

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 26 – Marriage – Beginning, Purpose, and Problems

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Introduction

We are moving on to the topics of marriage and the family (parenting). Our study on marriage will cover the purpose and foundation of marriage, singleness, the husband's role, the wife's role, divorce and remarriage, forgiveness and relationship reconciliation, and communication.

Family relationships are some of the most intimate of relationships, capable of providing a great deal of love, support, and joy. Unfortunately, these relationships can also cause some of the greatest pain in our lives. The Bible speaks much to marriage and family relationships. Before we look at marriage difficulties and see how the Bible addresses those issues, we must first understand God's foundations in marriage.

Beginning of Marriage

First let's look at the situation at creation.

Day 1 (v1-5): God created light and **"saw that the light was good"**; then He separated light from darkness.

Day 2 (v6-8): God separated the water below and above the expanse.

Day 3 (v9-13): God separated dry land from oceans and **"saw that it was good"**; God created plants and fruit trees bearing seed and fruit after their kind and **"saw that it was good"**.

Day 4 (v14-19): God created the sun, moon, and stars and **"saw that it was good"**.

Day 5 (v20-23): God created water creatures and winged birds after their kind and **"saw that it was good"**.

Day 6 (v24-31): God created the beasts of the earth, cattle, creeping things after their kind and **"saw that it was good"**; God created man in His likeness; God's summary statement regarding all He had made was **"behold, it was very good"** (v31).

Day 7: God rested; He ceased from His creative activity.

❖ **Do you view all of God's work as good (Phil 1:6)?**

⁶*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a **good work** in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil 1:6*

There is an interesting change in the name of God from Genesis 1 to Genesis 2. In Genesis 1, God is called "Elohim" meaning "Strong One" and emphasizing His power as Creator and speaking of His transcendence over His creation. In Genesis 2, God's name is "Lord God", "Yahweh Elohim". "Yahweh" means self-existent, covenant-keeping One and emphasizes His personal care for His creatures. Genesis 2 describes how God cares for and provides for Adam.

❖ **Does your view of God come from the Scriptures only (or do you often say, "MY God would not...")?**

Genesis 2 gives us more details of Adam and Eve's creation and their God-ordained work. Before God proclaimed everything "very good", there was one situation that was "not good". It was not good for the man to be alone. Therefore, God moved to make Adam a suitable helper.

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, **"It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."** Gen 2:18

The “not good” situation appears to have been God’s evaluation, but the man did not come to the same assessment. Perhaps because he so enjoyed the intimate fellowship he had with God that he did not understand his actual circumstances.

❖ **What is God showing you about your character or situation? Is your view the same as God’s view?**

So, look what God did:

¹⁹Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, **and brought them to the man** to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, **but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.**
Gen 2:19-20

God brought, presumably, the male and female of every created beast of the field and bird of the sky to Adam to name. Each of the animals had a suitable helper, “someone” like them or corresponding to them, but Adam did not have a suitable helper. God demonstrated to Adam that he was alone and needed companionship. He did not have his perfect fit. So God fixed the “not good” situation and created a suitable helper.

²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. ²²The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. ²³The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” Gen 2:21-23

Adam’s first recorded words are “This is now...” which literally means “this time” and expresses joy over what God had given him. It could be translated “Here, now!” or “This one! At last!” (Holman Christian Standard Bible); “This at last...” (ESV)

❖ **Do you view your spouse as a God-given gift?**

Marriage Defined

God’s view of marriage is different than a culture or government’s view of marriage. This will be important for us to understand, particularly when we work through the topic of divorce and remarriage several weeks from now. We will address this in more detail then.

❖ **Where do you get your concepts of marriage?**

The Bible teaches that marriage is instituted by God. It is not something made up by mankind. God established marriage as a life-long covenant. It is a life-long contract or promise between the man and woman publically entered into before God as a witness. When a man and woman get married, God is joining them together regardless if the man and woman acknowledge it or not.

²⁴For this reason a man shall **leave his father and his mother, and be joined** (KJV = cleave) **to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.** ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Gen 2:24-25

⁴And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ ⁶**So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.**” Matt 19:4-6

❖ **When you got married, who did you view as “marrying” you, a person or God?**

Marriage involves leaving and “cleaving” or becoming one flesh (Gen 2:24). This joining is the physical union between the husband and wife and is a part of marriage. This physical union is in the context of a primary, permanent, exclusive commitment. Of course, marriage is more than two people who have moved in together, it is two people who have publicly committed themselves to each other in a permanent relationship as husband and wife. It is this union that is intended to be inseparable (Matt 19:6).

❖ **Do you view marriage as permanent; that divorce is not an option?**

Marriage forms a new family. The meaning behind the idea of a man leaving his father and mother and being joined to his wife (Gen 2:24) is that a new family is created. Leaving and cleaving does not mean breaking off all extended family relationships, moving far away, or relinquishing responsibility toward extended family (1 Tim 5:8). Leaving and cleaving means changing one’s dependence from the parents to the spouse. Leaving and cleaving implies that the child is no longer dependent on the parents emotionally nor financially and no longer subject to their authority, but still required to honor the parents (Eph 6:2).

❖ **As a married couple, have you left your parent’s family and formed a new family?**

Marriage is not for everyone (we will look more at that in our lesson on singleness).

Marriage is good. Not only did God design marriage, He also says to those whom it has been given, it is a blessing from Him.

²²He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. Prov 18:22

❖ **Do you believe at the heart level that your marriage is a blessing from God?**

Marriage is between a man and a woman. Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:4-6, as well as the Biblical prohibitions on homosexuality, clearly set marriage as being between one man and one woman.

❖ **What is your view on homosexual “marriage”?**

Christians must marry Christians. God gives us freedom in choosing whether to marry and who to marry with one restriction, believers must marry “in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39) meaning a fellow believer in Christ. In addition, 2 Corinthians 6:14 teaches us not to be “bound together with unbelievers.” This command must apply to marriage since there is no earthly commitment more binding upon us than marriage.

³⁹A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, **she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.** 1 Cor 7:39

¹⁴**Do not be bound together with unbelievers;** for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 2 Cor 6:14

Purposes in Marriage

There are many reasons that people get married. Some might want to hold a certain social status, find happiness, enjoy guilt-free sex, have someone to take care of them or their things, fill a void of loneliness, feel fulfilled, improve their economics, or have children.

❖ **What did you hope to accomplish by getting married?**

However, the Bible gives us specific purposes in marriage. Understanding these purposes allows us to understand God’s plan for marriage. It also allows those who are married or who are contemplating marriage to have realistic expectations. Regardless of the reason we got married, we must bring our thoughts on our purpose in marriage in line with God’s thoughts.

1. God's Glory – This is the ultimate purpose for everything. To glorify God is to show His character in our motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. We glorify God when we live in a way that those around us can see God's character in us (Exodus 33:17-23). Marriage provides a wonderful opportunity to display the life of Christ living through us (Gal 2:20).

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever **you do, do all to the glory of God.**

1 Cor 10:31

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

❖ **What is your purpose in marriage?**

2. Mutual Companionship – God created Adam and Eve to desire the companionship of others like them. Marriage is not the only way to have companionship, but it is and should be the most intimate of human relationships. Each spouse's gifts and abilities complement the strengths and weaknesses of the other, yet each has a role to fulfill within the relationship (more will be discussed on this in later lessons).

¹⁸Then the Lord God said, "**It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.**" Gen 2:18

The specifics of what relational intimacy looks like in your specific marriage are different than other marriages. However, here are some ideas on areas of relational intimacy (companionship) within marriage that you may wish to cultivate:

The sharing of...

- the day's activities
- thoughts and ideas
- opinions
- hopes and aspirations for the future
- goals (individual, marriage, and/or family)
- finances
- things God is teaching you
- things you are learning from the Bible
- convictions
- joys and sorrows of life and the difficulty of trials
- friendships
- recreational activities and hobbies
- ministry involvement
- ministering "the one-anothers" to each other and to others together.

An important thing to keep in mind is that your marriage should not look like two single lives being lived together. You are now "one flesh" so most things will be different from being single.

❖ **Do you view your spouse as a "companion"?**

3. Procreation – God has designed sex to be exclusive to the life-long commitment of marriage. God's ideal pattern then is that children be born and raised within the context of this relationship.

²⁸God blessed them; and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth,** and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Gen 1:28

❖ **How do you view children within marriage?**

4. Pleasure – Sexual union within marriage builds intimacy and brings pleasure to each spouse.

¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love. Prov 5:18-19

¹⁶“How handsome you are, my beloved, *And* so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant! (*i.e. producing vast quantities of something*) Song of Solomon 1:16

❖ **Do you view sex as only pleasure for yourself or a way to serve your spouse?**

5. Purity – A purpose of marriage is to help your spouse maintain moral purity. Marriage helps protect against the temptation of sexual immorality by meeting the need for sexual fulfillment. The sexual temptations of singleness have a legitimate outlet in marriage. We will investigate some of this topic more when we talk about singleness and roles within marriage.

²But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. ³The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. ⁵Stop 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. ... ⁸But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. ⁹But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*. 1 Cor 7:2-5, 8

❖ **Do you serve your spouse in areas of physical intimacy?**

6. Picture – The marriage relationship is meant to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church.

²²Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. ²⁸So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; ²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ³⁰because we are members of His body. ³¹For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³²This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Eph 5:22-32

❖ **Are you striving to honor God by making your marriage relationship be this picture?**

Problems in Marriage

The following issues will be dealt with in more detail when we talk of husband and wife marriage roles. To understand the basics of problems within the marriage relationship, we go back to the Genesis account. Genesis 3 is a historical account (Matt 19:3-5, Rom 5:12-21) of the event by which sin entered the human race – called “the Fall” from sinlessness. The Fall occurred in the context of the marriage relationship.

The sin events as well as the curses pronounced by God show the problems with which all of Adam and Eve's descendants struggle. Much could be said about this event, but in this study we are interested in what was occurring in the first marriage and the judgments God pronounced. There were many failures in this marriage relationship that have implications for us today. The failures and curses in this passage give context to the New Testament teaching on marriage.

3:1-7 – God had given Adam instructions regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). Adam must have then passed that prohibition onto Eve. It is interesting that Adam and Eve are not condemned for adding to God's words. However, it does appear that Eve's response to Satan's question shows a lack of reverence for God's commands. It is also interesting that Adam was "with" Eve when this temptation was occurring. Eve's temptation by Satan encompasses elements of any temptation: 1) a lie in opposition to the truth of God's Word (v4); 2) the lust of the eyes (v6); 3) the lust of the flesh (v6); and 4) the pride life (v6).

- Adam had told Eve what God had commanded, yet she did not follow his leadership and was deceived (1 Tim 2:14) by Satan to disobey God.
- Adam was with Eve when this all occurred. Adam then failed in his God-given role as head of his family and passively allowed his wife to fall into temptation.
- Adam followed his wife into sin. He was not deceived, he simply chose to sin. Again, Adam followed his wife and did not lead his wife.

❖ **Where do you go to understand your role and responsibilities in marriage?**

3:8-13 – Immediately, the couple were no longer innocent. Both Adam and Eve blamed someone else for their sin – a pattern that has continued in their fallen descendants. Even in their blame is their own indictment. Adam disobeyed God's word and acquiesced his leadership. Eve failed to submit to Adam (and ultimately God) and disobeyed God's word.

❖ **Do you blame your spouse for your sin (e.g. "You make me so mad")?**

3:14-24 – Ultimately, Adam's disobedience was to the revealed will of God (Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-19). The results of sin were judgments on:

1. (v14) The serpent with an altered form that now caused it to crawl on the ground.
2. (v15) Satan with enmity between Satan's seed and the seed of the woman – a painful wound would be given to the woman's seed, but Satan would be given a fatal blow. With judgment also comes the promise of salvation in 3:15 with the first announcement of the gospel. This is the first promise of a coming redeemer.
3. (v16) Eve with childbirth and a desire (of mastery, 4:7) toward her husband. Eve's (and her descendants') struggle would be to dominate, master, enslave her husband.

❖ **Wife, what is your struggle in your marriage?**

4. (v16) Adam with a struggle to "rule" or "master" over his wife. Adam's (and his descendants') struggle would be to dominate his wife.

❖ **Husband, what is your struggle in your marriage?**

- (v17-19) Adam with a cursing of the ground and the need to toil for food.
5. (v17-18) Creation is subject to futility and corruption (Rom 8:19-21).
6. (v19-24) Adam and Eve's descendants with physical death (Rom 5:12) and spiritual death (Gen 3:8; Eph 2:1; 4:18; Col 2:13).
7. (v22-24) Adam and Eve were banished from Eden (this really was not part of the curse, but a demonstration of God's grace).

In the Fall from sinlessness, our first grandparent's failed to live according to the roles that God had instituted: Servant leadership of the husband and respectful submission of the wife. Today as well, the main problem issues in marriages result from not following these God appointed roles.

Concluding Thoughts

We each have preconceptions based on the examples of marriage we have experienced or seen. As we continue to study marriage, it is vitally important that we commit to surrender our thinking to what the Bible says. We must bow before God and not other masters as we commit to practice what God says (to be doers of His Word) in regard to the marriage relationship. Our hearts must be committed to honor God regardless of our situation.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: You have been married for only a couple of years. You were so excited to marry your “best friend”, but soon after the wedding it became obvious that he/she is not as perfect as you had thought. You find yourself with “buyer’s remorse”. What responses in this situation would honor God? Which of God’s attributes, purposes for marriage, or promises would be encouraging to you?

Yourself #2: You have been married for over 25 years. You had children early so they are all off living their adult lives. Life had revolved around the kids and now you each have significant responsibility in your professions. You are committed to your spouse, but do not feel a great deal of affection toward him/her. What responses in this situation would honor God? Which of God’s attributes, purposes for marriage, or promises would be encouraging to you?

Yourself #3: Your workmates often joke about the “old ball and chain”; disparaging their spouses and, really, all spouses in general. What do you do?

Someone Else #1: One of your church friends who is more than a casual attendee at your Bible teaching church, confides in you how he/she and his/her spouse are unhappy in their marriage. They do not fight all the time, but neither is there the closeness that other couples seem to enjoy. What should you be careful about in this situation? As you begin to care for this dear fellow believer, what is the most important thing that you need to know at this time? What truths might you begin to share with her/him?

Someone Else #2: Your cube-mate at work is disappointed in his/her marriage relationship. He/She sees all the happy people on television and wonder where he/she went wrong. What are some things you could share with him/her regarding purpose and fulfillment in marriage? What is the most important thing that you need to know as you seek to bring Biblical care to your work mate?

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 26 – Marriage – Additional Study

Take some time to think about and write down what you want the most out of your marriage.

Read again the passages regarding God's purposes for marriage in today's study. Does what you want most out of marriage match God's purpose for marriage?

Think about conflict in marriage. Make a list of the sins being committed when there is conflict.

What ways do you sin against your spouse that brings conflict in your marriage?

How do you respond when you are sinned against by your spouse? Do you honor God? If not, what are you trying to accomplish with your response?

Read Ephesians 5:18-6:4

- Where does the power to have God honoring relationships come from?

Colossians 3:16-21

- Where does the power to have God honoring relationships come from?