

# BECOMING THE CHURCH

## “God’s Design for Marriage”

(1 Corinthians 7:1-24, Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:2-9)

As a kid, “don’t stare at the SUN.” “Don’t put anything in your ears.” “Don’t run by the pool.” how did that work out? Today the subject in Scripture is marriage – and how we have managed to break it (typical, everything beautiful in life we have found a way to mess it up.)

- If you are married, This message is NOT to beat you up. Listen up, it’s for your edification!
- If you are single, This message is NOT to beat you up. Listen up, it’s for your edification!
- If you are divorced, This message is NOT to beat you up. Listen up, it’s for your edification
- If you are Re-married and have a blended family, this message is NOT to beat you up. Listen up, for your edification
- ALL of us, regardless of our relationship status on FB, have much to learn about God through His design - Marriage

### MARRIAGE:

**Main Point: There is not a more powerful gospel image on the earth than a healthy, God-honoring marriage.** = a picture of two broken people, committed to unconditionally love each (no matter what) in covenant, in UNION = “ONE FLESH” = Unity=unbreakable, indissoluble, permanent, and unending.

- “Leave and cleave” Hebrew word Gen. 2:24 “Cleave”= GLUE/cement (not meant to be broken/separated)

**READ 1 Corinthians 7:1-6 – Context:** Corinthian Ch asked What about Courtship & Marriage, and Divorce?

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. [NIV: it is good for man not to marry][ESV: it is good for a man NOT to have sexual relations with a woman] <sup>2</sup> But because of [the temptation of] sexual immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. <sup>3</sup> The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise the wife also to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise the husband also does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup> Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. In this immediate context, Paul is giving instructions on the necessity of intimacy in marriage (duty/authority). The physical union between man/wife is to display and reflect the spiritual union:

**Marriage was not only created by God, but it belongs to God.** Marriage IS the doing of God. And the most ultimate thing we can say about marriage is that it is an earthly display of God. The reason it is the display of God is that *in Christ*, God has made a new covenant with his people. In it He promises to forgive, justify, and glorify all who turn to Him from sin and receive Christ as the Savior and Lord and supreme Treasure of their lives. Marriage between a man and a woman was designed, from the beginning, to be a reflection and display of that covenant relationship.

That’s why Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 — “A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”=glue— and then says, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31-32). Leaving parents and holding fast to a wife, forming a new one-flesh union, is meant from the beginning to display this new covenant — Christ’s leaving his Father and taking the church as his bride, at the cost of his life, and holding fast to her in a one-spirit union forever (1 Corinthians 6:17).

**The foundation of covenant-keeping love between a man and a woman is the unbroken covenant between them and God.** = Staying married is not about staying in love. It’s about covenant-keeping.

- Marriage was not only created by God & belongs to God, but is KEPT by GOD. IS yours?

**READ Ephesians 5:25-33** “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.<sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as

their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—<sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”<sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> **However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. = Love and Respect!**

**Don't miss this Covenant language in Ephesians how Paul describes the roles in Marriage.**

- Wives are submitting to the husband as unto the Lord. Jesus submitted Himself to the Father & came to earth
  - The Church submits itself to Christ since He is the Head of the Church, His Body
- Husbands are to love their wives as Jesus loves the Church
- Husbands are to sacrifice for his wife as Jesus gave Himself for the Church
- Husbands are to lead their wives in holiness, leading her in God's Word, Presenting her to the Lord as a loved, radiant, pure, blameless, and beautiful wife
- Husbands are to care for their wives as they care for their bodies (nourish, cherish, support, & honor them)
- Husbands are to honor and affirm their wives as members of Christ's Body, the Church. They are sisters in the faith, daughters of the King.
- Husbands/wives are to seal their spiritual union & emotional commitment physically, being one flesh =UNION
- If husbands do this well, often, with care and intentionality – then wives will find it easier to submit to them.

**READ 1 Peter 3:1-2, 7-9** “In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if any of *them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup> as they observe your pure <sup>3</sup>and respectful behavior. You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with <sup>4</sup>someone weaker [more delicate/fine china], *since she is a woman*; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. <sup>8</sup> <sup>5</sup>To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, <sup>6</sup>loving, compassionate, and humble; <sup>9</sup> not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you would inherit a blessing.”

- A. God DESIGNED us to have our deepest needs to be met by **Him** First (Salv., Love, Security, Joy, Peace, Unity)
- B. Being relational creatures, God also created us to have our secondary needs met by our spouse:
  - “The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable [comparable] for him." GEN. 2:18 – The wife was created by God to complement (help/support) him to accomplish his God-given tasks:

**1 Cor. 7:3** “The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise the wife also to her husband. <sup>4</sup> The wife does not have **authority** over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise the husband also does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.”=Duty and Authority (**mutual** needs & mutual provision)

Together, as husband and wife, leader & helper, male & female – **they are to CREATE:**

- 1) **Unity in Purpose – (worship):** To know, love, and glorify God in our hearts, speech, and action. Worship is why we exist! The Husband and wife begin the center of communal worship of God.
  - **Physical Intimacy** mimics/reflects our spiritual relationship with God: Sex requires **closeness**, (“*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*” Gen. 2:25); learning; listening; responding; vulnerability; selflessness, and timing. The physical act reminds us of our deep intimacy that God requires w us
- 2) **Emotional Intimacy** - formula for companionship (**time + gratitude x Communication = emotional intimacy**)  
Affection, love, and true companionship grow out of a oneness of spirit as each partner models Christ's unconditional love (Amos 3:3). Hearts are most bonded when each other feel safe, encouraged, believed-in, free to be self, free to dream, free to be vulnerable, free to fail, and completely *known* & accepted. =UNION
- 3) **Spiritual Intimacy** – IN Christ, God has called me to serve, love, encourage, cherish, honor, obey, and pray for my spouse. *The closer I become with Christ, the more capacity I have to extend grace and invite my spouse into a deeper relationship with Him!* -Every act in marriage is to help us become more like the Son!! (Rom. 8:29) – Marriage is living sanctification. In marriage, like no other relationship in my life, I will have to *perfect* forgiveness, grace, seeing your spouse through Christ's eyes, and thankless service (Col. 3:23)

4) **Unconditional Partnership** (Covenant) = shared experiences in life - God established marriage as a covenant, not a contract (Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:16-17). (Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 21:2, 9). A genuine loving commitment to a person requires *selflessness* -- your goal being to give and get nothing back (1 Cor 13:5)

1. A *covenant* is based on trust between parties. A *contract* is based on distrust.

2. A *covenant* is based on unlimited responsibility. A *contract* is based on limited liability.

3. A *covenant* cannot be broken if new circumstances occur. A *contract* can be voided by mutual consent.

5) **Labor** – God has called us into union with each other to accomplish His purpose on the earth = spiritual and physical work (kingdom building) – in our lives, in our children, in our church, community, this world, and within His creation. We need each other’s strengths, encouragement, perseverance, and Insight. **“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor”** Eccl. 4:9

6) **Fruitfulness.** Loving and giving ourselves away to others for their spiritual benefit. i.e. Children. The blessing of children in a marriage relationship allows that relationship to reproduce itself physically. It is an example of the "oneness" that results in a marriage (1 Peter 3:7). **“God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”** Gen. 1:28 – we are fruitful as we give ourselves away (to our children, to foster, to adopt, to serve family members, to serve the church, to love others well.

7) **Community** – Marriage is the foundational institution which all other Divine institutions are built: **Family, Church** (community) and Civic **Government**.

To accomplish all 7 of these is impossible. It takes GOD to make it work. Those who welcome the difficulties of marriage, become more like Jesus. Those who bail out of marriage, or quietly wish theirs would end, miss the spiritual benefits of enduring trials. Learning to endure trials makes one more holy.

Love is a battle. Real love hurts. There is NO escape! Marriage as mortification? Marriage as sanctification. How offensive! You must not really love your wife.” This line of thinking misses the point, **for real love is a fight against self-love**. It is a struggle against our fallen and very selfish natures. It is a dying that gives life to another.

**What does the world say?** Marriage is outdated. Marriage is disposable. If it’s tough, give it up. Your happiness is more important than what God wants.

**What does God say? Marriage reflects my covenant love. Marriage is a sacred UNION which displays the gospel.** **How you treat your marriage may reflect what you think about the gospel.**

#### GOSPEL REMINDERS

- A. We married a flawed person. We married a sinner. Broken Spiritually, emotionally? Baggage?
- B. We can never “complete” or fix our spouse’s flaws: Only Christ can! If you love them, point them to Jesus
- C. Because we are each flawed & broken, even on our best days, conflict is inevitable. How will you handle it?
- D. When we don’t handle conflict well, we begin a cycle of regression:  
(Our *hurts* are rooted in fear, to turn to anger – anxiety -lashing out – resentment – Guilt – Coping)
- E. When our emotional & spiritual needs are met = intimacy; when unmet = intimacy depleted -hurt/loss

## APPLICATION:

- Everyday I will commit myself to seek the Lord; His presence; His Word; and His power to make me the spouse my (husband or wife deserves)
- Everyday I will recommit myself to my spouse afresh. To love them as the Lord loves them. To see them as God sees them. Lord, give me NEW (fresh) eyes.
- Everyday I will seek to bless and serve my spouse in the ways they need
- Everyday I will communicate with my spouse “what can I do to make your day better?”
- Everyday I will make my spouse feel special –using special words, actions, and intentions to bless them
- Everyday I will make my spouse feel that I am the most blessed person in the world to be married to them
- Everyday I will unload his/her burden. I will be a safe space for them emotionally & spiritually