

SERIES: RELATIONSHIPS MATTER  
PART 1: Why Marriage (Relationships) Matter

Nothing in our culture works toward helping marriages stay together. There is an assault on traditional Biblical marriage. If your marriage is going to be successful, it will be because of you and your commitment to Jesus, your spouse, your children. Do not be deceived—marriages are under attack because marriage is God’s idea and is His purpose and plan for our lives, and our present culture is in rebellion against anything that is in God’s image, whether it be **Spiritual, Emotional, Relational, Financial, Vocational, Intellectual, or Physical (Sexual)**.

Some people say, “Is marriage even important? Isn’t it just a piece of paper? Isn’t it just a social construct? Isn’t it just a government issue of a license? Is it really important to have just a ‘piece of paper’?” And the answer is, “Yes it is.” Because marriage is far more than an idea that the human family has made up. As I will mention later, marriage between a man and a woman is what the fabric of our culture is built on. This marriage model is a leading metaphor throughout the entire Bible and is consummated in the book of Revelation with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. There are four reasons why marriage and all of our relationships are important.

**I. Marriage (relationships) is God’s idea**

Please read out loud with me Genesis 1:26-27, “**Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings (man) in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground. <sup>27</sup>So God created human beings (man) in His own image. In the image of God; He created them male and female He created them.’**”

Genesis 2:18, 21-25, “**Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.’... <sup>21</sup>So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. <sup>22</sup>Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and He brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>‘At last!’ the man exclaimed. ‘This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called “woman” because she was taken from “man.”’ <sup>24</sup>This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. <sup>25</sup>Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.’**”

This passage is part of the summary narrative of Creation (Genesis 1:1-2:3), complemented with more specific details about man and his setting in chapter 2. The following was gathered from O.T. scholar Gerhard Hasel.

1) The first point is that **man (Adam) is a term which includes both male and female.** Adam is a generic term for mankind.

2) Next it is to be stressed that in Genesis 1 man is created as both “male and female” (vs.27). **There is no distinction between the sexes in terms of superiority or subordination.**

3) **Man has existence as a total and complete creature uniquely as man and woman.**

4) 2:18 says, “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.’” **Only with the creation of woman does man exist in complete and harmonious partnership and communion.** With the coming into existence of both man and woman, creation is complete—a fact stressed again in Genesis 2.

5) **There is no distinction in terms of superiority or inferiority. To the contrary, woman is also created, like man, in the image of God.** Both man and woman are thus set apart from the rest of creation as constituting a new and distinct order.

6) **The blessing bestowed by God upon both man and woman is the power to be fruitful and multiply and thus perpetuate the species.** The responsibility for propagating and perpetuation of mankind rests equally upon both man and woman.

7) The phrase, “I will make a helper who is just right for him,” is an incredible phrase. Helper comes from the Hebrew word ezer, and the phrase “just right for him” from the Hebrew Kenegod. **The idea is that woman is a helper “corresponding to him” or alongside him.** Inasmuch as woman is made a helper alongside and corresponding to man, she is his suitable counterpart and fitting companion. So in Genesis 2:18 & 20, the kind of relationship which is entailed is one of equality, because the word neged (counterpart) which joins ezer (helper) indicates that woman is a suitable helper fit for man.

All throughout the Scripture whenever the institution of marriage is challenged from Jesus to Paul they always refer back to the creation narrative. In other words, what God says about marriage in the Genesis account gives His definitive statement on who marriage is made for and how our sexuality is to be expressed for our own good and for the good of civilization.

In Matthew 19:1-9 some religious leaders tried to trap Jesus with this question: v. 3b **“Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?”** Jesus’ response is critical. He refers back to the creation narrative that we just read. In vs. 4-6 Jesus says, **“Haven’t you read the Scriptures?”** Jesus replied. **‘They record that from the beginning “God made them male and female.”’** 5 **And He said, ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united**

**into one. 6 Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.’”**

Here Jesus says what God says in Genesis 1 and 2 is definitive for who is to marry and why marriage is so strategic to the human race. The Bible says we are to honor marriage.

There’s symbolism in the creation narrative. God took the woman from Adam’s rib which was the closest part to his heart. He didn’t take the woman from Adam’s foot so that Adam could stomp on her and have dominion over her. He didn’t take her from his head so she would rule over him. He took woman from his side to be his partner, his companion, his co-equal and the closest to his heart. There’s symbolism instead of just creating the woman out of nothing.

Marriage is God’s idea. It’s not just a human plan. It’s not something you can take it or leave it. Like, “Why get married? Let’s just live together.” Or, will we change who can marry whom? No. God says it’s My purpose and plan for humanity, and if you do it the way I have designed you to live together you will prosper.

## **II. Marriage (relationships) is a spiritual object lesson**

God uses marriage as a metaphor for a spiritual truth. There is a profound tie-in of God’s family and the human family. Between Christ’s marriage to the church and your marriage to your spouse. But God says, “I want you to understand this

profound truth.” The Bible calls the family of God the body of Christ and the bride of Christ. Just as two bodies become one through their sexual union, a bride and a husband are united in marriage. God says you are to be united with Christ, and you are to be one with Him, and your family is to be a model of a spiritual family. This is why understanding God’s reason and purpose for our sexual identity is so important. Spirituality and sexuality parallel each other in a very deep and significant manner. Our sexuality is more than just a physical act. It is a spiritual, relational, emotional, and physical connection. Through marriage God says I’m going to give you a physical example of a spiritual truth.

We’re in a broken planet. No family is perfect. But it is a small understanding of what God wants us to be about in being a part of His family, the church. And being a part of the bride of Christ and the body of Christ. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:29-33, **“No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for His body, which is the church. And we are His body. As the Scriptures say, ‘A man is to leave his father and mother and is to be joined to his wife, and the two are to be united into one.’ This is a great mystery, but is an illustration of the way Christ and His church are one. So again I say, each husband must love his wife as he loves himself and each wife must respect her husband.”** It’s a spiritual object lesson.

### **III. Marriage is the foundation of civilization**

In fact, society depends on marriages to function. Stable families. No nation can survive the breakup of the family. If you know anything about human history you know the only way a nation, an empire, a culture survives is through strong families. When the breakup of the family becomes complete there is no more empire. It begins to crash and burn and fall apart at the seams. Because the basic building block of every church, every community, every business, every nation is the family unit.

Several years ago I read a very important report called, “**Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences.**” It was a consortium of scientists, psychologists, sociologists, marriage experts, parenting experts, family experts. It’s not a Christian report. It’s just a report of all these organizations working together saying, “What is the impact of the family on culture?” Not the theological impact. The economical impact of having strong families or the economic impact of weak families.

This national study came up with twenty-one social implications. I’m not going to read them all to you, but let me just read you a few.

- The lack of two married parents in a home increases the child’s risk of failing in school, not graduating from college, being involved in substance or alcohol abuse, being victimized by child abuse. These children would experience more psychological distress, depression, risk of suicide. They’re more likely to do jail time. Highly likely they will

live their lives in poverty and increase the risk that they themselves will divorce or bear children outside of marriage.

- On the other hand, women who marry and stay married have lower rates of depression than either single women or cohabitating women, mothers who live with a man but aren't married to them. They have a much lower risk of being a victim of crime and violence. They have a higher net worth than those living with a man outside of marriage.

- Men who marry and stay married earn more money than single men with similar jobs and education or job history. Men who are married live longer than those who aren't married. They amass more net worth than those who live with a woman without marriage. And they have fewer injuries and illnesses.

- Children who live with their own two parents enjoy far better physical health than children living in any other family form.

I didn't make this up. This is a multiyear, national study on the impact and the importance of marriage. Why? Because God designed it. God purposed and planned the best situation possible for His human family. It is marriage between a man and a woman.

The conclusion was living together without the permanent commitment of marriage has proven to have none of these benefits. Zero. Marriage is the foundation of civilization.

The Bible says in Hebrews 13:4, **“Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.”** Proverbs 14:34 says, **“Godliness makes a nation great, but sin is a disgrace to any people.”**

Marriage is the foundation of the very fabric of our culture and civilization. Mess with God’s purpose and design and you are setting yourself up for failure.

#### **IV. Marriage is the opportunity to learn to truly love**

Life is all about learning to love. God put you on earth to learn two things: To learn how to know and love Him and to learn how to know and love other people. God is love. This is a testing ground. If you don’t learn how to love, you’ve missed the primary purpose of life.

You understand attraction. You don’t have to learn how to be attracted to somebody. But attraction is not love. You don’t have to learn infatuation. That comes natural. You don’t have to learn desire. That comes natural. But you do have to learn how to love. Because love is when you give up yourself for the benefit of another person. Love is not what you can do for me, how good you make me feel, how beautiful you are. To love is what I want to do for you out of unselfishness. It’s learning to love.

Love is a choice. Love is a commitment. Love is not a feeling. It creates feelings. In fact, it creates really great

feelings. But love is not a feeling. You choose to love. And if you fall out of love it's because you choose to fall out of love. You don't say, I can't help myself. You can't help yourself who you're attracted to. But you can choose who you're going to love. And you choose who you're not going to love. Stop blaming somebody else if you "fall out of love." You chose. It is a choice.

The Bible has a lot to say that the marriage bond is the number one way that most people learn how to love. It is in the family that we learn what love is all about. Or, don't learn what love is all about. In Ephesians 5 we have one of the most misinterpreted passage in the Bible. It's the most abused, it's the most misunderstood. It's often misused to teach inequality between men and women. It has nothing to do with that. This verse is not about men and women in general. This passage is about husbands and wives in a loving relationship and learning to love in different ways. The wife is to learn to love her husband in certain ways. And the husband is to learn to love his wife in certain ways. You learn different ways of love in marriage.

It says in Ephesians 5:21, "**Submit to each other...**". Stop right there. Circle "each other." The husband is to submit to the wife? Yes. And the wife is to submit to the husband? Yes. A lot of people want to ignore that part. It says submit to each other. Why? Because they deserve it? No. Because out of reverence for Christ, I submit to you, you submit to me, not because you deserve it or I deserve it. But because we revere Christ. Remember marriage is a ministry. It is a model of

Christ in the church. And Christ was submissive to the Father even though He was equal to the Father.

**“<sup>21</sup>...submit to each other out of reverence for Christ.**

**<sup>22</sup>For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of His body, the church.”** [Here’s the parallel. What does it mean to be the head of the family?] **“He gave up His life for her.”** (v. 5:25b)

So what does it mean to be the head? Does it mean I dominate my wife? No. I demand my wife? No. I boss my wife around? No. Do I supervise my wife? No. It means I give my life for her. That’s what it means to be the head of the house. It means I get to sacrifice the most. The leader leads by example, not by domination. The leader leads the way Christ leads the church. Jesus gave His all, dying on the cross saying, “This is how much I love you.” And the husband, as the head of the home, is not to dominate, but he is to sacrifice the most. And as he does that, the wife is to follow his leadership.

The Bible says, **“<sup>25</sup>For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up His life for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word.”** [This is more of that parallel between God’s family and the human family, between the bride of Christ and what marriage is to be.] <sup>28</sup>**“In the same way, husbands [as if we didn’t get it, he says it a third time] ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies.**

## **For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself.”**

Several years ago Kathe and I took a dancing lesson. It is a great metaphor for marriage. This is so important that you understand this.

What marriage is to be is it's to be a dance. But not just any kind of dance. It's to be like ballroom dancing. There are some kinds of dances where you don't even need a partner. You just get out on the floor and you do your own thing. That is not the metaphor of marriage. Marriage is like ballroom dancing – waltzing and all the other forms of ballroom dancing.

Ballroom dancing... I don't know if you know this. It's a set of rules where the partners in dancing learn three things – **respect, dignity for others, and most of all trust.** You cannot do ballroom dancing without respect, dignity for each other, and trusting each other, because you've got to move in synchronization. You've got to move at the same time. You've got to move in the same way. If you've ever seen Dancing With the Stars you know that when people move in synchronization it's beautiful. When they don't, it's pathetic! They're uncoordinated, “I'm going this way,” and “I'm going to go this way” will not happen in ballroom dancing.

In marriage, like ballroom dancing, a husband's role is not to dominate or manipulate but to lead his love on a beautiful journey. That's the role. If she [the wife] allows him to lead,

everybody else can see that she's trusting him in that moment, whether on the ballroom floor or in life and marriage. When the wife does not trust her partner's lead it's awkward, it's uncoordinated, and it's a mess. Because in ballroom dancing to have that beauty and elegance, you've got to move together. And somebody's got to take the lead. You can't have two leaders in ballroom dancing. A two headed anything is a monster. **Anything with two heads is a monster. This is not about equality; it's about roles and goals and beauty.**

In the dance of marriage the husband proposes the steps, but it is the wife's choice to accept those steps and to trust his lead. If she didn't trust him, and just as important, if she doesn't trust herself, if she doesn't trust him and she doesn't trust herself then there's no dance. It doesn't happen. That's true in the ballroom and that's true in marriage. It's true in friendship. It is impossible to waltz without trusting your partner to lead.

Men, it is your responsibility to use every strength and skill that you have to earn your wife's trust. That should be your number one goal in marriage. To earn her trust by sacrificing for it. By showing that her needs are more important than yours.

Men, you must use every strength and skill you have to earn your wife's trust; but ultimately that trust is in her hands. She must choose to trust you. Just like ballroom dancing, as the woman learns to trust herself and to trust her body's

movement to the lead of her partner, both the husband and the wife will experience great joy in marriage and God's intended purpose for their union.

It's about moving together. It's built on trust, respect, and dignity. The wife submits to her husband's leadership because she knows there's one person in this world who's going to take care of me more than anybody else and who's going to put my needs before anybody else's. He's treating me like Christ treats the church – unconditional love.

Prayer: Father, we thank You that relationships and marriage is Your purpose and plan for the family. None of us would be here if it hadn't been for some kind of family. So today, Father, I pray this blessing on every relationship and marriage. I pray that when life is difficult as individuals we will find a few friends we can turn to and help each other. The marriages represented here will turn to each other and help each other. That when life is sad that they'll comfort each other. When life is fun may they enjoy each other. I pray that when life is confusing that they will guide each other. I pray that when life is fearful that they'll strengthen each other. I pray that when they disagree that they'll understand each other. When they differ, that they'll respect each other. And when they misunderstand that they'll actually listen to each other. Father, when they're tempted may they support each other. And when they fail may they forgive each other. Father, when they dream may they believe in each other. And when they're discouraged may they hold on to each other. May the torch of their love grow stronger and brighter and

warmer year after year after year. And when they feel like giving up may they hold on. You have said, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” So we commit every marriage to You in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.