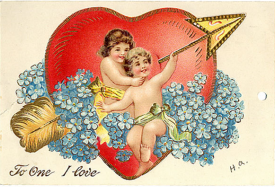


Is Marriage Really Needed?

Genesis 2:23-24: (NASB) ²³*The 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. ²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*



Coming up this Thursday is a day to celebrate love and relationships. It is a day of chocolates, flowers, dinners out, cards, hugs and kisses. Yep, Valentine's Day! It is a day for saying “I love you” to that special person. But is it a day to celebrate marriage? Is that old stogy institution of marriage even relevant anymore? Shouldn't we just move forward - you know, modern times? Stay with us as we focus on love and marriage - that's right - marriage! It is the oldest and best God-given institution that the human race has ever had the privilege to celebrate!

What is marriage?

 Introduction, *The Cracking Institution of Marriage*, David Goodnow


- *It's the oldest human institution, the key to success for each new generation, the foundation of our civilization, a foundation most Americans believe is cracking.*

Genesis 2:20-24



Observations regarding the first marriage:

- The noticeable absence of the woman revealed the emptiness the man had without her.
- God's creation of woman from man gives a sense of equality and companionship.
- Adam's desire for companionship was now fulfilled and he expressed this by saying, *at last... and bone of my bone*, etc. There must have been some time without Eve, thus allowing him to feel the contrast.
- *Therefore a man leaves his mother and father and clings* implies a lifelong devotion - not just for a moment or until you get tired.
- They become one flesh, inseparable and united in every way.

 Time together, *Dana Fillmore, psychologist and marriage counselor*

- *The average couple can spend as little as one hour total alone per week. The average couple with kids? Sometimes none! The average two people having an affair spend at least 15 hours per week together! Think about that! Those two people somehow manage to find 15 hours alone in spite of all their other commitments. When I work with couples, I ask for a mere 8 hours per week.*

When something is important to you, you will find the time. What is most important? We need to nurture the relationship of marriage. **This sounds like the principle that Jonah violated:** Jonah 2:8: Jonah focused on what *he* wanted rather than what God wanted. When we focus on ourselves, we lose the bigger picture and what is important.

Are men and women really that different?

 Emptying the dishwasher, *How to Reward a Man*, Mark Gungor, marriage counselor

- *...the more you appreciate the kindnesses that he does, the more he wants to do it. Men love to be appreciated! I'll give you an example: I was at home and I had a dirty dish in my hand. I was by myself, and I had actually gotten trained so I could put it away by myself in the dishwasher. And I went up to the dishwasher and I opened it up, but it was full of clean dishes. That's a moral dilemma to a man! So it finally dawns on my little brain, empty the dishwasher! So without being asked, I emptied the dishwasher and put everything away and then of course I stick around 'cause I want to see what happens. Why? Because I love to be appreciated! My wife comes home; she goes over to the dishwasher and goes, "AH! You emptied the dishes! You're such a good husband!" And I eat it up!*

We know men and women are wired differently, and as a result, we are shown different roles: Ephesians 5:21-24: What does *this* mean? Notice the simplicity of this command. Christ is head over the church. He was willing to die for his church, so that is how husbands should pattern their love for their wives.



Our first beginning, marriage is for life (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com

- *In our church, we were having a social. We were sitting down, laughing and talking. Jethro came up, he spoke to us, and he then threw his hat in my lap. I thought, what's the matter with him? After a while he walked me home, and we started from there. That was our first beginning...*

Now the command to the husbands: Ephesians 5:25-31: (NASB) 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.

Note the word "love" here is *agape* love, the highest form of selfless love that gives unconditionally.



52 unexpected things, How to Reward a Man, Mark Gungor, marriage counselor

- *Guys, get a clue. I know it's hard, but she loves unexpected kindness. You need to learn to give her unexpected little things; that's how you can keep a woman crazy in love with you...I want to write a book, "365 Unexpected Things a Man Can Do For a Woman." I thought about and then decided on 52! Every day?? What was I thinking?*



Observations: Look at the detail of the man's responsibility!

- Women: Love and be subject;
- Men: 1) Love and give himself up for her; 2) Love and care for her as your own body; 3) Your love for her becomes your way of self-preservation; 4) Cherish her; and 5) Leave all other ties for her sake

What are the danger signs in a marriage?



Married at 9:15, marriage is for life, (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com

- *We courted five years and we had to build up confidence in each other. We married on our birthday, one Wednesday night at 9:15. At my house, all the clocks just stopped at 9:15. I look at the clock almost every morning at 9:15 and remember what I said when I told Reverend King, Sr. that I take this girl to be my wife... (They were married by Martin Luther King, Sr. and grew up with Martin Luther King, Jr.)*

Galatians 6:2-5: To bear one another's burdens is to show the highest trust one for another.



The four horsemen, John Gottman and John Stossel, 20/20 (television show, 1993)


- *Among all the problems couples have, Gottman says, there are four kinds of behavior that are most likely to predict divorce.*
- *What we find is there are what I call Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. These are the four things that happen that are characteristic of couples who are on a trajectory toward their marriages falling apart: The first one is **criticism**, the second is **defensiveness**, the third is **contempt**, however that is expressed, and the fourth one is **withdrawing** in the interaction.*
- *Gottman says the biggest predictor of divorce is **when the husband withdraws**.*

We can *all* be critical and defensive. We certainly have the ability to demonstrate or outwardly show contempt for our partner, and all of us tend to withdraw at times and think, "What's the use?" Left unchecked, these can bring disaster and unhappiness to a marriage. Even a car needs maintenance to keep it running. We have to do the work required to keep our marriages running. All four of these horsemen are founded in thinking of *me* first, *my* interests, *my* needs, *my* approach.

Holding grudges and constant complaining are never good things: Proverbs 19:11-13
Letting anger or resentment fester...that's gonna hurt tomorrow! Ephesians 4:25-27: This gives us a good principle for marriage: Speak truth with your spouse. It is okay to be angry,

but do not sin. Take care of the issue before the evening is over. Talk it through and ask for forgiveness if we have made a mistake. We have to be willing to admit fault. One of our criticisms of men in society today is men are wimps! They don't stand up and have the integrity and maturity to be real men in their relationships. Will you accept the responsibility that comes with being a real man? **Generally it is pride and ego that is behind our marriages' destructive behavior: Proverbs 16:18-19: Scriptural principle that applies to the marriage union: 1 Corinthians 8:1-3**


Is there such a thing as a “soul mate?”

 Hey, Sugar Bee, marriage is for life, (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com

- *I think about when I get out of bed in the morning, what am I gonna call my wife in the morning? Hey, Sugar Bee! Yeah, that's her name for today. Tomorrow it will be another name! Think about making people happy - we are still working at it and grow every day...*

He works every day at making his wife feel special. There is effort required in maintaining a good marriage. After 66 years, they are still working on it every day!

General Principle: Here is a general summary of guidelines with which to assess our marriage role: Romans 12:3-4: Don't try to make your spouse “you,” or an extension of “you.” Have them be the best “them” that they are and compliment their parts.

 “Soul mate” defined, Love, Marriage and Stinking Thinking, Mark Gungor, marriage counselor (Mark Gungor is responding to an e-mail from a married man who, although he has a wonderful wife, thinks he found his “soul mate” in another woman...)

- *Is there such a thing as a “soul mate?”*
- *If people want to say as a term of endearment, “she's my soul mate,” or “she's my sweetheart,” I've got no problem with that. But what they are trying to buy into is that there is this one special cosmic person just for you. What he is saying is, “Oh my goodness, I have a fabulous wife, but she (this other woman) is my soul mate! Surely God doesn't want me to miss out on a soul mate!” He has bought into a broken, stupid line of thinking that comes from pagan thinking, actually from Greek mythology. The Greeks at one time believed that people have four legs and four arms and two faces...apparently we made some god angry and he split us all in half. And that's how we wound up with two arms, two legs and just the one face. And part of the punishment now is that we have to search out the world to find our other half to be whole. You complete me!*

This idea of a “soul mate” could be such a devious device of the deceiver. Once we are attached, we undoubtedly have ups and downs in life and it may be at those down times when we get restless and start to believe the lie that there is “the one” out there for us. We are supposed to make it work, not commit adultery. Self-sacrifice belongs in marriage. Men need to be the leader in their household and draw them to a godly way of living. **Let's see what Jesus very bluntly had to say about this: Matthew 5:27-30 Ecclesiastes 9:9: Is she perfect? No, but are you? We have to put this in the right perspective and then enjoy the gift of our marriage that we have been given. So, built into this covenant of marriage, this solemn promise is the dedication to deliver what we have promised. Even though it may not be romantic, pleasant, easy or even fun at times, this dedication is what makes our promise a reality.**

What is the main ingredient? Love in its highest form. 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: (NRSV) ⁴Love is patient, love is kind, love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful.


 More statistics, The Cracking Institution of Marriage, David Goodnow

- *Half of all who marry will divorce. Cohabitation - unmarried couples living together - is up 12-fold since 1960. Out of wedlock births have since exploded from 1 in 20 to over 1 in 3 today. The real fact of the matter is, if marriage is not strengthened, the consequences are going to be at your doorstep, in your workplace and at your school. It's everyone's problem. We have to be concerned about it and engage in the fight to save and marriages in America.*

When you get down to it, love in its highest form is spelled: **COMMITMENT**

A few of the qualities laid out in the previous text: *Love is patient: James 5:7: Why can't we patiently cultivate a loving marriage?*

Love is kind: Ephesians 4:32: Sometimes we forget to be tenderhearted towards our spouse. Sometimes it is easier to be tenderhearted toward those not as involved in our lives.

 **Married strangers, Dana Fillmore, psychologist and marriage counselor**

- I don't know how many couples have come to me over the years on the verge of divorce who tell me, "There's no major issues, we've just grown apart." What 'grown apart' means to me is that they were not spending enough time together. If you don't continue to connect throughout your life, you run the risk of being married to a stranger. How can you work on communication? How can you work on money issues if you never have the opportunity? I can explain everything I know about all of these topics. Unless you have time alone to talk to each other, be affectionate with one another and enjoy each other, it won't work. The relationship between the two of you is the foundation of the marriage and family.*

If you grow apart, you have not worked at staying together. And that is a major issue! There is a commitment part that is lacking. You end up cultivating “marriage weeds,” and not “marriage fruit.”

Love is not arrogant: 1 Corinthians 8:2-3 *Love does not insist on its own way:* Romans 12:10

Instead of complaining about aspects of your marriage you do not like, live the way *you* want it to be. Watch what can happen over time!

 **Something going on, marriage is for life, (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com**

- I knew something was going on because he was doing a little different. It was all work related. You know how people work together? Then it goes a little bit further than work. It goes to having an affair with somebody on the job. He apologized and said don't hold that against him for a long, long time, because he would not do that anymore. And if he did anymore, I didn't know it. But that's where I said that sometimes when the road gets rough and rocky, you got to see if you can help to straighten it out.*

This shocked us! There was a coming together and willingness to work through a massive problem. They did not give up. **Do we fall into the old “the grass is greener elsewhere” thinking?** Proverbs 5:15-18: Stay at home. Be committed to that which you made a covenant in front of God.

 **Priorities - kids second, Dana Fillmore, psychologist and marriage counselor**

- In order, our priorities should always be: Marriage, kids, job, family and friends, etc. If the order gets mixed up, the whole thing could fall apart. When I ask for this, most couples look at me like I've lost my mind. What about my job? I have to provide for the family! I don't see my kids all week. I have to spend time with them at night and on the weekends. I understand what it means to be a working couple with children. But if the marriage falls apart, it all falls apart. Your kids will not thank you if you put them first but then get a divorce.*

Here lies a key for longevity in marriage: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12: The third strand is God! So, with God as our “tie that binds us together,” we have a built in security in our building of our marriage. Take that love for God and express it to our loved ones.

 **Forgive and forget, marriage is for life, (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com**

- ...forgive him and try to forget it and then after a while you will forget it. And keep yourself in communication - it is a fine thing in marriage. We have stood the test of time all these years. And we still standing! We still workin' on it. We'll have to work on it some more.*

Clothing ourselves with grace as we put away every damaging imperfect human characteristic: Colossians 3:8-15: We should think how much can I give today to make my spouse happy? That takes humility, selflessness, and committed love. Marriage is not just an institution; it is an action of living. This is what I have done and will continue to do. **Here is a sure fire success tip - always see your spouse as more important than you!** Philippians 2:2-4: Imagine if we apply this Christian principle directly to our marriages! Valentine's Day is coming up. Take that day and apply it in the best way you know how to show what love and true commitment are in a marriage. Show your spouse it is “to death do us part” no matter what the circumstances in life are. God has ordained this for us by making this commitment with God as our witness.

*So is marriage really needed...?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...Think about it...!*