value but different in function.
8. What happens to a marriage when one of the spouses refuses to “leave and cleave”?

### **Genesis 1:26–28; 2:18–25 (ESV)**

*Then God said, “Let us make man [The Hebrew word for “man” (adam) is the generic term for mankind and becomes the proper name “Adam”] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26–28)*

*Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for [or, corresponding to] him.” Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” [The Hebrew words for woman (ishshah) and man (ish) sound alike.] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18–25)*





# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## SINAI: A COVENANT OF LOVE

### Exodus 19–24

#### I. A Misunderstood Mountain

##### A. Bad associations

When people think of Mount Sinai, many have negative associations: dark clouds, a threatening Presence, onerous obligations, heavy burdens, etc. For such people, Sinai represents legalism and **works righteousness**. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is (unfortunately) a good example of this bad understanding.

1. He places Sinai **before** the Wicket Gate and the Cross (before salvation). In other words, he places Mt. Sinai in **Egypt**.
2. Trying to get relief from the burden on his back, Worldly-Wiseman counsels Christian to climb a hill (Sinai) and visit a village named Morality where a man named Legality will help him.

*But when he reached the hill, it seemed so high, and the side of the hill that was next to the pathway had such a great overhang, that Christian was afraid to venture farther lest the hill should fall on his head... Flashes of fire came out of the hill making Christian afraid he would be burned. Here, therefore, he sweat and shook with fear.<sup>9</sup>*

3. Later, Christian meets a pilgrim named Faithful who describes his encounter with Moses.

*As soon as the man (Moses) overtook me... he knocked me down and laid me out for dead. But after I had somewhat come to my senses again, I asked him, "Why did you do that to me?" He said it was because of my secret inclination to follow after Adam the First; and with that, he struck me another deadly blow on the chest and beat me down backward.... When I came to myself again, I cried for him to have mercy; but he said, "I don't know how to show mercy!" And with that he knocked me down again...<sup>10</sup>*

##### B. A new look at an old mountain

Though Pharisees and misguided Christians may see Sinai in such negative terms, a closer read of the Bible offers a radically different view.

1. Notice that Sinai and the giving of the law comes **after** redemption, not before. Though the Pharisees in Jesus' day believed one had to obey God's law in order to be saved, they simply didn't know their Bibles! We obey God's law not in order to be saved but because we **already are**! Keeping the law is the result of salvation, not the cause! Salvation has always been by grace alone!
2. The main event at Sinai is not the giving of the law but the establishment of the **covenant**! Yes, a covenant has duties (laws) associated with it (so does

---

<sup>9</sup> Bunyan, 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 95–96.

marriage!) but the important thing is the love relationship... not the “obligations.”

3. The prophets clearly understood that Sinai was a **wedding** covenant between God and Israel and thus any unfaithfulness on Israel’s part was spiritual adultery.
  - “You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called Hephzibah (My Delight Is in Her) and your land **Beulah** (Married)... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isa. 62:4–5).
  - “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a **bride**, how you followed me in the wilderness...” (Jer. 2:2).
  - “Behold, the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their **husband**...” (Jer. 31:31–32).
  - “When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, ‘Go, take to yourself a wife of **whoredom** and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord’” (Hosea 1:2).

## II. What Happened at Sinai (Exodus 19–40)

God redeemed the Hebrew people from Egyptian bondage by **blood** (Passover lamb) and **water** (passage through the Red Sea). For three months they walked through the desert, experiencing a series of five tests (Ex. 15:22–18:27). Finally, they arrive at Mount Sinai where they will remain 18–24 months.

**Read** Exodus 19:1–8, 16–20; 20:1ff; 24:3–11, 16–18; 25:1–9; 32:1–6; 34:5–7; 40:34.

The Covenant Is Established (Exodus 19–24)			The Tabernacle Is Constructed (Exodus 25–40)		
Preparation	Stipulations: The Law	Ratification: Vows & Ceremonies	The Plan is Given	The Golden Calf	The Plan Is Carried Out
19	20–23	24	25–31	32–34	35–40

Four important events happen at Sinai:

- A. The **Covenant** is established (Ex. 19–24). This defines the **relationship** between God and his people.
  1. Just as creation began with a wedding (Gen. 1–2), so does **redemption**. God reminds Israel that from among all the nations of the earth, he **chose** her, rescued her from bondage, and brought her to himself “on eagles’ wings” so that she would be his “treasured possession” (Ex. 19:4–6; John 15:16). This is a **love story!** (How odd of God to choose the Jews!).
  2. Yet even lovers need to establish expectations of one another. These behavioral expectations are stated in the law (see B, below) but especially in the **vows**:
    - *God promises* to love Israel and provide for all her needs. He has already manifested this covenant faithfulness (Hebrew, *hesed*) in the Passover, Red Sea, Marah, Mana, protection from the Amalakites, etc.

*“I will be an enemy to your enemies... I will take sickness away from you... I will lead you to your inheritance...” (Ex. 23:20–33).*

- *Israel promises* three times, “All that the Lord has spoken **we will** do” (Ex. 19:8; 24:3, 7).
3. Many elements of this covenant-making ceremony are carried over into traditional wedding ceremonies today:
    - **Music**. There is thunder and lightning, a thick cloud and a very loud **trumpet** (Ex. 19:16, 19).
    - **Symbols** and signs. Sabbath observance is the sign that the covenant is in place (Ex. 31:12–17): “This is a sign between me and you....” In marriage ceremonies, the ring is not just a piece of jewelry, it is a **sign** of the covenant.
    - **A reception**. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and 70 elders go up on the mountain where they meet with God and eat and drink (Ex. 24:9–11).
    - No wedding is complete without **fear and trembling** (Ex. 20:18–21).
- B. The **Law** is given (Ex. 20–23). This defines the obligations of the covenant, the **behavior** expected of Israel.
1. The Bible does not hesitate to join together law and **love** (John 14:15; Rom. 13:10; etc.). When God marries Israel he wants her to understand the behaviors to which he, as husband, is committing himself and the behaviors that he expects her, as wife, to follow. These duties are summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17) and itemized in more detail in Exodus 20:22–23:19 (laws about altars, slaves, restitution, social justice, Sabbath, Festivals, etc.).
  2. The law, therefore, is not a bad thing. It is very, very **good**. Jesus explained that he came to fulfill the law, not destroy it (Matt. 5:17). Paul explained that the law is holy, righteous and good (Rom. 7:12; I Tim. 1:8). If it is used rightly, the law becomes a blessing that:
    - **Reveals** God’s holy character.
    - **Convicts** us of sin (Rom. 7:7–11).
    - Points us to **Christ** (Gal. 3:24).
    - Shows us how **to live** (Deut. 30:11–14; Jer. 31:31–33; Rom. 8:3–4).
- Augustine said it well: “The law was given that grace might be sought. Grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.”
- C. The **Tabernacle** is constructed (Ex. 25–31, 33–40). This defines worship, **intimacy** with God, how to live with the Holy One.
1. Once the marriage (covenant) has occurred, the couple is free to **live together**. The Tabernacle is the dwelling place for God. The whole point of redemption is that God and Israel can live together in an intimate relationship (Ex. 25:8; 40:34).
  2. But how does a sinful wife (Israel) live with a holy husband (God)? The Tabernacle defines how sinners can live in intimacy with the Holy One: enter the door, find a blood sacrifice, wash in the laver, enter the Holy Place, etc.
- D. The Covenant is **broken** (Ex. 32–34). Israel commits adultery with a golden calf and God has to decide whether or not he should **divorce** her.

The story of the golden calf reminds us how quickly Israel broke her vows! Six weeks after the wedding, she is in bed with a bull! It just doesn’t get uglier than this. God threatens to divorce her but thanks to Moses’ intercession he finds a way to forgive. The real issue in adultery is not sex... but **faithfulness** (*hesed*).

### III. Sinai and Marriage

At Sinai, God and Israel got married! Coupled with the wedding in Genesis 1–2, the wedding at Sinai becomes the **prototype** for all weddings in history. Here we see the basic elements that constitute a marriage. It is remarkable how nearly all of these elements are powerfully expressed in the traditional marriage ceremony (see the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP), first published in 1549, for the classic English example).

#### A. **Initiating** love

God (husband) **pursues** Israel and chooses to enter into a relationship of covenant love with her. Thus we see the origin of all the romantic stories of a knight in shining armor on a white horse pursuing his beloved (chivalry). But from Genesis 3 onward, men struggle to initiate and lead; we are confronted with what Larry Crabb calls “the **silence** of Adam.”<sup>11</sup>

#### B. **Responding** love

Israel has a **choice**. Though she is chosen she can decline the offer. A woman’s glory is to be loved and cherished by one ready to give up everything for her. But from Genesis 3 onward, women have struggled to live in submission (especially to a “silent” Adam) and often resort to **manipulation**.

#### C. **Romantic** love

A covenant is not a contract between business partners, a treaty between nations, or a social arrangement between families. It is a romantic love story! Amazingly, God is smitten and head over heels in love with Israel. He calls her “my treasured possession” (Ex. 19:5) and rejoices over her (Isa. 62:5). See the Song of Songs as an illustration.

#### D. **Vows**

At its most basic level, a marriage is built on words... promises... vows. But note it well: these are not just casual promises. They are solemn vows (Eccl. 5:4–7)! These vows are:

- **Exclusive**. “Forsaking all others...” (BCP). Marriage is not only a big “yes” but also a big “no.” No other gods before me! God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5; 34:14).
- **Comprehensive**. “For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health...” (BCP). Once married, there is no place you can go where you are not married.
- **Irrevocable**. “Till death do us part... as long as you both shall live...” (BCP). There is no fine print and no escape clause.

#### E. **Obligations**, duties, laws

The covenant needs a clear understanding of expectations that will define behaviors for both husband and wife. The vows stipulate these duties: *Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live? ... To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part...*(BCP). A spouse who sees such obligations as an onerous burden proves that he/she doesn’t understand the meaning of marriage!

---

<sup>11</sup> Crabb, 11–12.

F. The possibility of **divorce**

When Moses broke the tablets after the incident with the golden calf, God was threatening a divorce with Israel (Ex. 32:7–10, 19, 30). He certainly had **grounds!** Later God did indeed (apparently) divorce the ten tribes of the northern kingdom (Jer. 3:6–10). Thus we see that the law permits (though it doesn't mandate!) divorce in extreme cases (Deut. 24:1–4). But the intent of the covenant is to remain together forever.

G. A **ceremony** fitting for the occasion!

Making a covenant like this is a big deal! Thus it needs to have all the appropriate ingredients to give it the solemn **dignity** and sacred **joy** it deserves: music, food, ceremony, signs and symbols, reception for guests, holy awe, etc. As the traditional ceremony states: it is “not to be entered into unadvisedly but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God.”<sup>12</sup>

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What did you learn about Sinai in this lesson? What did you learn about marriage?
2. Why is the location of Mount Sinai so important?
3. How do the events at Sinai lay the foundation for understanding marriage?
4. Is divorce ever permissible?
5. Think of the way weddings are practiced today. How are they similar to the covenant at Sinai? How are they different?
6. What part does the law (obligations, duties) have in weddings? How do love and law go together?
7. Why did God wait until after the covenant was established to “move in” with Israel? What does this teach us about couples today who want to cohabit *before* the vows are said?

---

<sup>12</sup> The wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton (April 29, 2011) illustrates what we have been talking about (see “Prince William and Kate Middleton exchange vows,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDoXUcJ9stM>).



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## CANA: GLIMPSE OF GLORY

John 2:1–11

- I. The most famous wedding in history!
  - A. Why should this wedding be so famous when almost everything about it is **strange**?
    1. The Jesus in this story is **unfamiliar** to us. He is not teaching, preaching, healing, or praying. Instead, he is at a wedding reception assisting with the beverage service! Was he dancing? Was he drinking? Was he a good social mixer?
    2. This wedding becomes the event that **launches** Jesus into public ministry. But it would be difficult to envision a more **inconspicuous** setting to begin his ministry:
      - In Galilee (not Judea).
      - In Cana (not Jerusalem).
      - At a wedding reception (not in the Temple).
      - We don't even know the names of the bride and groom!
      - The miracle was to provide refreshments for the wedding reception to save the bride from social embarrassment.
      - Apparently, Jesus was reluctant to perform the miracle and his mother had to pressure him to do it.
    3. Do we really need 120–180 gallons of **wine**? Though the alcoholic content would have been small, the quantity and quality are shocking. It would almost seem that Moses had a better approach when he began his public ministry by turning water into **blood**! (Exodus 7:14–25).
    4. The role of Jesus' mother is troubling. It almost appears that Mary is **manipulating** her son and that Jesus is **rebuking** his mother (vv 3–4). Though he seems to at first resist her demand to fix the problem (no wine), he eventually complies.
    5. Perhaps the real hero of this story is the **servant(s)** who gave foot-washing water to the master of the feast and urged him to drink it! Knowing nothing of the previous conversation between Jesus and his mother, the master of the feast was surprised and pleased: "... You have kept the good wine until now." (v 10).
  - B. But it isn't the strange elements that make this wedding so famous. Its importance is explained by two simple realities:
    1. **Jesus** was invited to the wedding.
    2. The wedding (and the miracle performed there) was a **sign** (see v 11); it pointed beyond itself to something bigger.

Note: when these two realities are present, *every* wedding takes on cosmic significance!
  - C. Perhaps the key element in this story relates to **timing**. Mary wants Jesus to do something to fix a bad situation. She seems pushy. Jesus protests: "My **hour** has not

yet come” (v 4). In John’s Gospel, the “hour” is a major theme that speaks of that “moment” when Jesus will reveal his glory to the world.<sup>13</sup> Mary apparently believes that the time is now! “Tell the world *who* you are and *why* you’ve come!” Jesus, at first, is reluctant but then, he agrees and moves forward with an action (turning water to wine at a wedding) that announces clearly both his **identity** and his **mission**.

- D. After telling the story, John gives a brief **commentary** which helps us understand that more is going on here than is going on here! “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.” (v 11). Note:
1. This is a **sign**. John calls Jesus’ miracles “signs”, meaning they are not ends in themselves. They are not just mighty works of power. They point beyond themselves and teach a spiritual reality. Ultimately, a sign is meant to stimulate **faith**. John’s Gospel is structured around a series of seven signs carefully chosen and arranged.<sup>14</sup> At the end of the book, John explains his purpose:

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have **life** in his name. (20:30–31)*

2. This is Jesus’ **first** sign. The miracles John includes in his Gospel and their chronological order are not random. By putting this miracle first and telling us it is first, John is clearly highlighting its importance.
3. This miracle “manifested his **glory**.” In other words, this miracle enabled his disciples to see who Jesus really was! In John’s Gospel, the concept of “glory” is closely tied to Jesus’ deity (See 1:14; 2:11; 17:5, 24).
4. This miracle caused the disciples to **believe** in Jesus. Faith is a major theme in John’s Gospel. Believing in Jesus makes it possible to become a child of God (1:12). Unbelief puts one under God’s wrath (3:36). The whole point of Jesus’ coming was that people would put their trust and confidence in him (6:28–29). The miracle at Cana is important because it enabled the disciples to believe in Jesus.

E. Notice the broader context.

1. See John 2:13–22. Immediately after the wedding, Jesus went to Jerusalem and in anger cleansed **the Temple**. Was there something about the wedding at Cana that caused Jesus to think of the Temple and its spiritual condition? Could it be that Jesus was looking for his bride? Could it be that the condition of the Temple confronted him with the reality that his bride was unprepared for her wedding day? See Jeremiah 2:1–5, 23–24, 32–35; 3:1–2, 6–10, 20.
2. See John 3:28–30. It wasn’t long after Cana that John the Baptist was asked once again about what he thought about Jesus.

*...I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this*

---

<sup>13</sup> The following references in John describe the importance of “the hour” in Jesus’ self-understanding and how the right timing of his words and actions were so important. See 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; and 17:1.

<sup>14</sup> The seven signs are: 1) turns water to wine (2:1–11), 2) heals an official’s son (4:46–54), 3) heals an invalid at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1–17), 4) feeds five thousand (6:1–15), 5) walks on water (6:16–21), 6) heals a man born blind (9:1–41), and 7) raises Lazarus from the dead (11:1–44).

*joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.  
(3:28–30).*

In other words, John sees Jesus as the **bridegroom** and himself as the **best man**. But who is the **bride**? The bride is Israel, the people of God. In Gospel terms, the bride is “the body of Christ”, the **Church!** The wedding at Cana thus announces Jesus’ true identity and purpose: the groom has come searching for his bride. A wedding is about to occur! But is the bride ready for her wedding day?

## II. The Wedding at Cana Gives Us a Glimpse of Glory

### A. Christ’s presence transforms **the ordinary** into the extraordinary.

Typically, one would think that God would launch a new work by beginning in an important *place*, with important *people*, addressing some important *issue*. But Jesus began his ministry with an unnamed couple in a nondescript village, at a wedding reception where he performed his first miracle to protect them from social embarrassment because the wine ran out! Jesus apparently wants us to know that he cares about ordinary people in ordinary situations facing ordinary problems. When he is **invited**, nothing is ever “ordinary” again! **Water** becomes wine. Elizabeth Barret Browning (1806–1861) understood this when she wrote:

*Earth’s crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries...*

### B. Every marriage has **cosmic significance**.

Human history **began** with a wedding (Genesis 1–2) and human history will **end** with a wedding (Revelation 19–22). This helps to explain why Jesus chose to begin his ministry at a wedding as well. Marriage matters! Obviously, marriage is more than a mere social convention for determining sexual mores, property rights, parental obligations and who gets the inheritance. Marriage is a sign, pointing beyond itself to God’s ultimate purposes for our planet! So don’t tamper with the **model!**

- One man and one woman (male and female).
- A covenant of steadfast love (*hesed*).
- Two become one... one becomes three, etc.
- Till death do us part.

If the model **breaks**, becomes **distorted** or **disappears**, then we have almost no capacity to understand God’s ultimate cosmic purposes! This is why one of the indications of imminent judgment is when “the voice of bridegroom and bride (are) heard no more” (Rev 18:23; Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11).

### C. Christ is the **bridegroom** searching for his bride.

The most important message of Cana is missed by most who read the story. This wedding (like *every* wedding is meant to do!) serves as a **metaphor** to help us see that Jesus is the ultimate Bridegroom. He has come from his Father’s home searching for a bride. John the Baptist is the best man who has been making advance arrangements. The only question is this: will the beloved **recognize** her Lover and give him her whole-hearted devotion in return? Or will she reject his advances and prefer other lovers? Tragically, the Jewish people did not recognize the One who had come for them (John 1:10–11). Jerusalem “did not know the time of her visitation” (Luke 19:44).



Though most Christians are quick to recognize Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, King, Lamb, Shepherd, etc. they have little awareness of his role as Bridegroom. Other places in the New Testament highlight this prominent truth:

1. Mark 2:18–20

*And people came and said to Jesus, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” And Jesus said to them, “Can the **wedding guests** fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.”*

Questions for reflection: Do I think of my relationship with Christ in terms of a **romance** that will soon climax in a wedding? Does the groom’s delay in coming cause me sadness (do I fast)? Or do I think only in terms of a judicial pardon before a judge, a dutiful obedience before a king, etc.

2. Matthew 22:1–14

*The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a **wedding feast** for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come... they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry... then he said to his servants, “The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find...”*

Questions for reflection: Do I have a wedding **invitation**? Am I making plans to attend or perhaps am I making excuses?

3. Matthew 25:1–13

*Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten **virgins** who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them... And the bridegroom was delayed... And while (the foolish virgins) were going to buy (oil), the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut... Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*

Questions for reflection: Am I living like a virgin, saving myself for marriage? Am I watching for my Beloved’s arrival? Am I **prepared**? Am I foolishly hoping that those around me will be ready and thus will be able to share their “oil” with me?

4. Ephesians 5:22–33

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.... This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to **Christ and the church**...*

Questions for reflection: Am I conscious of how my own marriage is a **reflection** of the relationship between Christ and his church? What impact ought this to have on the way I interact with my spouse? What influence does this have on our children? On our neighbors?

5. II Corinthians 11:2–3

*For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I **betrothed** you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

Questions for reflection: Do I think of witness and evangelism in terms of inviting others to be engaged (betrothed) to Jesus? Where is the serpent leading me astray from my **pure devotion** to Christ?

6. Revelation 19:5–9; 21:1–2, 9–10; 22:10.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Explain in your own words the significance of the fact that Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding.
2. Though most contemporary Christians easily think of Jesus as prophet, priest, king, lamb, etc. few think of him as bridegroom; few think of being a Christian in terms of marriage. Why is this true? Why is it important?
3. The author claims that every marriage has “cosmic significance.” Do you agree? What does this mean?
4. John the Baptist saw his role in terms of being the “best man” for the coming wedding between Christ and his Church. Describe how such a concept of witnessing/evangelizing can impact the way the Gospel is shared with unbelievers.
5. Roman Catholics claim that marriage is a sacrament. While Protestants disagree with such a claim, most would say that marriage is indeed “sign.” Discuss this.
6. What did you learn from this lesson about the importance of “the ordinary”?

## Lord, Who at Cana's Wedding Feast

By Adelaide Thrupp (1853)

*Lord, who at Cana's wedding feast  
Didst as a guest appear,  
Thou dearer far than earthly guest,  
Vouchsafe thy presence here;  
For holy thou indeed dost prove  
The marriage vow to be,  
Proclaiming it a type of love  
Between the Church and thee.*

*The holiest vow that man can make,  
The golden thread in life,  
The bond that none may dare to break,  
That bindeth man and wife;  
Which, blest by thee, whate'er betides,  
No evil shall destroy,  
Through care-worn days each care divides,  
And doubles every joy.*

*On those who at thine altar kneel,  
O Lord, thy blessing pour,  
That each may wake the other's zeal  
To love thee more and more:  
Oh, grant them here in peace to live,  
In purity and love,  
And, this world leaving, to receive  
A crown of life above!*



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## THE WEDDING OF THE LAMB: HAPPILY, EVER AFTER

### Revelation 19–22

A story is only as good as its **ending**. Every child intuitively knows that a story is supposed to end with the words “and they lived **happily ever after**.” It's written in our DNA.

Unfortunately, many stories do not have a happy ending. But for followers of Jesus Christ, the story will just get better and better.

*But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.<sup>15</sup>*

Scripture paints the future with language that is equally ebullient: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (I Cor. 2:9 NLT). But before things get better, they are going to get **worse**... a lot worse.

#### I. A Tale of Two Cities

##### A. The meaning of the city.

In the Bible, a “city” means more than a geographical location and a sociological grouping of people. Its meaning is profoundly theological. Think of the cities of Genesis, for example: Enoch (4:16–17), Babel (11:1–9), and Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16–19:29). A city is a **spiritual power** that has a powerful influence on its citizens. Consider how cities like New York, Las Vegas, Hollywood, Rio, Paris, and Calcutta shape the identities of those who live there.

##### B. The two cities.

In Revelation, John describes human history (past, present and future) as a tale of two cities: **Jerusalem** (the city of God) and **Babylon** (the city of man). Though historically Jerusalem has been a strange mixture of good and evil and though God's people have often been called to live in Babylon and pray for her welfare (see Jer. 29:4–7), ultimately there are only two cities: one is good and will abide forever and the other is evil and will be destroyed. Every human who has ever lived is a **citizen** of one city or the other.

##### C. Come away, my beloved.

The most astounding characteristic of these two cities in Revelation is that both are described as **women**! One is a wicked temptress and **prostitute**, the other a beautiful **bride**, white and pure. In the spirit of Proverbs 9, Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly make their appeals for the hearts of men.

*Wisdom has built her house;  
she has hewn her seven pillars.  
She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine;  
she has also set her table.  
She has sent out her young women to call*

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 210f.

*from the highest places in the town,  
 “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!”  
 To him who lacks sense she says,  
 “Come, eat of my bread  
 and drink of the wine I have mixed.  
 Leave your simple ways, and live,  
 and walk in the way of insight.” (Proverbs 9:1–6)*

*The woman Folly is loud;  
 she is seductive and knows nothing.  
 She sits at the door of her house;  
 she takes a seat on the highest places of the town,  
 calling to those who pass by,  
 who are going straight on their way,  
 “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!”  
 And to him who lacks sense she says,  
 “Stolen water is sweet,  
 and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”  
 But he does not know that the dead are there,  
 that her guests are in the depths of Sheol. (Proverbs 9:16–18)*

II. The Great Prostitute: Babylon (Revelation 17:1–19:5)

The Appearance of the Woman (17:1–6)	The Identity of the Woman (17:7–18)	The Judgement of the Woman (18:1–24)	The Hallelujah Chorus (19:1–5)
--	---	--	--------------------------------------

A. The appearance of the woman (17:1–6).

1. She is riding a 7-headed scarlet beast—**Antichrist** (17:3). Who is controlling whom?
2. She is the Great Prostitute (*porne*). Her name is on her forehead: “Babylon the Great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” (17:1, 5).
3. She is involved in **sexual immorality** (*porneia*) with the whole earth. (17:2, 4; 18:3, 9).
4. She is seated on many waters (nations and peoples) (17:1, 15).
5. She is dressed in **gaudy** apparel and lives in luxury (17:4; 18:3, 7, 11–13, 16).
6. She enjoys killing **Christians** (17:6; 18:24).
7. She is involved in human trafficking (17:6; 18:13).
8. She is arrogant, self-confident and deceived about her security (18:7–8).
9. She **deceives** the nations through sorcery (*pharmakia*) (18:23).
10. She is drunk with the blood of the martyrs (17:6) and she makes the nations drunk as they drink the abominations and impurities from the cup in her hand (17:2, 4; 18:3).

B. The identity of the woman (17:7–18).

1. She is closely allied with **the beast**, Antichrist (see 12:3) who was, and is not, and is to come (17:8). He suffered a mortal wound but recovered (13:3).
2. The 7 heads of the beast are 7 mountains on which the woman is seated (17:9). This is undoubtedly a reference to Rome, the city of 7 hills. But this does not

mean that the historic city of Rome exhausts the meaning of who this woman is.<sup>16</sup>

3. The 7 heads are also 7 kings: five have passed on, one is, and the other is yet to come.<sup>17</sup> An 8<sup>th</sup> king belongs to the 7 and he too goes to destruction (17:10–11).
4. The 10 horns are 10 kings yet to come who will reign only briefly (one hour). In an outward show of unity, they will give all their authority to the beast and together they will make war on the Lamb. But the Lamb wins! (17:12–14).
5. But in reality the 10 horns and the beast **hate** the woman (Babylon) and will destroy her. In doing so, they are unknowingly carrying out God’s purposes (17:16–17).
6. At last we are told specifically the identity of the woman: she is “the great city (Babylon) that has dominion over the kings of the earth” (17:18).

*Babylon is not a city. She is the city... All the cities of the world are brought together in her, she is the synthesis of them all.... She is the head of, and the standard for the other cities... Venice, Paris, New York—they are all the same city, only one Babel always reappearing...<sup>18</sup>*

C. The judgement of the woman (18:1–24).

1. The fall of Babylon (18:1–3). In John’s mind, the future destruction of this great city is so certain that he writes about it as if it has **already happened!**
2. Only those who **come out** of Babylon will be saved. Those who remain in Babylon will share in her destruction (18:4–8).
3. There is great lamentation over the fall of Babylon (18:9–20). Kings, merchants, and sailors all weep over the city. But their grief is not really for the city but for **themselves** who have suffered great personal loss in Babylon’s destruction.
4. Up in smoke (18:21–24). As the smoke of her burning ascends, Babylon descends like a millstone in the sea. In describing all that has been lost, note how John specifically says, “the voice of the **bridegroom** and **bride** will be heard in you no more.”

D. Wedding invitations can now be sent (19:1–10).

1. As Babylon sinks into oblivion under God’s judgment, a song of praise arises in heaven. Ding dong the witch is dead! This is the original **Hallelujah Chorus!** (19:1–5).
2. With the defeat and disappearance of the Great Prostitute, invitations are sent out for the **Marriage of the Lamb:**

*Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to*

---

<sup>16</sup> Leon Morris states that “in the first century, Rome was a striking embodiment of what John means by Babylon. In Rome as nowhere else men, could see the city of man bent on its own blasphemous way, opposing with all its might the things of God” (*The Revelation of St. John*, 209).

<sup>17</sup> Many have tried to determine which Roman emperors John may have been referring to. But the emphasis here is on the future, not the present. It seems wise to await future events to determine who these kings really are.

<sup>18</sup> Ellul, 20f.

*clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are **invited** to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” (19:6–10)*

### III. The Bride: Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1–22:6)

Jerusalem’s arrival (21:1–5)	Entrance requirements (21:6–8)	Jerusalem’s description (21:9–22:6)
---------------------------------	-----------------------------------	--

#### A. Jerusalem’s arrival (21:1–5).

Human history does not end when we “go up” to heaven but when the City of God “comes down” to earth (21:2, 10). No humans built this city; its designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). The city is “new”. The word refers to new in respect to **quality**, not new in respect to time (recent). This is not an ending, but a fresh beginning! Note the things that are *not* in this city: death, crying, pain, a temple, sun... nothing unclean (21:4, 22, 23, 27). Note especially, that the new Jerusalem arrives as a **bride** (21:2, 9).

#### B. Entrance requirements (21:6–8).

Those permitted into the city are the **thirsty** (21:6), the ones who **conquer** (21:7), and the one’s whose names are written in the **Lamb’s book of life** (21:27). Those excluded are the cowards, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers (*pharmakos*), idolaters and all liars (21:8).

#### C. Jerusalem’s description (21:9–22:6).

1. Her radiant **beauty** (21:9–11). “...like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.” She is the glory of God!
2. Her wall is massive and “**clear as glass**” (21:12–14, 18). She has 12 gates (for the 12 tribes) each made of a single pearl (21:21), and 12 foundations (for the 12 apostles) each made from a precious stone (21:19–20).
3. She is shaped like a massive **cube** (1,400 miles each direction). The only other cubic shape in the Bible is the Holy of Holies (I Kings 6:20).
4. The city is made of jasper and gold (21:18–21).
5. The gates of the city are never shut; the nations are free to enter (21:22–27).
6. The city is also like a garden characterized by the river of life and the **tree of life** (22:1–6). The leaves of the tree bring healing to the nations!
7. The citizens of this city will live with God **face to face** (22:4).

### IV. Here Comes the Groom (19:11–16)

#### A. His name.

He is called **Faithful** and True, the Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords. He also has a secret name that no one knows except himself.

#### B. His attributes.

He rides a **white horse** and has eyes of fire. Many crowns are on his head and he is clothed in a robe dipped in blood. A sharp sword that comes from his mouth is his only weapon. He is leading a vast army dressed in white robes riding on white horses.

C. His mission.

He comes to **destroy** the Beast (Antichrist) and the False Prophet (19:17–21). This is apparently the battle of Armageddon (see Rev. 16:13–16). Then he will begin his millennial **reign** (Rev. 20:1–6). “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord...” (Rev. 11:15).

D. What a contrast between Jesus’ first coming and his second coming.

Jesus’ First Coming	Jesus’ Second Coming
A tiny baby	A might warrior
Riding on a donkey	Riding on a white horse
In meekness and humility	In glory and power
He came to save	He comes to judge
He is seen by only a few	He is seen by everyone
To shed his own blood	To shed the blood of his enemies
The Lamb of God	The Lion of Judah
To woo his bride...engagement	To marry his bride... face to face forever

V. The Last Word on Marriage

- A. The last word on marriage is that **marriage** is the last word. Human history will culminate in a glorious wedding and then we will live with God happily, ever after. We are made for this! We are redeemed for this! What a contrast to T. S. Eliot’s depiction of how history will end for “the hollow men”: “This is the way the world ends... not with a bang but a whimper.”
- B. What God has defined let no one **redefine**! Since the Garden of Eden God’s definition of marriage is consistently the same: one man, one woman, a covenant of faithful love, for life. Those who tamper with the recipe will regret what they will have to swallow. When God’s pattern and model for marriage is distorted, judgment is soon to follow (Sodom, Babylon, etc.).
- C. Every marriage on earth is a **mirror** (reflection) of heavenly and eternal realities. When marriage is what it ought to be, it gives children and neighbors a picture of God and the future he has prepared for them. It makes others *want* to know God! But when marriage is *not* what it ought to be, then we lose the ability to see God as he is. When a culture reaches this stage, judgment is not far away.
- D. The **choice** of all choices: will I be captured by the loving voice of Lady Wisdom or the seductive lies of Lady Folly? Which city will define my identity, my home, and my destiny? Have I responded to the wedding invitation? Do I have the proper **clothing** (Rev. 19:7–8; Matt. 22:11–14)? Am I **ready** for the bridegroom to suddenly appear (Rev. 19:7; Matt. 25:10–13)?



### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Have you ever considered the spiritual influence of a city? What about the “city” in which you live? How does it influence your spiritual identity?
2. The writer of Proverbs seems to define human life as essentially a choice between responding to the invitations of Lady Folly and Lady Wisdom. Discuss this.
3. Describe your thoughts and emotions as you respond to the reality that human history is moving toward a wedding.
4. Think of the home you grew up in and your parents’ marriage. Did it help or hinder your understanding of God?
5. What is really at stake in our nation’s attempt to redefine marriage? Why is this issue so important?



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## WHEN THE SIZZLE FIZZLES: WHAT SIN DOES TO MARRIAGE (Genesis 3 and related passages)

### I. Introduction

#### A. God's workshop.

Marriage (and family) is the primary place where God brings together the elements necessary to produce a **saint**. Where does one have a better opportunity to discover self-giving love (agape), forgiveness, fatherhood, faithfulness, prayer, etc.? Gary Thomas insists that God designed marriage to make us **holy** more than to make us happy.

*If the purpose of marriage was simply to enjoy an infatuation and make me "happy," then I'd have to get a "new" marriage every two or three years. But if I really wanted to see God transform me from the inside out, I'd need to concentrate on changing myself rather than on changing my spouse. In fact, you might even say, the more difficult my spouse proved to be, the more opportunity I'd have to grow.<sup>19</sup>*

- B. According to many historians, Abraham Lincoln was our country's greatest president. And yet, Mary Todd Lincoln was probably the **most difficult** first lady of them all! Think about it, the greatest president was married to the most difficult first lady. Is it possible there is a **connection** between greatness/holiness and a bad marriage? Beware thinking that your life could amount to something significant if only you were married to someone else!
- C. The book of Genesis teaches us that **dysfunctional** families are precisely the place where God intends to produce his saints! Genesis reveals that even the best families have varying degrees of dysfunction and it doesn't hide the fact that often the saint in the family is the source of the problem!

### II. The Model for the Home (Genesis 1–2)

Genesis 1–2 describes God's original intention for marriage. The remainder of the book describes a sad history of family dysfunction but these introductory chapters set forth the **standard** that God intends. Though sin may cause us to want to give up in despair, these first two chapters steadfastly hold forth what marriage **ought to be**.

- A. Together, the man and woman reflect the **image of God**. God is one yet three. Marriage is two yet one.
- B. One **man** and one **woman**. Thus God is opposed to polygamy, homosexuality and bestiality.
- C. Two become **one** then one becomes three.
- D. A union of **differences**. By definition, marriage will be difficult... but fruitful! Same-sex marriage is a union of sameness and consequently **barren**.
- E. **Naked** and not ashamed. In marriage, there is nothing to hide.

---

<sup>19</sup> Thomas, 23.

- F. Sex is not evil but something that is **very good** when experienced in its God-ordained place: marriage.
- G. Leave **parents** and cleave to one another. Thus, marriage is more important than any other human relationship.
- H. Male and female are equal in **value** but different in **function**:
  - Adam was created first and thus is given **headship** of the home (I Cor. 11:8–12; I Tim. 2:12–15). Just as the Father has a sort of headship in the Trinity, we learn that headship is about **servicing** and **giving** not about being served and getting.
  - Eve is Adam’s **“helper”** (Gen. 2:18). The Hebrew term *ezer* should not be understood as demeaning. Elsewhere in Scripture, the word is used to describe **God** in his great strength (Ex. 18:4; Deut. 33:7; Ps. 121:1–2; 124:8; 146:5; etc.).

### III. A Snake in the Garden (Genesis 3).

When sin entered the picture, however, marriage (and family) was profoundly affected. Theologians describe what happened as **“The Fall”**. Though the consequences of sin had an impact in many dimensions (toward God, toward nature, toward our inner-self), some of the most tragic consequences are seen in what sin did to marriage.

- A. Though it is tempting to simply blame the first sin on the woman, the Bible recognizes that the head of the family was standing next to Eve as she was tempted (v 6). Adam’s **silence** is just as culpable as Eve’s disobedience... perhaps even more!
- B. Scripture highlights Eve’s role. She was **deceived** by the serpent and succumbed to the temptation (II Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2:14; see Gen. 16:2). It seems that Eve was **usurping** the role of leader and head of the home. (See John Milton’s description in *Paradise Lost*).
- C. Sin brought **shame**. For the first time, Adam and Eve realize they are naked (exposed, vulnerable). They sew fig leaves together to try (!) to cover what needs covering (v 7). Marriage partners now have secrets from one another, something to hide. No longer is there **transparency** in the home.
- D. Guilt caused Adam to **blame** his wife for what happened. Eve blamed her misconduct on the snake (vv 11–13). Ever since this tragic moment, sinners have sought to evade responsibility for their poor choices and evil actions by playing the blame game. “It’s not my fault; the problem is not me but my parents, the economy, my genetics, my boss... the devil made me do it.”
- E. Suddenly the union of differences became **disunion**. The lovers now found themselves in a fierce **competition** for control. To the woman God said: “Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you” (v 16). The word “desire” (see Gen. 4:7) speaks of a desire to control her husband. Yet, the husband will fight back to prevent such a hostile takeover. Ever since Eden, spouses tend to fall in one of two ditches: husbands are either **abusers** or **wimps**... wives are either **manipulators** or **doormats**.

### IV. Family Pathologies 101 (Genesis 4–50)

The remainder of Genesis gives many illustrations of home and family. However, even the best families are marred by dysfunction and sin. Rather than sweeping such tragic realities under the rug, the Scripture **highlights** these pathologies in the hopes that we will learn from others’ failures! The sick families help us to recognize even more the importance of holding forth the original standard (Gen. 1–2). Let’s take a quick survey at some of the more notable examples of family life in Genesis:

- A. *Lamech* had **two** wives and was known for his arrogance and **violence** (4:19–24).
- B. *The sons of God* (probably a reference to the godly descendants of Seth... see 4:26) are attracted to *the daughters of man* (probably a reference to the wicked descendants of Cain) and begin to **intermarry** with them and have children (6:1–4). This seems to be the provocation for God sending the flood.
- C. *Noah* is a model to imitate in that he built an ark “for the saving of his family” (Heb. 11:7). However, after the flood he got **drunk** and lay naked in his tent (9:20–25). To see “the nakedness of your father” may be an idiom to describe maternal incest<sup>20</sup> (see Lev. 20:11). Regardless of the actual sin, the dysfunction is real and the consequences heavy!
- D. *Abraham* is “the father of all who believe” (Rom. 4:11) and thus a model of fatherhood for all people everywhere. God explained that the reason he chose Abraham was “that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19). However, twice Abraham, in an act of **self-preservation**, pretended that his wife Sarah was his sister (12:10–20; 20:1–18). And in an act similar to Adam, he passively followed his wife’s advice which had disastrous consequences: having sex with his servant Hagar and thus giving birth to Ishmael and 2,500 years of Arab-Israeli conflict (16:1–6).
- E. *Lot* was called a “righteous” man (II Pet. 2:7–9) but his family was a disaster! He offered up his two virgin daughters once to sexual perverts (19:8). His wife had a mind of her own and protested until the end having to flee Sodom (19:26). Later he lived in a cave with his two daughters who proceeded to get him drunk so that they could have **incestuous** sex with him. This explains the origins of the Moabites and the Ammonites (19:30–38).
- F. *Isaac* illustrates the importance of using the right criteria to **choose** a mate (Gen. 24) and how important it is to love your wife and pray for her when she is in need (24:67; 25:21). However, Isaac follows in the footsteps of his daddy (“the sins of the fathers will be visited upon...”) and has an occasion when he protects himself by pretending that Rebekah is his sister (26:6–11). But the greatest dysfunction by far in this home is the blatant **favoritism** of parents for particular children: “Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob” (25:27–28). Thus this home was filled with competition, secrets, lies, deception, and the ugly **sibling rivalry** (see Gen. 27).
- G. *Esau* illustrates how *not* to choose a spouse! He marries two Hittite women; “and they made life **bitter** for Isaac and Rebekah” (26:34–35; 27:46).
- H. *Jacob* shows some qualities worthy of imitation in the way he loved his wife Rachel and worked seven years to obtain permission to marry her, “and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her” (29:20). However, the dysfunction in his family was great due to multiple wives and concubines (Gen. 29–30), family secrets, lies and **deception** (Gen. 29–31) and having a favorite son (Joseph) who he “loved more than any other of his sons” (37:3–4).
- I. *Dinah* (the daughter of Jacob and Leah) is **raped** by Shechem, the Hivite (Gen. 34). Her brothers, Simeon and Levi, avenge her defilement by killing Shechem and his family and plundering the city where he lived.
- J. *Tamar* is wronged by her father-in-law, Judah (Gen. 38). When his son marries Tamar and then dies, he offers another son, who also dies. But Judah refuses to risk

---

<sup>20</sup> One possible interpretation of this difficult passage is that Noah’s son Ham actually slept with his mother and they had a child named Canaan—whom Noah cursed!

giving a third son. To force him to do right, Tamar disguises herself as a **prostitute** and then sleeps with her father-in-law and becomes pregnant with twins (Perez and Zerah). Judah says of Tamar, “she is more righteous than I” (38:26).

V. Lessons Learned

- A. Although human history is a sad litany of family dysfunction, the original model for marriage (Gen. 1–2) remains. We must continue to hold up **the standard** even when it seems to be an unrealistic ideal.
- B. Even the best families have varying degrees of **dysfunction** and **sin**. The point is not to pretend this isn’t true but rather to speak the truth and find God’s remedy.
- C. To build healthy families we must first **diagnose** the problems in our current families. Genesis helps us to accurately label the types of pathology that can bring pain and suffering and destruction into our homes and families. For example:
  1. One man and two women (Lamech, Abraham, Jacob, etc.). It appears that every instance of **polygamy** in the Bible has negative consequences.
  2. **Competition** for control of the home (Abraham and Sarah, etc.).
  3. Men who are **silent** and don’t lead. Woman who **manipulate** and control. But be careful! Just as listening to your wife may lead a man into trouble (Adam, Abraham) so *not* listening to her counsel can be equally devastating (Joseph and Mary, Pilate and his wife). Be discerning!
  4. **Secrets**, deceptions, and lies (fig leaves). (Isaac and Rebekah, etc.)
  5. Abuse (Lamech, Abraham (“She is my sister”), Lot, etc.).
  6. **Incest**: “uncovering the nakedness” of someone in your family (Ham and his mother, Lot, Judah and Tamar, etc.).
  7. **Blame**: “It’s not my fault.” (Adam and Eve, etc.).
  8. Adultery, prostitution (Judah and Tamar, etc.).
  9. **Homosexuality** (Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.).
  10. Rape (Shechem and Dinah, etc.).
  11. **Alcohol** (Noah, Lot, etc.).
- D. Steps to dealing with family pathology:
  1. **Confession**. Agree with God that there is a problem. Stop passing the buck (blame game) and diagnose the pathology in your marriage/family. Getting the right **label** on the problem is the first step to health.
  2. **Repentance**. Ask God for help in turning from the dysfunctional patterns of behavior that are causing the difficulties in your home.
  3. Receive **forgiveness** and begin afresh. With God’s help, settle for nothing less than the divine pattern for the home mapped out in Genesis 1–2.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What struck you most about the lesson today?
2. Why is the marriage of Adam and Eve (Genesis 1–3) so important?
3. Which one of the marriages/families in Genesis makes you think most of your own marriage/family?
4. Most of us like to present a good image to others and hide our family dysfunction. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Explain.
5. Name one pathological dynamic in your marriage/family and ask God to help you discover the path to healing.



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## MARRIAGE: A PROFOUND MYSTERY

### Ephesians 5:21–33

#### I. Introduction

A. In his book *Love, Sex, and Lasting Relationships*, Chip Ingram examines what Hollywood says makes for a successful relationship. There are four basic steps:<sup>21</sup>

1. Find the **right person**.
2. **Fall** in love.
3. Fix your hopes and dreams on this person for your future fulfillment.
4. If failure occurs, **repeat steps 1, 2, and 3**.

B. The classic text.

1. From practice to theory—from examples to **theology**.

So far in our study, we've looked at actual marriages in the Bible (Eden, Sinai, Cana, etc.). We have learned how marriage is the primary **metaphor** for understanding the relationship God desires to have with us but we haven't yet seen a biblical **definition** of what marriage is and how it is supposed to work. Welcome to Ephesians 5:21–33. This could be called the classic text concerning marriage.

2. A profound mystery.

The most shocking statement Paul makes in this passage on marriage is that it really isn't about marriage at all! It is about **Christ and the church!** Paul explains: "This mystery is profound" (v 31). The word "mystery" does not refer to something too difficult to understand but to a previously hidden purpose of God that can now be understood because he has chosen to **reveal** it<sup>22</sup>. This passage reveals mysteries about marriage that simply cannot be understood without divine revelation:

- a. Unity in **difference**. Two becomes one without ceasing to be two. Becoming one does not diminish personal identity but **enhances** it.
- b. **Headship** (leadership, authority) is not about domination and control but rather about giving up one's rights and privileges for the good of someone else.
- c. Submission is not about becoming a doormat but rather the path to becoming a person **resplendent in glory**.
- d. Marriage on earth is **preparation** for life in the kingdom of God.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ingram, 24–28.

<sup>22</sup> In his Latin translation (the Vulgate), Jerome translated the word "mystery" as *sacramentum*. Though he probably understood the word to indicate how the union of a man and wife symbolize the union of Christ and his church, many in the Roman Catholic Church have pretended that this verse supports the teaching that marriage is a sacrament.

II. Ephesians 5:21–33

The General Rule	The Role of the Wife	The Role of the Husband	This is a Profound Mystery
“submitting to one another...”	“Submit to... respect your own husband...”	“Love your wives...”	“...it refers to Christ and the church...”
21	22–24	25–31	32–33

A. The place of verse 21.

A glance at different translations reveals how scholars have struggled to know what to do with this verse. Some see it as a conclusion to the exhortations in the preceding text. Others see it as an **introduction** to the following text (5:22–6:9).

1. The word “submitting” is a present participle (as are “addressing” (v 19), “singing” and “making melody” (v 19) and “giving thanks” (v 20) which all are consequences of being filled with the Spirit (v 18).
2. Note especially that in the Greek, verse 22 has no verb because the call to submission in the preceding verse is intended to be carried over into it. Thus, a literal translation of verses 21–22 might be: “...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, wives, to your husbands...”
3. Regardless of where you place verse 21, Paul certainly intends it to be a **transition**, a bridge between talking about relationships in general to the relationship between a man and a wife (children and parents [6:1–4], slaves and masters [6:5–9]).
4. For the Christian, *all* relationships are to be governed by agape-love (Eph. 5:2), thus “submitting to **one another**” (giving up one’s own rights for the good of someone else) goes to the core of all social interaction!

B. Targeted audience.

Note that Paul is appealing to a specific audience. He speaks directly to women (vv 22ff.), then directly to men (vv 25ff.), then to children and parents (6:1–4), and then to slaves then masters (6:5–9).

*An often overlooked feature of the Bible’s wifely submission commands is how they are addressed to the wives, not the husbands. In contrast to the Qur’an, for example, the Bible never tells husbands to make their wives submit – quite the contrary. Consider the prophet’s instruction in the Qur’an: “Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other... As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, forsake them in beds apart, and beat them.” The Bible, in contrast, tells wives to **voluntarily** surrender prerogative for the sake of the husband (and not to men in general). So the asymmetry the Bible teaches is not subjugation, or even domination, which has so characterized the sad history of men and women in relationship, and which was ominously predicted in Genesis 3:16, saying that the fallen man will dominate the fallen woman. Rather, it is the valued and limited submission appropriate to an equal partner... You cannot have true submission without **equality**.”<sup>23</sup>*

<sup>23</sup> Andreades, 111–12.



- C. Note Paul's precision of language when he says that wives are to submit *to* **their own** husbands (v 22). In other words, Paul is talking about individual marriage relationships not about a general demand that all women be subordinate to all men.
- D. The meaning of verse 33. In his summary statement, Paul does not mention "submit" at all. Rather he states the wife should **respect** her husband. Respect (an **attitude**) goes deeper than submission (an act). Just as a woman's most basic need in marriage is for love, so a man's most basic need is for respect. For Emerson Eggerichs, this verse is the key to the marital relationship: "A husband is commanded to love his wife unconditionally, and a wife is to respect her husband **unconditionally**."<sup>24</sup>

### III. Major themes

- A. **Equal** in value yet **different** in function.

Many assume that because the Bible insists on the equality of men and women (Gen. 1:27; Gal. 3:28; etc.) there must therefore be an equality of **roles** as well: a woman can (and should!) do anything a man can do. But promoting "equality" does not erase obvious differences, seen most demonstrably in biological realities such as physical strength, birthing babies, etc. While a few places in Scripture seem to be culturally specific (wearing a veil, talking in church, etc.), the Bible avoids hard and fast rules on gender-driven behaviors (clothing, cooking, farming, etc.).

But when it comes to marriage, there is one functional difference that is emphasized throughout the Bible and has permanent and universal validity: the husband is the **head** of the wife (v 23). Though the two have become one flesh (v 31), the man and wife are not identical. Unity is not **uniformity**. This is a union of difference! The application Paul makes is not that the husband therefore is to give the commands and the wife is to obey but rather that the husband is **to love** and the wife is **to submit/respect**. As J. H. Yoder succinctly says: "Equality of worth is not identity of role."<sup>25</sup>

1. Husbands **love** your wives (vv 25–31). The word is *agape* (repeated three times, vv 25, 28) and must not be confused with romance (*eros*) or with companionship (*philia*) which also have a place in marriage. *Agape* is covenant faithfulness (*hesed*). Paul gives two analogies to illustrate a husband's love for his wife:
  - a. *As Christ loved the church* (vv 25–27). Paul uses four verbs to describe the love Jesus (the bridegroom) had for the church (his bride):
    - 1) He **gave himself up** for her. The standard for a husband's love is the cross of Christ!
    - 2) So that he might **sanctify** her.
    - 3) So that he might **cleanse** her.
    - 4) So that he might **present** her in splendor to himself without spot or wrinkle that she might be holy and without blemish.
  - b. *As a man loves himself* (vv 28–31). Appealing to sanctified **self-interest**, Paul urges men to do themselves a favor and love their wives. Because the two have become one, to love your wife is to love yourself... in a sanctified sort of way!
2. Wives **submit/respect** to your husbands (vv 22–24, 33). Paul bases his teaching not in the whims of popular opinion but roots it in **creation** (see

---

<sup>24</sup> Eggerichs, 319.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Stott, 218.

I Cor. 11:3–12; I Tim. 2:11–13). “This is not chauvinism but creationism.”<sup>26</sup> He goes further, and grounds his teaching in **redemption**: “the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (v 23). Within the evangelical church there is a debate raging between those who believe gender differences (notably, male headship) are eternal and good (complementarians) and those who believe they are the result of the fall (egalitarians).

## B. Headship

### 1. Headship is *not*:

- a. Tyranny, manipulation and **control**. In the Bible, authority (leadership) is always about responsibility not about privilege.
- b. The license to pursue **selfish** interests. To lead is always for the purpose of benefiting someone else.
- c. Rights and privileges but rather a great **burden** and heavy responsibility.

### 2. Headship is:

- a. Being the first to lay down **one’s rights**.
- b. Taking **responsibility** for the family. The buck stops here!
- c. Being a humble servant ready to **lead**, to **protect** and to **provide** for the family.

*“The husband is called to lead like Jesus who is the Lion of Judah (Rev 5:5) and the Lamb of God (Rev 5:6) – he was lionhearted and lamblike, strong and meek, tough and tender, aggressive and responsive, bold and broken-hearted. He sets the pattern for manhood.”<sup>27</sup>*

*“Authority, properly understood, involves a death to self every day for those we love. This is what it means to be in charge.”<sup>28</sup>*

## C. Submission

### 1. Submission does *not* mean:

- a. **Inferiority**. As God the Son submits to God the Father, we discover that submission has nothing to do with an inferior status.
- b. Subservience or **agreeing** with everything your husband says or does.
- c. That a wife gets her identity or her spiritual nourishment primarily through her husband.
- d. Unconditional, **blind** obedience. If a human authority misuses his God-ordained role by commanding what God forbids or by forbidding what God commands, then the one under his authority may refuse to obey because in such a circumstance they would be disobeying God (see Acts 5:29).

### 2. Submission is:

- a. A humble recognition of the divine ordering of society. This is simply **how things work**. To submit to one’s husband is “as to the Lord” (v 22).

---

<sup>26</sup> Stott, 221.

<sup>27</sup> John Piper, 73–74.

<sup>28</sup> Andreades, 101.

“Paul is not saying, ‘Obey your husband as if he was God,’ but rather, ‘Obey your husband as a way of obeying God.’”<sup>29</sup>

- b. A **freely chosen** attitude to a lover—not to an ogre.
- c. **Honoring** and affirming one’s husband’s leadership.

#### IV. Lessons Learned

##### A. The original and the copy.

We tend to think that human marriage helps us to understand God; that is, we project onto heaven our models of human relationship. The truth is just the **opposite!** Christ and the church are not like marriage. Marriage is like Christ and the church.

##### B. From “me” to “we”

In marriage, the independent “I” gives way to the new **interdependent** “we.” Submit one to another so that two become one.

##### C. Equality of value yet **difference** in function

There is no question that many have misunderstood and abused the meaning of headship and submission. But we must think clearly. As John Piper says, “Sin didn’t create headship and submission; it ruined them and **distorted** them and made them ugly and destructive.”<sup>30</sup> The blood of Calvary and the Spirit of Pentecost make it now possible to **recover** what has been lost!

##### D. A wife’s beauty is her **husband’s** responsibility.

Is a wife loved because she is beautiful? Or is she beautiful because she is loved? As the years go by, if a wife is not beautiful, it is her husband’s fault!

##### E. Read your **own mail**.

Husband, stop trying to make your wife submit and begin to read your own mail! Love her conditionally. Wife, stop trying to manipulate your husband and read your own mail! Respect his function in the home and submit to his leadership. Both of you, focus on your own need to change not that of your spouse! The Gospel does not tell us to change our spouse so that they become the right person. It calls us to **become** the right person!

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What is the difference between a healthy marriage and an unhealthy one?
2. Paul tells wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. He tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Which command is more difficult?
3. What is the source of a woman’s beauty?
4. What is the source of a man’s strength?
5. Is this passage about marriage or about the church?

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>30</sup> John Piper, 79.



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## THE NAKED TRUTH ABOUT SEX

### Leviticus 18

#### I. Introduction

##### A. Dirt and Spirit

To understand human sexuality, we must first understand who man is; what it means to be a person. Without Genesis 1–2 as a foundation, human sexuality will be little different than **animal mating**. The biblical creation story highlights the fact that man is distinct from animals and thus his bodily existence (including sexuality) has a dimension that is infinitely more than a biological function.

*Then the Lord God formed the man of **dust** from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the **breath** of life, and the man became a living creature. (Genesis 2:7)*

Human persons, therefore, are a sort of **amphibian** (*amphi*, meaning two; *bios*, meaning life): made to live in two dimensions at the same time (flesh and spirit, earth and heaven, with man and with God).

##### B. Blurred Boundaries

Genesis 1–2 emphasizes the boundaries that God has established between darkness and light, himself and the created order, earth and heaven, man and animal, male and female, good and evil, etc. **Paganism** consistently wants to blur these distinctions.

*Why is this so? Was it an unfortunate aberration? Hardly. It is a **theological statement**. If continuity (the idea that all things that exist are part of each other) is to work, both as a philosophical and a practical principle, then there can be no boundaries anywhere in the cosmos. There can be no boundaries between parent and child (hence, incest); there can be no boundaries around marriage (hence, prostitution); there can be no boundaries between members of the same sex (hence, homosexual behavior); there can be no boundaries between humans and animals (hence, bestiality). All these practices were told and acted out in the (pagan) myths... They are theological statements, necessary expressions of the worldview of which they are a part.<sup>31</sup>*

Nowhere in the Bible do we have a clearer expression of the boundaries God places on human sexuality than Leviticus 18. Like a locomotive that remains in its tracks, the boundaries are given not to repress freedom and enjoyment but to **enhance** it!

---

<sup>31</sup> Oswalt, 56f.

## II. Leviticus 18: A Truly Amazing Chapter

### A. Outline of the chapter

Introduction	Sexual Prohibitions	Conclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am the LORD.</li> <li>Don't walk like the Egyptians or the Canaanites.</li> <li>You shall follow my rules.</li> <li>If you follow these rules you will find life through them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incest (6–18)</li> <li>Menstrual uncleanness (19)</li> <li>Adultery (20)</li> <li>Child sacrifice (21)</li> <li>Homosexuality (22)</li> <li>Bestiality (23)</li> </ul> <p><i>(It is probable that this list is suggestive, not exhaustive.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't be unclean and thus incur punishment.</li> <li>Don't be unclean and cause the land to vomit you out!</li> <li>I am the LORD.</li> </ul>
1–5	6–23	24–30

### B. Notes on the text.

- The chapter begins (v 2) and ends (v 30) with the words “I am the LORD (Yahweh) your God.” The Scripture assumes that the One we worship will have a huge impact on our **sexual behavior**.
- The phrase “uncover the nakedness of” occurs repeatedly. Though it can be a euphemistic way of describing sexual relations, the phrase is actually a very good way to describe a **wide range** of sexual misconduct, which results in defiling, abusing, harassing, and treating someone as an object for selfish and perverse pleasure.
- God says “You shall not” **26 times** in this chapter. The prohibitions relate to various kinds of sexual behaviors, but the bulk of the material (vv 6–18) concerns abusive relationships between **family members**. God’s concern is not just incest in the technical sense but any form of inappropriate sexual activity in the family (speaking, touching, bullying, looking, abusing, making fun of, etc.). The Bible contains several tragic examples (Noah, Lot, Judah, Amnon, I Cor. 5, etc.).
- In the following chapter, we find the two most well-known verses in all of Leviticus. It is no accident that the context of chapter 18 and its long list of sexual sins sets the stage for saying:
  - “You shall be **holy**, for I the LORD your God am holy” (19:2).
  - “You shall love your **neighbor** as yourself” (19:18).
- The terms used to describe various sexual sins are instructive. Notice that it is the **activity** that God hates and not the persons themselves; but unless they repent, they will be punished. Sexual sins are:
  - Depravity (v 17; 20:14)—corrupt, crooked
  - An **abomination** (vv 22, 26, 27, 29, 30; 20:13)—disgusting, vile, loathsome
  - A **perversion** (v 23; 20:12)—abnormal, degenerate, lewd
  - A disgrace (20:17)—loss of favor and respect, shame
  - Causes the name of the Lord to be **profaned** (v 21)—disrespect, contempt, to be treated with irreverence

- f. Causes **uncleanness** (vv 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30)—dirty, impure, mixed with foreign matter
  - g. Causes the land to **vomit** you out (vv 25, 28)
6. Leviticus 20:10–21 is a similar passage. It differs from chapter 18 primarily in that it outlines the various **punishments** for different sexual sins and aberrations:
- a. To be **cut off** from the people (18:29; 20:17, 18)
  - b. Put to **death** (20:10–13, 15–16)
  - c. Burned with fire (20:14)
  - d. Their blood is upon them (20:16)
  - e. He shall bear his iniquity/sin (20:17, 19, 20)
  - f. They shall die **childless** (20:20, 21)

### III. Implications and Applications

#### A. Why does God say “No”?

God says “no” 26 times! “Because I say so, that’s why!” But this can make God look like a celestial killjoy. What’s his **hang-up** with sex? It is easy to fall into the trap of legalistic moralism and become a Pharisee who simply recites rules without explaining why. Unless we can answer the **Why?** question, we will neither succeed in discovering what is really at stake in human sexuality nor pass this reality on to the next generation!

God says no to bad sex because:

1. He doesn’t want you to fall into the **perverse exploitation** of sexuality that is practiced by the Egyptians and the Canaanites (vv 1–3). Pharaoh can marry his sister and Canaanites can burn their children as an offering to Molech, but not you!
2. He doesn’t want you to have **tragic consequences** from abusive experiences nor does he want the land to vomit you out (vv 24–30). Sexual license invariably leads to disease, broken families, infertility, isolation, etc.
3. He wants you to enjoy **good sex**. Long before God said “No” to sex he said a resounding “Yes”! “Be fruitful and multiply... naked and unashamed...” (Gen. 1:28; 2:25) is God’s emphatic endorsement of the goodness of human sexuality. God is the one who created sex, and it is good, right, clean, and holy *when it is practiced* within the boundaries that God has established:
  - One **man** and one **woman**
  - In a life-long, exclusive **covenant** of love

God does not want to take away your sexual desires; he wants to **sanctify** them! Don’t look to Egypt or Canaan for sexual fulfillment (Hollywood, psychotherapy, medication, etc.). God’s “No” is so strong in Leviticus because his “Yes” is so glorious in creation and redemption.

*It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot*

*imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*<sup>32</sup>

B. What if someone has done something to me that God says shouldn't be done?

Many today have been **badly hurt** because of tragic behaviors that have been forced upon them (abuse, harassment, bullying, rape, family dysfunction, etc.). Especially within families, when someone who is thought to be "**safe**" turns out to be a "perpetrator," the wounds of such encounters often remain for years to come. The first step in healing may come when we realize how God feels about those who victimize and abuse others in sexual ways.

*I remember very clearly the moment. Sunlight coming in the window onto my desk... And the words leaping out at me... "You shall not (uncover the nakedness of)..." Incest taboos. One after another. I slammed the book shut. I was shocked. I had no idea THAT was in the Bible. I never imagined it might be mentioned there....*

*It didn't matter that my father by now was six years dead. Nor did it matter that long before he'd died, I'd confronted him on all the things he'd done to me. Nor did it even matter that he'd continued to deny them until the day he did die... I never knew that what he did was condemned by HIS God before he ever did it. I never knew he was breaking God's law. But there it was, clear as anything....*

*I will never be able to explain what that moment was like, that discovery of Leviticus 18. I wanted to call up everyone I knew and say, "It was wrong. What he did was wrong. It says so right here, in the Bible." Therapists had told me, my own instincts told me, everything had told me—yet NOTHING told me the way Leviticus told me. Wrong. Condemned. Hateful in the eyes of God. Even as I wanted to yell out, I was struck dumb, speechless. It was wrong, truly truly wrong. And for the first time I felt utterly and absolutely vindicated. For the first time, I felt clean. For the first time I felt that what had happened was between him and his God and he'd have to make his expiation however he did it. I felt absolved. I felt released.*<sup>33</sup>

C. What if I have done to someone else something that God says shouldn't be done?

Many today have not only *been* hurt by sexual abuse, they have themselves hurt others. The past haunts them and they wonder what to do with their **guilt**. Our secular culture has several suggestions for dealing with such guilt:

- **Denial**—"It wasn't what you thought it was...."
- **Redefine** sin—"Homosexuality is no sin. In fact, it's a good thing..."
- **Blame** it on someone or something (parents, environment, genetic code, etc.)—"I was made this way and can't help it."

Jesus came to save us *from* our sins not to leave us *in* them (Matt. 1:21). He came to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:4–10). But to be set free from our past as well as from our perverse desires, we must:

1. **Confess** the truth.
2. Turn from our sin (repentance).

---

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Testimony of Minnie Warburton quoted by Roy Gane, 331f.

3. Invite Christ to come into our lives as Savior and Lord.
4. Offer our **bodies** to God (Rom. 12:1).
5. As much as is possible, make **restitution** for the past.

*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. (I Cor. 6:9–11)*

### Questions for Discussion

1. Genesis explains that human persons are composed of dirt and the Spirit of God. Why is this important and how does it relate to human sexuality?
2. A resurgent paganism today is seeking to blur the boundaries between male and female, man and animal, God and man, marriage and non-marriage, etc. How should Christians respond?
3. How do you imagine most people in our culture today would respond if they encountered Leviticus 18?
4. In a culture that sexualizes almost everything, how should Christians talk about sex?
5. What is the one thing you learned from this lesson that you want to remember and apply? Discuss this with your small group.





# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

### Selected Passages

#### I. Introduction

##### A. Supreme Audacity

In stating that same-sex marriage is a constitutional right, the Supreme Court (June 2015) has **redefined** civilization's most foundational institution. The court's decision is a brazen attempt to change the way we think about gender, family, marriage, civil rights and even God. Although the focus of these studies has been on marriage, we must pause to consider what the Bible says about homosexuality.

##### B. Who Is Mentally Ill?

Until 1973 the American Psychiatric Association listed homosexual practice in its official *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of **Mental Disorders***. Yet today, just 40 years later, it is those who dare to question the legitimacy of same-sex behaviors that are considered unstable and guilty of hate speech.

##### C. The Devil's Dictionary

1. Understanding the issues related to homosexuality will be determined, in large measure, by the vocabulary we use. The devil often wins the battle by redefining behaviors even *before* the conversation begins:
  - Adultery becomes **an affair**.
  - Drunkenness becomes **an addiction**.
  - Abortion becomes **pro-choice**.
  - Gambling becomes **gaming**.
  - Lying and stealing becomes **business and politics**.
  - Blasphemy becomes **freedom of expression**.
2. Nowhere has the change in vocabulary becomes more influential than when it comes to same-sex behaviors. Terminology that was once morally rooted has now become technical (homosexual, same-sex), neutral (lesbian) or emotionally positive (gay). Although modern Bibles typically use the term "homosexual," the word is not the best term to translate the original vocabulary.
  - The men of Sodom were **great** sinners against the Lord (Gen. 13:13).
  - An **abomination** (Lev. 18:22; 20:13).
  - A dog (male cult prostitute) (Deut. 23:17–18; cf. Rev. 22:15).
  - **Dishonorable** passions (Rom. 1:26).
  - Relations that are **contrary to nature** (Rom. 1:26),<sup>34</sup>
  - **Shameless** acts (Rom. 1:27).

---

<sup>34</sup> Part of Paul's argument for sexual morality in Romans 1:18ff. is rooted in "natural law," things that work in accordance with the created order. Especially in dealing with pagans like those in Rome, Paul wanted them to realize that these moral laws are not just true because they are in the Bible. They are in the Bible because they are true! (See J. Budziszewski's *What We Can't Not Know*).

- I Cor. 6:9 and I Tim. 1:10 use words that are translated in various ways: men who practice homosexuality, abusers of themselves with mankind, **effeminate**, boy prostitutes, sodomites.
- “What is contrary to **sound doctrine**” (I Tim. 1:10).
- Unnatural desire (literally, “other flesh”) (Jude 1:7).

D. Let’s Be Clear About This

1. In these passages, the Bible is talking about same-sex **behavior** *not* same-sex **attraction**. We are *all* born with various types and intensities of sinful attractions that predispose us to various immoral behaviors (Gen. 6:5; etc.). The fact that someone may struggle with same-sex attraction is *not* in and of itself a sin any more than someone who struggles with a predisposition to shop-lift. The point is to *resist* temptation not **normalize** it or allow it to define our identity!
2. In these passages, the Bible is *not* talking about those who occasionally stumble or wander astray but about those who make a **conscious, willful, habitual** choice to brazenly refuse God’s plan. Homosexuality not only defines what they *do*. It defines who they *are*. They **self-identify** with their predisposition and orientation. They have seared their conscience (I Tim. 4:2) and no longer know how to blush (Jer. 6:15). They have suppressed the truth and exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones (Rom. 1:18, 26–27). Consequently, God has sent upon them a “strong **delusion** so that they may believe what is false” (II Thess. 2:11).

II. Selected Passages

A. Genesis 18:16–19:29

*Then the Lord said, “Because the **outcry** against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, “I will know.”” (Genesis 18:20)*

The men of Sodom<sup>35</sup> had normalized perverse forms of sexuality that were abhorrent to God and they were militant in trying to convert others to their perverse ways of thinking and acting. The city was not destroyed because it was sinful or even because it was confused about gender. It was destroyed because it refused to **repent**.

B. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13

*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination... If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13)*

In a chapter outlining a long list of sexual prohibitions, homosexuality is placed between a warning against child sacrifice (18:21) and a warning against bestiality (18:23). The death penalty shows the seriousness of this sin in the eyes of God. In the New Testament, the result of such an unrepentant sin would be **excommunication** (cf. I Cor. 5:1–13).

C. Romans 1:18–32

*For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men*

---

<sup>35</sup> Our word “sodomy” comes from the type of sexual sin practiced in this wicked city.

*likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1: 26–27)*

The big question in this chapter is whether homosexuality is the *cause* of God’s wrath or the **manifestation** of it. The problem in Rome was not the absence of truth but the **suppression** of it (Rom. 1:18). The refusal to listen to God resulted in God giving the Romans what they demanded (“God gave them up...” vv 24, 26, 28)—a graphic description of judgment and hell (sinners get what they want).

D. I Corinthians 6:9–11

*Or 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. (I Corinthians 6:9–11)*

The Gospel of Jesus has not only the promise to forgive sin, it has the power to **transform** the heart and life. “Such were some of you...” The New Testament is crystal clear: the purifying blood of Calvary and the sanctifying Spirit of Pentecost can enable sinners to live in victory over their sinful desires and passions of pleasure.

E. I Timothy 1:8–11

*.... The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners... for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers (sex traffickers?), liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine....” (I Timothy 1:9–10)*

Paul is coaching the young pastor Timothy to see the relationship between “sound doctrine” and moral behavior. **False doctrine** leads to immorality. Orthodoxy leads to godly lifestyles.

III. Dis-mything Homosexuality

A. Myth #1. The Bible doesn’t condemn homosexuality.

Amazingly, some who promote homosexuality claim that the Bible is condones such a lifestyle. Either such persons have not actually read the Bible or they have adopted a method of **interpretation** that allows them to say that the Bible doesn’t say what it says. For example:

- The Biblical prohibitions are only relevant for Bible times. Today, however, things have changed and those passages don’t apply to us.
- The Bible is only talking about abusive sexual practices (trafficking, prostitution, rape, etc.) not about loving consensual committed relationship.

B. Myth #2. It doesn’t matter.

Many today pretend that normalizing same-sex behaviors and same-sex marriage is a **private** matter and therefore doesn’t really matter. “Hey, I’m personally opposed to it but I certainly don’t want to force my morality on other people. Let’s just live and let live. It’s no **big deal**.” Really? Consider how normalizing the abnormal:

- Weakens traditional morality and authentic marriages. When one area of sexual ethics is liberalized, other areas also will be liberalized: divorce, adultery, premarital sex, pornography, abortion, etc.

- Decreases the birth rate.
- Opens the door to other “creative” forms of marriage (polygamy, incest, bestiality, etc.).
- Diminishes the authority of the Bible.
- Makes people blind to the grand narrative of Scripture: human history both begins and ends with a wedding because God wants to marry his people!

C. Myth #3. You can’t legislate morality.

But what else *do* you legislate? The government is a very moralistic organization. It tells you the speed you can drive, that 17-year-olds can’t vote, that mistreating people on the basis of skin color is not permitted, that cigarettes are hazardous to your health, and that a brother can’t marry his sister. Don’t be **bullied** into silence by those who pretend moral behavior can’t be legislated.

D. Myth #4. This is hate speech.

To be sure, there is much vitriol on both sides of this issue. But speaking against homosexuality is no more hate speech than speaking against alcoholism means that I hate alcoholics. In fact, one could build a case that speaking against things like alcoholism is the *only* way to show alcoholics how much we really **love** them! Jesus models how we can hate **sin** and yet love sinners.

E. Myth #5. This is about genetics.

We are all born into this world with **perverse** tendencies and inclinations (Gen. 6:5). We are born sinners. But this doesn’t mean we should give in to these desires and allow them to define us. Genetics tells only part of the story about human behavior. We are not **animals** controlled by instincts. We are free moral agents. While I don’t struggle with same-sex attraction, I do struggle with other-sex attraction! But thank God I haven’t defined myself as an adulterer! To tell our children, “Follow your desires and be who you feel like being” is a recipe for social anarchy! Furthermore, this myth perpetuates the idea that change is **impossible**. My genes dictate who I am. Really? But what if I’m “programmed” as a pedophile or a serial killer?

F. Myth #6. This is about equal rights.

It was the linkage of gay rights to the civil rights movements that perhaps more than anything caused our culture to support the homosexual agenda. But is this linkage justified? Is my sexual behavior equivalent to my ethnicity? Further, to pretend that denying marriage to same-sex couples is denying them a civil right is to pretend that there is no agreed upon definition for marriage in the first place. For two men to ask for marriage might be compared to a pacifist wanting to join the army. He certainly has this right but he does *not* have the right to insist that a nonviolent branch of the military be created just for him.<sup>36</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

A. Promote God’s model for the family.

The best way to defeat the homosexual agenda in our country today is to build strong, healthy, stable **traditional** marriages.

B. Get involved.

Stand up and be counted. Don’t be bullied into **silence**. In America the laws are still made by the “consent of the governed.” Let your elected representatives know how

---

<sup>36</sup> Illustration taken from Kevin Deyoung, 145.

you feel about these issues. Support ministries, movements and candidates who support traditional marriage.

C. Love sinners and hate sin.

The last thing we need is to form some sort of cultural Taliban (sharia law) to deal with immorality. Love your neighbor. Listen, **understand**, dialogue. But hate his sin. Remember what Jesus said to the adulterous woman: “Neither do I condemn you. God and sin no more” (John 8:11).

D. Preach the gospel.

Homosexual sin is similar to all other forms of sin: it separates us from God. But thanks be to God, Jesus died for us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). **Politics** will not solve the issues that are tearing our country apart. Only the Gospel of Christ can do that!

### Questions for Discussion

1. Describe some of your own experiences with the “homosexual agenda” at work in our culture today. Have these experiences been positive or negative? Have they confirmed your core beliefs or caused you to question them?
2. Discuss the distinction between same-sex attraction and same-sex behavior. Why is this distinction important?
3. Why do homosexuals tend to self-identify with their orientation? Why is this significant?
4. Why do you think the Bible is so strong in its condemnation of homosexual behavior?
5. Do you find it difficult to love the sinner yet hate the sin? Discuss this.
6. Has this lesson caused you to change the way you think? Explain.



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

### I Corinthians 6:12–20 and Selected Passages

#### I. Understanding the Body: Greek Philosophy or Biblical Theology?

##### A. Cultural Obsession with the Body

As a culture, never before have we been more body-conscious and never before have we been more **confused!** Whether we are talking about sports, obesity, tattoos, pornography, drugs, anorexia, clothing (or lack thereof), diet, or sex, our fixation on the body is evident everywhere we look.

##### B. New Forms for Ancient Heresies

Various forms of **Greek** philosophy influenced the Roman Empire during the early centuries after Christ (Platonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Gnosticism, etc.). They tended to fall into one of two camps when it came to understanding the body:

1. The body is something to be **glorified** because of its beauty and strength (art and statuary, athletics, mythology, etc.).
2. The body is something to be **despised**. At death, the soul can finally be set free from its prison house (immortality of the soul). What matters is the soul (spirit, mind, heart). Matter doesn't really matter.

##### C. A Spiritualized Faith

Even in the New Testament, these Greek **heresies** influenced Christian thinking.<sup>37</sup> In churches today many think of their faith in spiritualized (non-bodily) terms: asking Jesus into my **heart**, getting my **soul** saved, having the **mind** of Christ. Many assume that deepening one's faith means shutting one's eyes to the material realities of this world and focusing on the inner world of the spirit. What does the body have to do with the Christian faith? I'm so glad you asked!

##### D. Back to the Bible

While the contemporary church may talk occasionally about the importance of exercise, diet, and sexual purity, rarely can one find a developed theology of the body.<sup>38</sup> This lesson is a humble attempt to introduce thinking Christians to a revolutionary concept: what **the Bible** says about the body.

#### II. What the Bible Says about the Body

##### A. The Human Body is Unique

While the rest of the created order was *spoken* into existence ("Let there be..."), the creation of man was different. Made in the **image of God**, Adam is composed of dirt and Spirit (Gen. 2:7). His uniqueness is seen in many ways: language, stands erect, dominion, moral behavior, clothing, opposable thumb, etc. Humans come in only

---

<sup>37</sup> For example, Paul's struggles with the church at Corinth concerning sexual immorality (I Cor. 5–6) and their doubts about the resurrection of the body (I Cor. 15; cf. Acts 17:22–34).

<sup>38</sup> One notable exception is Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body." For a good introduction, see Christopher West's *Theology of the Body for Beginners: A Basic Introduction to St. John Paul II's Sexual Revolution*.

two models: **male** and **female**. Humans are not divine and neither are they animals (*Ni ange ni bête*; Pascal). Not only does Adam *have* a body... he *is* a body!

Implications:

- The body is **good**. In the New Testament, Paul will describe that part of man that is hostile to God as “the flesh.”
- The body is different from **animal** bodies while related to them.
- The body is needed to reflect the image of God.
- Gender is a given... not a **choice**.

#### B. God Has a Body

The concept of God taking on a human body is **blasphemous** to Jews (and Muslims) and **irrational** to Greeks. Nothing is more shocking than the enfleshment of God; the incarnation (John 1:14). After his resurrection, Jesus ascended bodily into heaven and promised to return in the same manner (Acts 1:9–11). John calls those who deny these truths **antichrist** (I John 4:1–3).

Implications:

- The material realm is not divorced from the spiritual realm; **matter** matters!
- God now includes a bodily reality in his being.
- In Jesus we see the ultimate **model** of what a human person is meant to be.

#### C. Jesus Gave His Body

Jesus gave not only his time, his talents and his wisdom; he gave his body. “This is my body given for you.” No one forcibly took it; he freely offered his body out of love (John 10:17–18). In his bodily death on the cross, he not only saved our souls but redeemed our bodies! There is **healing** in the atonement (Matt. 8:17) as well as forgiveness of sins. As the wounded healer, Jesus models how all gospel ministry is to be done: through **self-giving** love. “Death is at work in us, but life in you” (II Cor. 4:12).

Implications:

- God could not accomplish our redemption by issuing a **decree** from heaven; he had to come in an embodied presence and lay down his life so others might live.
- Authentic ministry must always be **incarnational**; self-giving love. The bodily death of Christ on the cross illustrates how all true ministry happens.
- The atonement makes possible both the saving of our souls and the redemption of our **bodies**.

#### D. The Resurrection of the Body

It was no disembodied spirit that rose from the dead on Easter morning. Jesus rose bodily. “Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have **flesh** and **bones** as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39). Though his new body had unusual powers (appear behind closed doors, etc.), it was quite “normal.” Though it sounds oxymoronic, Paul calls it a “**spiritual body**” (I Cor. 15:44). When Paul preached in Athens, the philosophers (believing in the immortality of the soul) listened with curious interest—*until* he proclaimed the resurrection of the body. Then they **laughed** (Acts 17:30–34).

Implications:

- Jesus today is at the right hand of God in an embodied form.
- After death, believers will be raised **bodily**.

- Life after death will not be floating about in “heaven” as disembodied spirits but rather a new bodily existence on a new **earth**.
- The human body, therefore, is of inestimable worth!

#### E. God Wants My Body

Though popular preaching emphasizes that God wants our souls (hearts, spirits, minds), the gospel underscores that God wants our bodies as well (Rom. 6:12–14; 8:11; 12:1; Gal. 2:20; etc.)! As believers, we are to **glorify** God in our bodies (I Cor. 6:12–20). Though holy living relates to a wide range of behaviors (speech, actions, diet, exercise, etc.), the New Testament places a special emphasis on how we live out our **sexuality** (cf. I Thess. 4:3–8).

Implications:

- The New Testament refuses to make a hard and fast separation between the soul and the body. The Gospel always addresses us as **whole persons**.
- Biblically, it is impossible to claim to love the Lord with one’s soul (heart, spirit) while serving the devil with one’s body.
- If one’s body is not holy in conduct, there may be reason to question the authenticity of one’s salvation.
- To **take care** of my body is one way to glorify God.

#### F. Ministry to Others Includes Their Bodies

Although Jesus knew that he had been sent into the world to **preach** and to give his life a ransom for others (Mark 1:35–38; 10:45), he consistently showed a genuine concern for bodily needs (sickness, hunger, etc.). Though he knew that disease was a **symptom** of a deeper root problem (sin), he did not cease to minister to those who were physically sick. This means that ministry to human bodies (sickness, hunger, trafficking, etc.) is a legitimate activity in and of itself.

Implications:

- Those who minister to physical needs (doctors, relief workers, etc.) must also look for opportunities to apply the gospel to the **root causes** of human suffering (sin, unbelief, false doctrines, etc.).
- Those who minister to spiritual needs (pastors, missionaries, etc.) must also look for opportunities to apply the gospel to all areas where sin has had devastating effects (disease, hunger, oppression, ecology, poverty, etc.).
- In ministry to others we should emulate Jesus and minister to the **whole person**.

### III. Six Affirmations about the Body from I Corinthians 6:12–20.

#### A. Confusion about the Body in Corinth Community Church

Of all the churches in the New Testament, Corinth had more problems related to misunderstandings about the body than any other church. Greek **philosophical** influences (Platonism, Gnosticism, etc.) were undoubtedly still present even in the lives of the redeemed. Many in the church assumed that sexual immorality was no big deal (I Cor. 5–6) while others questioned the resurrection of the body (I Cor. 15).

#### B. Two Misleading Slogans

Similar to evangelicals today, the Corinthians liked to reduce their faith to a **cliché**, a sound-bite; something that would fit on a bumper sticker or coffee mug. Two slogans in Corinth tended to dominate people’s thinking when it came to sexuality. It wasn’t



that these slogans were *wrong* (possibly they were quoting Paul himself), it was that they were **partial** and simplistic.

1. “*All things are lawful for me*” (6:12; 10:23). This slogan was true in that it underscored the **freedom** one has in Christ. We are no longer under law but grace. Christ loves me just as I am. But this slogan was toxic in that many believed it gave them **license** to do whatever they wanted. My soul is right with God so it doesn’t matter what I do with my body. Right?
  2. “*Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food*” (6:13). What food is to the stomach, sex is to the body. The body is meant for sex and sex for the body. God made the body and God made sex, so we should follow our **natural urges** and feel no guilt in doing so. In fact, to deny these sexual urges is as harmful as to refuse to eat. Like animals, we should obey our instincts. Right?
- C. Six Affirmations about the Body
1. My body is my **servant** not my master. “All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything” (6:12).
  2. My body is for **the Lord**. “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (6:13).
  3. My body will be **raised**. “God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (6:14). The gospel proclaims the resurrection of the body not just the immortality of the soul.
  4. My body is a member of **Christ’s body**. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (6:15–17). Therefore, be careful what you do with your body!
  5. Sexual sins are **serious**. “Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body” (6:18).
  6. My body is a **temple** of the Holy Spirit. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?... You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So **glorify** God in your body” (6:19–20). Diet, exercise, clothing and especially your sexuality all reflect on your Creator and Redeemer. Christian **liberty** is not the right to do what I want but the power to do what I ought!

### Questions for Discussion

1. What did you learn from this lesson that you did not know before?
2. Why do you think our culture is so obsessed with the body? Why do you think it is so confused?
3. At a personal level do you struggle more with glorifying the body or with despising the body? What causes you to think this way?
4. Without naming names, describe someone you know who believes they can have a right relationship with God in their soul while living in sin with their bodies. What enables them to live with such contradiction?
5. Do you think Christians obsess about sexual sins or is there perhaps a good reason for focusing on sexuality?
6. Describe a personal experience when you struggled to know whether you should minister to a person’s soul or his/her body. How did you handle the situation?



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## AGAPE AND EROS

### I John 4:7–21

#### I. In Love with Love

A. While dating, I remember the first time I said to Katy, “I love you.” But as I reflect on what *I said*, I realize that what *I meant* was “I love the way I **feel** when I’m with you.” Which is another way of saying “I love **me!**” Not very romantic!

B. Narcissus and his kin.

A nymph (nature spirit) named Echo fell in love with another nymph named Narcissus. Although she was beautiful and good, Narcissus rejected her love and treated her cruelly. The gods devised a special punishment for him because of his refusal to love goodness and beauty. Once on a hunt, he stopped at a fountain of water to drink. On seeing his reflection in the water, he was captivated by his own beauty and fell in love with himself! He gave up eating and sleeping so he could gaze at himself. Growing thin, pale and ugly, he died... destroyed by **self-love**. A purple and white flower sprang up where he had died that bears his name. Narcissus was last seen crossing the River Styx on his way to Hades, gazing over the side of the boat into the water, hoping again to see the reflection of his face.

1. This story from Greek mythology teaches that the refusal to love others causes me to love myself. The Bible teaches just the opposite: self-love makes me **incapable** of loving others. Getting the *cause and effect* right is very important.

2. Today, psychologists label someone who has an excessive admiration for himself as having Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Some of the traits are listed below:

- a. A grandiose sense of self-importance.
- b. Believes he is “special”; a sense of **entitlement**.
- c. Requires excessive **admiration** and affirmation.
- d. Uses other people for personal advantage.
- e. Unable to love others; lacks the capacity for **empathy** or compassion.

C. Self-love is inherent in our (fallen) nature. “What’s in it for me?” is the **default position** for almost every human decision and activity. For marriage and family to work as intended, self-love must be replaced by **other-centered** love. But how? The one thing marriage demands is the one thing I can’t do!

#### II. The Problem with Language

Much of the difficulty in understanding “love” relates to the limited **vocabulary** we have in English. I “love” Oreos and milk, my wife, my country, God, the guys in my small group, tennis, my parents, the smell of honeysuckle, etc. No wonder we are so **confused** about

love. The Greek language is much richer. At least four different words were available to Greeks to help them describe their affections:

- A. *Storge* describes **natural affection** and things we “like.” Parents have *storge* for their children, people have *storge* for their pets, etc. This word is not found in the New Testament except in compound forms (Rom. 1:31; 12:10; II Tim. 3:3).
- B. *Philia* is used for **friendship** and describes the attraction people feel for one another as family members, friends, guests, etc. It is used often in the New Testament.

*We picture lovers face to face but friends **side by side**; their eyes look ahead. That is why those pathetic people who simply “want friends” can never make any. The very condition of having friends is that we should want something else besides friends.*<sup>39</sup>

- C. *Eros* describes **desire**, longing, craving, want. It is the **feeling** that I feel. It can be used of many types of relationships but especially of romantic and sexual desire. Though this was by far the most common word in the Greek language for describing “love,”<sup>40</sup> it is notable that it occurs **zero** times in the New Testament! In its crudest expression, it is the desire to control and use others for the benefit one receives. See for example, the hit song “Vehicle” sung by the group *The Ides of March* (1970):

*I'm a friendly stranger in a black sedan, won't you hop inside my car.  
I got pictures, got candy, I'm a lovable man  
And I can take you to the nearest star.  
I'm your vehicle baby, I'll take you anywhere you want to go.  
I'm your vehicle woman but I'm not sure you know  
That I love ya, I need ya, I want ya, got to have you child,  
Great God in heaven you know I **love** you.*

- D. *Agape* was used only rarely in classical Greek but became the dominant word for love in the New Testament. *Agape* is based in the very **nature** of God (God is agape). *Agape* is not based in feelings or desire but rather in **the will**. Its source is found not in the “loveableness” of the other but in the character of the lover. Thus Christians are called to love even their enemies! *Agape* only wants what is best for the other. This is the **supreme virtue**, even greater than faith and hope (I Cor. 13:13).

- “‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’” (Matt. 22:36–40)
- “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...” (John 3:16)
- “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8)
- “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Rom. 13:10)
- “...If I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing... [Love] does not insist on its own way... Love endures all things... Love never ends... So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (I Cor. 13)
- “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (I John 3:16)

---

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 98.

<sup>40</sup> See Plato’s *Symposium*, for perhaps the most famous example.

It is especially in the contrast between Eros and Agape that we see the **revolutionary** nature of the love that Gospel makes possible.

Eros	Agape
Self-seeking, self-serving: It's about me.	<b>Self-giving</b> : It's about you.
<b>Ego-centric</b> (narcissistic)	Other-centered
Based on <b>emotions</b> and feelings	Based on the will
Clutches, controls, possesses	Releases, yields, lets go
Seeks to get	Seeks to <b>give</b>
Must be earned, merited, deserved	A free gift, <b>undeserving</b>
Dependent on the worth of the beloved	Dependent on the <b>character</b> of the lover
"I love you because you are beautiful."	"You are beautiful because I love you."
A human quality.	A <b>divine</b> quality.

*Eros and Agape introduce us to two radically different **world views**; two opposite approaches to life. Eros-religion and Agape-religion, Eros-ethics and Agape-ethics, Eros-marriage and Agape-marriage. It is naïve to assume that Christians are immune from Eros-religion. Alas! Like a **poisonous** toxin, it has infiltrated the thinking and the behavior of many who call themselves followers of Christ.*

*Eros-love seeks, not my neighbor for his own sake, but my neighbor **as a means** to the satisfaction of my needs or to my advancement in good.... But Agape has no place for self-love.... Self-love is the great enemy which must be overcome. Self-love separates man from God; it blocks the channels of self-spending and self-offering, both towards God and towards man.<sup>41</sup>*

### III. The Infallible Mark of a Christian: I John 4:7–21

John has a lot to say about agape. In 15 verses he uses the term 27 times! Few passages help us more than this one to grasp the revolutionary reality the Gospel introduced into human life. Six great truths about agape-love.

#### A. **God** is agape (vv 8, 16).

Notice that John does *not* say "Love is God." Love does not define God. God defines love! To say "love is God" makes "Love" my god; it makes an idol of my **desires**! John tells us that love is not just what God *does*; it is who he *is*! His essence, his very nature is *agape*. This would make no sense if God were not tri-une. Other "deities" may express love but only the God of the Bible can *be* love! Because God is love, love comes from him (v 7). He is the only **source** of agape! Philanthropists and humanitarians may show pity, generosity and even compassion; but when they leave God out of the equation, they prove they are motivated *philia*, *storge* or *eros*... not *agape*!

#### B. Agape is a **choice**.

No one "falls into" *agape*! *Agape* is not a **feeling**, it is a choice, an act of the will. As such, agape can be extended to anyone: lepers, enemies, abusers, jerks, etc. Agape is not based on the worthiness of the one loved but on the character of the lover. God loves us not because we are loveable but because it is his nature to love. In a similar way, our love for God and for others is also a choice. "Beloved, let us love one

<sup>41</sup> Nygren, 168–70.

- another..." (v 7). John is urging us to make a choice. "This is the love of God: that we keep his **commandments**" (I John 5:3).
- C. Agape is **self-giving** not self-serving.
- Other forms of affection (*eros, philia*, etc.) are determined by how they affect **me**: I love Oreos because they taste good, I love my country because it has been good to me, I love my children because I'm proud of them, I love God so that he will bless me, etc. This polluted Eros-religion can unfortunately be found in the church!<sup>42</sup> John writes his letter to correct such **heretical** thinking! "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." (I John 3:16).
- D. Agape had **redemptive** power.
- Eros* is ego-centric and therefore seeks to build up myself at the expense of others. *Philia* shows concern for others but only as there is a mutuality of benefits. *Agape* alone has the power to redeem and save because it aims at what is best for the other. God did not love us because we were beautiful.<sup>43</sup> We became beautiful because he loved us! His love is the **cause** of our worth not the effect. Agape-love is the most **powerful** force in the universe. It has the power to redeem the whole world!
- E. Agape is the foolproof **evidence** that one has been born of God.
- In the 1<sup>st</sup> century as in the 21<sup>st</sup>, it was not always easy to **discern** the true Christians from the false. Was it their morality? Perhaps their dress? Worship? Was it their doctrinal beliefs? For John, the presence (or absence) of *agape* was the sure-fire proof of one's relationship to God. "Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love" (v 7-8). "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a **liar**" (v 20). The fruit of the Spirit is *agape* (Gal. 5:22). You will know them by their fruit!
- F. Agape is **impossible**!
- All the descendants of Adam and Eve are born ego-centric. "It's all about me." This means *agape* is simply impossible... without a miracle of grace. *Agape* is not the result of study and hard work. It must be **experienced**! Only those who have received *agape* are able to share it with others. This is exactly what the Gospel makes possible: an infusion of divine love.
- This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (I John 3:16).
  - ...whoever loves has been **born of God**... (I John 4:7).
  - We love because he first loved us (I John 4:19).
  - ... God's love has been **poured** into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5).

---

<sup>42</sup> The so-called "Prosperity Gospel" is perhaps the worst example! In its crudest expression, it pretends that Jesus died on a cross so that I can be healthy, wealthy and happy. That is "erotic" in the worst sense of the term!

<sup>43</sup> The fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* captures this truth in a powerful manner. Beauty loved the Beast not because he was handsome and rich but because it was her nature to love the unlovely. Her love transformed him.

### Questions for Discussion

1. English uses one word for “love” and Greek uses at least four. Discuss the significance of this.
2. Think about your own church culture. When people talk about “love” are they talking about *agape* or *eros*? What implications does this have for worship? For fellowship? For ministry?
3. Describe someone in your life who really knew how to love with *agape-love*. What was the explanation for such love?
4. What is hindering you from being the kind of lover God wants you to be?

## Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

Charles Wesley

*Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down;  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
All thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation;  
Enter every trembling heart.*

*Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit,  
Into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in Thee inherit;  
Let us find that second rest.  
Take away our bent to sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be;  
End of faith, as its Beginning,  
Set our hearts at liberty.*

*Come, Almighty to deliver,  
Let us all Thy life receive;  
Suddenly return and never,  
Never more Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in Thy perfect love.*

*Finish, then, Thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in Thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.*



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## MARRIAGE MATTERS!

### Putting It All Together

In our effort to discover what the Bible has to say about marriage, we've covered a lot of ground. In this final session, let's try to summarize what we have learned.

#### I. Marriage is what the Bible is **all about**.

- A. The Bible **begins** with a wedding (Eden) and **ends** with a wedding (the marriage of the Lamb). The relationship between God and Israel is described as a wedding (Sinai) and Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding (Cana), thus manifesting his glory and the real reason he came.
- B. Thus we see that God's great purpose for men and women is not simply to forgive their sin (Judge) or even to give them birth (Father). What he really wants is for each of us is an **intimate**, face-to-face relationship (Husband).

#### II. Marriage is a **great mystery**.

In the classic passage about marriage (Eph. 5:22–33), Paul surprises us by explaining that what he is really writing about is **Christ** and **the church**! This is a “profound mystery,” he explains. The “mystery” of marriage reveals that:

- A. Just as three Persons are one in the Trinity, so it is in marriage. Marriage is a **union** of **differences** (male and female). And just as the Triune God is creative, so is marriage. It is the union of differences that makes the marriage **fertile**. Two becomes one then one becomes three. Same-sex marriages are barren and thus a contradiction in terms.

*God is an eternal Communion of Persons.... And here is why we exist: Love, by its nature, desires to expand its own communion.... God imprinted in our sexuality the call to participate in a “created version” of his eternal “exchange of love.” ...In this way, sexual love becomes an icon or earthly **image** in some sense of the inner life of the Trinity.<sup>44</sup>*

- B. Submission is not inferiority. The woman's role in submitting to her husband is similar to Christ's role in submitting to his Father. There is an equality of **value** but a difference of **function**.
- C. Headship is not superiority. Far from being a place of perks and privileges, to be head of the home is a position of great **responsibility**. In God's eyes, to be a leader means to be the first one to serve!

#### III. Marriage has basic ingredients.

The Bible emphasizes certain foundational realities that are essential to marriage. Today, when marriage is being redefined, these basic ingredients need to be highlighted once again:

- A. **One** man and **one** woman. Though many cultures have practiced polygamy, the biblical model (Genesis 1–2) insists that God's original intention is one man and one woman.

---

<sup>44</sup> West, 7–8.

- B. Gender distinction of **male** and **female**. Gender is not a matter of personal choice but is assigned providentially. Gender distinction goes to the core of marriage.
- C. The actual marriage occurs when a **covenant** is made (vows of faithfulness). In the Bible, such a covenant is:
- Exclusive. “Forsaking all others...”
  - Comprehensive. “For better, for worse...”
  - Irrevocable. “Till death do us part...”
- IV. Husbands are to **love** their wives.
- A. The word in Greek is not *eros* but *agape* (**self-giving** love). The husband is to lay down his life and give up his rights and sacrifice everything for his wife—even as Christ did for the church.
- B. When a husband allows sin to define his marriage, he tends to fall into one of two ditches:
- He becomes a silent, passive **wimp**.
  - He becomes a domineering **bully**.
- C. A husband is responsible for:
- **Leadership**: direction, purpose, mission.
  - **Protection**: keeping away dangers to the home.
  - **Provision**: meeting the needs of those in the family.
- D. A great illustration of such husband-love is that of Robertson McQuilkin. When his wife developed Alzheimer’s disease, he left his position as president of Columbia Bible College and Seminary. He explained his decision this way: “The decision was made in a way forty-two years ago when I promised to care for Muriel in sickness and in health ‘til death do us part” (quoted by Eggerichs, 169f). McQuilkin was startled by the response to his decision to give up his job. People were incredulous that he would do such a thing! McQuilkin was baffled: isn’t this what it means to make marriage vows? Isn’t this what it means to love your wife as Christ loved the church?
- V. Wives are to **respect** their husbands and **submit** to them.
- A. To submit is not subservience or agreeing with everything a husband may say or do. It is certainly not blind obedience. Rather it is **honoring** her husband as head of the home and appealing to him to lead wisely. It is like **dancing**. When leading and following is done rightly, though conscious to the couple dancing, it is hardly noticed by onlookers.
- B. When a wife allows sin to define her marriage, she tends to fall in one of two ditches:
- She becomes a conniving **manipulator**.
  - She becomes a passive **doormat** who is desperately needy.
- VI. Marriage needs **a mission, a purpose**.
- A. Marriage needs a purpose for me (the spouse).
- Though many enter marriage for the purpose of becoming happy, this is not a suitable goal. Marriage is meant to make me **holy** far more than to make me happy. It is designed by God as the perfect workshop for creating saints. We should enter marriage with the same purpose as monks and nuns enter monasteries: to become holy.



*It's sort of like trying every key on a large ring of keys to see which one will open the Door of Life. The one labeled, "My spouse will make me happy," doesn't seem to work. The pretty one called "Happy little home" doesn't work either. The gnarled one named "Protect yourself" doesn't fit. Well, I'll be doggone. There is only one key here that opens the door, and it's this one—"I am here to learn how to love." Huh. It is the last key most of us try. But it opens the door all right, and then we can get on with actually living our lives.<sup>45</sup>*

B. Marriage needs a purpose for us (the couple).

Though multiple purposes may come to mind, one of the major goals for a couple is simply to **know** one another. "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived..." (Gen. 4:1). **Intimacy** is the purpose of marriage—especially emotional oneness, naked transparency, fact-to-face communion.

C. Marriage needs a purpose for our family in relation to the watching world.

Trouble comes when a couple decides that their mission is their kids or their home. As John Eldredge says, "A beautiful you and a beautiful me in a beautiful place forever is not the right vision for a marriage. It backfires on you; it betrays you.... The vision is too self-centered, too inwardly turned. Like a bad toenail."<sup>46</sup> The only purpose worth having is mission to **glorify God** through covenant-keeping love.

VII. Marriage is **really hard**.

- A. The most dangerous food is wedding cake! Entering marriage is "like taking Cinderella and Huck Finn, tossing them in a submarine, and closing the hatch."<sup>47</sup> It is the union of two **incompatible** people! Why would God call us to such madness? Because he knows it is the best place to transform us into the image of Jesus.
- B. John Piper entitles the introduction to his book on marriage, "Marriage and **Martyrdom**."<sup>48</sup> Marriage is the best place to learn how to die to self-interest and live for someone else!
- C. My spouse does not **cause** me to be the way I am; like a mirror, she **reveals** the way I am! The great question in marriage is not, therefore, "Did I marry the right person?" but rather, "Am I *becoming* the right person?" This means that what many people call a marriage crisis is in reality a crisis of **faith**.

VIII. Marriage sometimes **breaks**.

- A. When marriage is seen as a **covenant**, then one realizes the only way to destroy it is to break the **vows** on which the covenant is founded. God apparently **divorced** the ten northern tribes of Israel when they persisted in their rejection of him and insisted on worshipping other gods (Jer. 3:6–10).
- B. Though God's original goal for marriage was no divorce, the Scriptures recognize that sometimes the covenant simply cannot survive when one of the partners is hell-bent on separating. Two grounds for divorce are given in Scripture:
- **Sexual immorality**. If a spouse insists that he/she wants another partner and confirms that desire by sexual relations, then divorce is permitted (though not mandated).

---

<sup>45</sup> Eldredge, 197f.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> John Piper, 13–17.

- **Desertion** of the unbeliever. If an unbelieving spouse abandons a believing spouse, the believer is permitted to let him/her go (I Cor. 7: 10–15).
- C. Even though all divorces are the result of sin, not all divorces are sinful. Christians know that reconciliation is possible when God’s grace is applied to the situation. But sometimes, the point of no return is reached and divorce happens even in a “Christian” home. Though God hates divorce, he does not hate **divorcees**.
- IX. Marriage is **possible**—with divine help!

The greatest thing one can do for one’s marriage is to develop a deep and genuine relationship with **Jesus Christ**. A speck of sand—in the eye it is an irritation; in the oyster, it makes a pearl!

- X. Marriage is **worth it**.

Though the **cost** is great the benefits are beyond your wildest dreams. Surpassing blessings that come from education, financial success and professional advancement, a healthy marriage is perhaps the **greatest joy** possible in this world. In his book *Love & War*, author John Eldredge tells of a wedding he performed where he shared the following message with the bride and groom:

*Daniel, Megan, in choosing marriage you have chosen an assignment at the frontlines in this epic **battle** for the human heart. You will face hardship, you will face suffering, you will face opposition, and you will face a **lie**.... A lie is going to come to both of you, starting very soon, in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. It can’t be done. It’s too hard. We had unrealistic expectations. It isn’t worth it. The lie to you, Megan, will be, “You are nothing more than a disappointment.” And the lie to you, Daniel, will be, “You are not really man enough for this.” And so, I have two words for you today. Words that I want you to keep close in your hearts as you go forward: You are. Megan, you are radiant, you shimmer, you shine, you are a treasure of a woman, a gem, you are. Daniel, you are a man, you are strong, and you are valiant. You have what it takes. Hold this close to your hearts. It can be done. And it is worth it.<sup>49</sup>*

### Make It Personal

Take a moment and write down one thing you want to remember from this lesson. Focus especially on how you want to apply this truth in your life and in your marriage.

---

---

---

---

---

<sup>49</sup> Eldredge, 5-6.



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## ANSWERS

### *Eden: The Garden Variety of Marriage*

- I. (A) box top/picture; (B) husband and wife; (C) foundations; (D) why; (E) God; God; God; (F) begins; end
- II. (A) differences; (A1) pinnacle; (A2) dominion; (A3) image of God; (A4) breathed; (A5) speaks; (A6) free moral agent; (A7) mating; (B1) one; one; (B2) Gender; (C) equal; different; (D) fertility; (E1) emotional; (E2) unselfconscious; (F) trumps; (G) reproduce; reflect the image; (H1) Shame; Guilt; Fear; Blame; (F2) domination; manipulation; (F3) competitive
- III. (A) image of God; (B) most important; (C) intimacy; (D) children

### *Sinai: A Covenant of Love*

- I. (A) works righteousness; (A1) before; Egypt; (B1) after; already are; (B2) covenant; (B3) wedding; Beulah; bride; husband; whoredom
- II. blood; water; (A) Covenant; relationship; (A1) redemption; chose; love story; (A2) vows; I will; I will; I will; we will; (A3) Music; trumpet; Symbols; sign; A reception; fear and trembling; (B) Law; behavior; (B1) love; (B2) good; Reveals; Convicts; Christ; to live; (C) Tabernacle; intimacy; (C1) live together; (D) broken; divorce; faithfulness
- III. prototype; (A) Initiating; pursues; silence; (B) Responding; choice; manipulation; (C) Romantic; (D) Vows; Exclusive; Comprehensive; Irrevocable; (E) Obligations; (F) divorce; grounds; (G) ceremony; dignity; joy

### *Cana: Glimpse of Glory*

- I. (A) strange; (A1) unfamiliar; (A2) launches; inconspicuous; (A3) wine; blood; (A4) manipulating; rebuking; (A5) servant(s); (B1) Jesus; (B2) sign; (C) timing; hour; identity; mission; (D) commentary; (D1) sign; faith; believe; life; (D2) first; (D3) glory; (D4) believe; (E1) the Temple; (E2) bridegroom; best man; bride; Church
- II. (A) the ordinary; invited; Water; (B) cosmic significance; began; end; model; breaks; distorted; disappears; (C) bridegroom; metaphor; recognize; (C1) wedding guests; romance; (C2) wedding feast; invitation; (C3) virgins; prepared; (C4) Christ and the church; reflection; (C5) betrothed; pure devotion

### *The Wedding of the Lamb: Happily, Ever After*

- ending; happily ever after; worse
- I. (A) spiritual power; (B) Jerusalem; Babylon; citizen; (C) women; prostitute; bride
  - II. (A1) Antichrist; (A3) sexual immorality; (A5) gaudy; (A6) Christians; (A9) deceives; (B1) the beast; (B5) hate; (C1) already happened; (C2) come out; (C3) themselves; (C4) bridegroom; bride; (D1) Hallelujah Chorus; (D2) Marriage of the Lamb; invited
  - III. (A) quality; bride; (B) thirsty; conquer; Lamb's book of life; (C1) beauty; (C2) clear as glass; (C3) cube; (C6) tree of life; (C7) face to face
  - IV. (A) Faithful; (B) white horse; (C) destroy; reign
  - V. (A) marriage; (B) redefine; (C) mirror; (D) choice; clothing; ready

### ***When the Sizzle Fizzles: What Sin Does to Marriage***

- I. (A) saint; holy; (B) most difficult; connection; (C) dysfunctional
- II. standard; ought to be; (A) image of God; (B) man; woman; (C) one; (D) differences; barren; (E) Naked; (F) very good; (G) parents; (H) value; function; headship; serving; giving; helper; God
- III. The Fall; (A) silence; (B) deceived; usurping; (C) shame; transparency; (D) blame; (E) disunion; competition; abusers; wimps; manipulators; doormats
- IV. highlights; (A) two; violence; (B) intermarry; (C) drunk; (D) self-preservation; (E) incestuous; (F) choose; favoritism; sibling rivalry; (G) bitter; (H) deception; (I) raped; (J) prostitute
- IV. (A) the standard; (B) dysfunction; sin; (C) diagnose; (C1) polygamy; (C2) Competition; (C3) silent; manipulate; (C4) Secrets; (C6) Incest; (C7) Blame; (C9) Homosexuality; (C11) Alcohol; (D1) Confession; label; (D2) Repentance; (D3) forgiveness

### ***Marriage: A Profound Mystery***

- I. (A1) right person; (A2) Fall; (A4) repeat steps 1, 2, and 3; (B1) theology; metaphor; definition; (B2) Christ and the church; reveal; (B2a) difference; enhances; (B2b) Headship; (B2c) resplendent in glory; (B2d) preparation
- II. (A) introduction; (A3) transition; (A4) one another; (B) voluntarily; equality; (C) their own; (D) respect; attitude; unconditionally
- III. (A) Equal; different; roles; head; uniformity; to love; to submit/respect; (A1) love; (A1a1) gave himself up; (A1a2) sanctify; (A1a3) cleanse; (A1a4) present; (A1b) self-interest; (A2) submit/respect; creation; redemption; (B1a) control; (B1b) selfish; (B1c) burden; (B2a) one's rights; (B2b) responsibility; (B2c) lead; protect; provide; (C1a) Inferiority; (C1b) agreeing; (C1d) blind; (C2a) how things work; (C2b) freely chosen; (B2c) Honoring
- IV. (A) opposite; (B) interdependent; (C) difference; distorted; recover; (D) husband's; (E) own mail; become

### ***The Naked Truth About Sex***

- I. (A) animal mating; dust; breath; amphibian; (B) Paganism; theological statement; enhance
- II. (B1) sexual behavior; (B2) wide range; (B3) 26 times; family members; (B4) holy; neighbor; (B5) activity; (B5b) abomination; (B5c) perversion; (B5e) profaned; (B5f) uncleanness; (B5g) vomit; (B6) punishments; (B6a) cut off; (B6b) death; (B6f) childless
- III. (A) hang-up; Why?; (A1) perverse exploitation; (A2) tragic consequences; (A3) good sex; man; woman; covenant; sanctify; (B) badly hurt; "safe"; (C) guilt; Denial; Redefine; Blame; (C1) Confess; (C4) bodies; (C5) restitution; some of you

### ***Straight Talk About Homosexuality***

- I. (A) redefined; (B) Mental Disorders; (C) an affair; an addiction; pro-choice; gaming; business and politics; freedom of expression; (C2) great; abomination; Dishonorable; contrary to nature; Shameless; effeminate; sound doctrine; (D1) behavior; attraction; normalize; (D2) conscious; willful; habitual; self-identify; delusion
- II. (A) outcry; repent; (B) excommunication; (C) manifestation; suppression; (D) transform; (E) False doctrine
- III. (A) interpretation; (B) private; bid deal; (C) bullied; (D) love; sin; (E) perverse; animals; impossible
- IV. (A) traditional; (B) silence; (C) understand; (D) Politics

### ***The Theology of the Body***

- I. (A) confused; (B) Greek; (B1) glorified; (B2) despised; (C) heresies; heart; soul; mind; (D) the Bible
- II. (A) image of God; male; female; good; animal; choice; (B) blasphemous; irrational; antichrist; matter; model; (C) healing; self-giving; decree; incarnational; bodies; (D) flesh; bones; spiritual body; laughed; bodily; earth; (E) glorify; sexuality; whole persons; take care; (F) preach; symptom; root causes; whole person
- III. (A) philosophical; (B) cliché; partial; (B1) freedom; license; (B2) natural urges; (C1) servant; (C2) the Lord; (C3) raised; (C4) Christ's body; (C5) serious; (C6) temple; glorify; liberty

### ***Agape and Eros***

- I. (A) feel; me; (B) self-love; (B1) incapable; (B2b) entitlement; (B2c) admiration; (B2e) empathy; (C) default position; other-centered
- II. vocabulary; confused; (A) natural affection; (B) friendship; side by side; (C) desire; feeling; zero; love; (D) nature; the will; supreme virtue; revolutionary; [Eros table column: Ego-centric; emotions]; [Agape table column: self-giving; give; undeserving; character; divine]; world views; poisonous; as a means
- III. (A) God; desires; source; (B) choice; feeling; commandments; (C) self-giving; me; heretical; (D) redemptive; cause; powerful; (E) evidence; discern; liar; (F) impossible; experienced; born of God; poured

### ***Marriage Matters: Putting It All Together***

- I. all about; (A) begins; ends; (B) intimate
- II. great mystery; Christ; the church; (A) union; differences; fertile; image; (B) value; function; (C) responsibility
- III. (A) One; one; (B) male; female; (C) covenant
- IV. love; (A) self-giving; (B) wimp; bully; (C) Leadership; Protection; Provision
- V. respect; submit; (A) honoring; (B) manipulator; doormat
- VI. a mission, a purpose; (A) holy; (B) know; Intimacy; (C) glorify God
- VII. really hard; (A) incompatible; (B) Martyrdom; (C) cause; reveals; faith
- VIII. breaks; (A) covenant; vows; divorced (B) Sexual immorality; Desertion; (C) divorcees
- IX. possible; Jesus Christ
- X. worth it; cost; greatest joy; battle; lie



# Marriage Matters

Examining the Biblical roots of civilization's most significant institution

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Jay E. *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980.
- Adreades, Sam A. *enGendered: God's Gift of Gender Difference in Relationship*. Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2015.
- Arnold, Bill T. *Seeing Black & White in a Gray World: The Need for Theological Reasoning in the Church's Debate over Sexuality*. Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2014.
- Book of Common Prayer*. New York: Oxford, 1990.
- Budziszewski, J. *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide*. Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2003.
- Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress in Modern English*. Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1998.
- Chesterton, G. K. *In Defense of Sanity*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011.
- Comiskey, Andrew. *Strength in Weakness: Healing Sexual and Relational Brokenness*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003.
- Crabb, Larry. *The Silence of Adam: Becoming Men of Courage in a World of Chaos*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Deyoung, Kevin. *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* Wheaton: Crossway, 2015.
- Dobson, Dr. James. *Marriage under Fire: Why We Must Win this Battle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004.
- Eggerichs, Dr. Emerson. *Love & Respect: The Respect He Desperately Needs*. Nashville: Integrity, 2004.
- Eldredge, John. *Love & War: Finding the Marriage You've Dreamed Of*. New York: Doubleday, 2009.
- Ellul, Jacques. *The Meaning of the City*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- Esolen, Anthony. *Defending Marriage: Twelve Arguments for Sanity*. Charlotte: Saint Benedict, 2014.
- Gane, Roy. *NIV Application Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Ingram, Chip. *Love, Sex, and Lasting Relationships: God's Prescription for Enhancing Your Love Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.
- Janney, Rebecca Price. *Then Comes Marriage? A Cultural History of the American Family*. Chicago: Moody, 2010.
- Kreeft, Peter. *How to Win the Culture War: A Christian Battle Plan for a Society in Crisis*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt, 1960.
- . *The Last Battle*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.
- . *The Weight of Glory*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

- McDowell, Sean, and John Stonestreet. *Same-sex Marriage: A Thoughtful Approach to God's Design for Marriage*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. New York: Penguin, 2000.
- Nygren, Anders. *Agape and Eros: A Study of the Christian Idea of Love, Part I*. New York: MacMillan, 1932.
- Oswalt, John N. *The Bible Among the Myths*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Piper, John. *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009.
- Piper, Otto A. *The Biblical View of Sex and Marriage*. New York: Scribner's, 1960.
- Plato. *The Symposium*. Translated by Walter Hamilton. New York: Penguin, 1951.
- Satinover, Jeffrey. *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- Sproul, R. C. *The Intimate Marriage: A Practical Guide to Building a Great Marriage*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1960.
- Stanton, Glenn T. *Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society*. Colorado Springs: Piñon Press, 1997.
- Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More than to Make Us Happy?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- West, Christopher. *Theology of the Body for Beginners: A Basic Introduction to St. John Paul II's Sexual Revolution*. West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2004.
- Yarhouse, Mark A. *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010.
- Yoder, J. H. quoted in John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979.
- Zimmerman, Carle C. *Family and Civilization*. Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008.



## Francis Asbury Society

PO Box 7

Wilmore, KY 40390

859-858-4222

800-530-5673

[fas@francisasburysociety.com](mailto:fas@francisasburysociety.com)

[www.francisasburysociety.com](http://www.francisasburysociety.com)