

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT MARRIAGE?

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The Bible's view of marriage is lofty and magnificent. Because of our tendency toward sinful, selfish thinking, and culture's profound influence on us, viewing marriage rightly is a formidable task. We must think and study hard, and depend upon God's word and the Holy Spirit to give us eyes to see. And, we must want to see!

Jesus' high view of marriage is demonstrated in His disciples' reply to Him after His correction of the Pharisees concerning divorce. They were so stunned by the content of His rebuke that they replied, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." (Matthew 19:10)

The Bible teaches us that, in order to live well in it, we must possess a right understanding of the purpose of marriage. This purpose begins with the recognition that our God is Lord over all—that everything that He has created and instituted is designed to bring glory to Him (Romans 11:36). He is to have preeminence in all things—including marriage. Those couples who understand this, and orient themselves in covenant relationship around this theme, position themselves to enjoy a Christian marriage.

In Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-25 we see that marriage is God's design, in which male and female were uniquely made for this purpose. Though both equally made in God's image, they are distinctively different for the purpose of marriage. In the first marriage, God made the woman for the man, gave her to the man, and performed the first marriage union. Marriage is His work, according to His design, and for His particular purpose. As man and woman are made in God's image, marriage is the image of God's own eternal marriage with His people.

When a husband and wife say vows to one another and become married, they should do so with a recognition that the attention is not upon them, but on the Author of marriage. God created the institution and performs the union. Because few understand this, many marriages are entered into and treated casually—and this is why so many are unfulfilling and commitments are so shallow.

In short, the Bible tells us that our marriages declare a covenantal relationship over and above that of the earthly marriage. They are dim pictures of the truth of God's relationship to us through His Son. Christ is the groom to His bride, the church. We cannot escape this witness, regardless of how poorly or well we witness to this fact.

God did not create the union of Christ and the church after the pattern of human marriage. God created human marriage on the pattern of Christ's relation to the church. **Get the order right!** Marriage is a parable or symbol of Christ's relation to His people. Everything that God does has meaning and purpose. God designed marriage very purposefully after the relationship between His Son and the church, which He had planned from all eternity.

Therefore, a biblically informed marriage has as its purpose the same as for all godly living—in everything we are to seek the glory of God. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God, and He has chosen marriage as one of the best instruments through which fallen people may glorify Him. **Jesus will never leave His bride!**

There are several other purposes in marriage, all under the umbrella purpose of the display of God's glory. We've looked at one of these above, which is the representative purpose; that is, that in our marriages we represent the relationship between Christ and His church. This is testimonial to the world. Additionally, we need to consider that the Bible teaches that to accomplish God's purposes for marriage, He uniquely designed man and wife to provide companionship, in order to fulfill His purposes of procreation, sexual fulfillment, and protection. Lastly, the Bible indicates that in marriage we are positioned to become more like Christ in the context of a relationship that requires the greatest degree of love, commitment, sacrifice, etc. Therefore, it is a restraint of sin, an exposure of hearts, and the necessity of other-centeredness and love.

**Check it out: Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:18-25; 3:20; 5:1, 2; Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:8, 9; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 5:22ff; 1 Cor. 11:11-12**

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