

Marriage

Roger Scully

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, in setting the stage for that which Paul was going on to discuss, he set forth a universal principle: “the head of every man is Christ...the head of the woman is the man...and the head of Christ is God.” Christ was said to have been equal with the Father in Philippians 2:6. Yet, we are told that when the kingdom is handed up to the Father and “when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him” (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, at the head of Christ is God. In Genesis 1:26 & 27 we find God created man in His own image, in that man is an intellectual being. Later we read, in 2:18-24, that the woman was created of the man, the Isha taken from the Ish—the wo-man, meaning out of the man; hence the head of the woman is the man. Just before creating the woman from the side of man God noted that it was not good, or not suitable, for the man to be alone, thus was in need of a suitable helper. So, God provided this need by making for him a wife. After having received his bride Adam spoke prophetically of a man “leaving his father and his mother” and “cleav[ing] into his wife” being “one flesh” with her (v.24). Jesus repeats this in Matthew 19:5 adding, “for they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (v.6). Jesus also explained on this occasion that God made the woman for the man, and that God’s plan is for there to be one man and one woman joined together making a home wherein roles are to be fulfilled, for this is the purpose of marriage. Sadly, however, the God ordained roles are rarely fulfilled, and the home is viewed as a lawless fraternity in today’s society. Men and women go into marriages failing to understand that there are things expected of them, not only by spouses, but, more importantly, by God. For this cause the next two issues of *The Christian Reader* will center on the theme of marriage and divorce.

The Institution of Marriage

Cade Somers

I was driving in my car one Friday afternoon and had just turned on the radio for some stress-free diversion to my tired mind when, ironically, the DJ requested for listeners to call in and share their emotional strains from the week gone by. I remember there were many callers, but I can specifically recall only one. It was a woman in her low-20s who had a marriage issue. The woman had foolishly married at a young age because of an overestimation of infatuation with a high school sweetheart. Within a short time, she was tired of her husband's mannerisms and habits in the home – the routine quirks every human has but are to most people private. Her aggravation over *his* issues was enough for her to consider calling it quits. I was shocked when the self-appointed love-doctor DJ dismissively justified the woman's feelings and presumed divorce would be best. The DJ, also a woman, said, "You see, this kind of thing is why I believe people need to live with their boyfriends or girlfriends for at least a few years before jumping to marriage. You don't know what you'll get until you live together."

I don't know what the caller did after putting down the phone – if she filed for divorce or learned to love. She may have been seriously seeking marriage tips from a radio DJ; if so, how stupid! Marriage is not dating, and dating is not marriage. In today's lucrative jewelry industry, businesses bounce because of the vanquished value of marriage and the casual blending of traditional marriage with gay marriage, open marriage and "living together." The only difference between marriage and "living together" is a name-change for the bride and some tax relief, but even the latter is permissible without marriage under certain conditions. The more divorces, the more remarriages; the more remarriages, the more purchases of engagement and wedding rings. Even some teens today buy expensive "promise rings" for their special interests, seemingly so seriously involved as to imitate older couples' love offerings.

It seems all these fancy rings are more costly to some than the institution of marriage itself. Many will cleave to expensive jewelry for a lifetime because they know its value, but they will squelch precious marriage in a heartbeat for immaterial reasons, apparently ignorant of its worth.

If marriage were merely a man-made institution, it is conceivable that one would think man can change what cultural standards he himself created. If I built a house and continued to own that house fifty years later, I could remodel the house, because it would be mine. But marriage is not man's creation. One writer attempted to connect the human desire to marry with the animal instincts of birds and primates. One should not attempt to explain every human trait by its correlation to beasts. We've heard this basic argument: "animals do thus and so, so humans do it too," but when was the last time you heard "humans do thus and so, so animals do it too?" Animals operate primarily on instinct; compared to humans, they hardly have any ability to reason. Animals aren't the superior, iconic beings as some scientists present them. Honestly match them up to humanity and there is no argument against the domination of man over beast. Fictional movies that have demonstrated dinosaurs ravaging the planet and extinguishing every man are entirely unrealistic, for dinosaurs are dead and man is still living.

Marriage: An institution of God's providence

It is because marriage is God's gift to man that man cannot tamper it into his preferred likeness. In a discussion regarding marriage and divorce, Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mt. 19:6). Jesus told His audience of Pharisees what had been tolerated under Moses was no justification for disregarding a standard which had been "from the beginning" (Mt. 19:8).

God's standard was established in the Creation. God made Man (Ge. 2:7). He gave Man sustenance in abundance, even a tree which could eternally procure mortality. Seeing "it [was] not good that the man should be alone" (Ge. 2:18), God created the animal kingdom, over

which Adam was given dominion. All this, yet there still was no “help meet” for Man (Ge. 2:20). So, God created Woman (Ge. 2:22). Woman is the natural and purposed complement to Man. She is his “help meet.” Scripture repeatedly makes clear the inseparable connection between the natural makeup of man and woman and the divine institution of marriage. A good example is found in Genesis 2:23,24: Man and woman were created (v23); Inspiration then records, “Therefore, shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his **wife**” (v24).” These words were restated several times in the New Testament (Mt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:7,8; Ep. 5:31). There was no reason for Scripture to explain how nature implicates the union which God approved for husband and wife; it simply took two verses to reveal the facts (cf. Ge. 2:23,24); those facts are logical.

It’s “natural” for a man to be with a woman (cf. Ro. 1:26-28; 1 Co. 11:11,12). It is not required we marry, but whether we remain single or we marry, we are required to keep the precepts of God. For most men and women there is a sexual and an emotional emptiness in life until they find a suitable mate to marry (cf. 1 Co. 7:9).

God knows our needs and supplies them (Mt. 6:8,25ff); so it is a blessing for man to marry, especially when his counterpart is a godly woman. Solomon wrote, “A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband; but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones” (Pr. 12:4). We should appreciatively receive God’s gift of the marriage institution and show honorable gratitude to Him through fulfilling the divinely given roles of husband and wife in the home (cf. Ep. 5:23ff). Another inspired proverb reads, “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity; for that is the portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun” (Ec. 9:9). To specify, we must say marriage God’s way is wherein we find blessing. His way, as indicated in Ecclesiastes 9:9, is to marry one spouse and to faithfully keep that spouse to death. In Paul’s words, “the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth;

but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Ro. 7:2,3). Note these three things: (1) one spouse (2) of the complementing gender (3) until death.

Should we be disappointed for the law’s provision of only one spouse? Should I be angry because I can’t divorce my spouse for any cause? It would be wrong of me to abhor something which was divinely given to me as a graceful gift. I should instead reverence the gift-Giver and respect what conditions precede the subsequent satisfaction. If I must be careful in choosing a spouse who qualifies for marriage, I will. If I must be faithful and grow in love toward my spouse throughout life, no problem. It is no hassle. It’s actually a quite valid obligation on my part, considering my dependence upon my Creator and Guide who directs every facet of my life.

Marriage: An approved and protected institution

Marriage modeled in the same format as indicated in the previous section – one spouse of the complementing gender for life – is necessary to be approved of God. There is one additional Scriptural qualification to enjoin in God-approved marriage. Neither wedding party should have been married and divorced before, unless the said divorce was a result of one’s previous spouse committing adultery (Mt. 19:9). If one’s reason for divorce was any other than adultery, it was “unlawful” (cf. Mk. 6:18). For that person to remarry is sinful, and for one to marry that person is equally sinful.

We should seek being approved of God in all things (Col. 3:17). A God-approved marriage is protected by God. It seems the loud voices of the human rights crowd have pushed the government to overzealously defend homosexual unions and popularize tolerance of sexual preference. Law enforcement, government protection and all Earth’s might can’t protect the souls of such people who indulge in fleshly

fantasies. They cannot do away with marriage and be right. They cannot manipulate marriage's contract because it is Divine. But they insolently act as if they can. Much of the context of Romans 1 describes such a people, whether they are two unmarried people unlawfully engaging in sex or two married people who irresponsibly married, ignoring Scriptural mandates on the matter. Such people bring dishonor to themselves through their lusts (Ro. 1:24). They "change the truth of God into a lie" (v24) and do not "retain God in their knowledge" (v28). They are filled with "unrighteousness, fornication, [and] wickedness" (v29).

"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (He. 13:4). The sweet bed of a God-approved married couple is a place of honor. It is the only place where God has approved sexual passions (1 Co. 7:2-4). That is one benefit to the marriage union. One has no right to satisfy sexual urges premaritally, extramaritally or independently! That is, one has no right to do so and expect God to save his soul. Some are tempted by illicit sex – the forbidden fruit aspect of it, but one must remember,

"Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he does not know that the dead are there, That her guests are in the depths of hell" (Pr. 9:17,18 NKJV).

To have God's protection is a comforting thought. Do what God teaches, and one will enjoy His providence: "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7).

Marriage is the privileged place of those who say, "I do." When one says those words, he assumes he is prepared, qualified and informed of the nature of the institution. It's not God's fault some men fail to see marriage God's way. If you find yourself explaining away the seriousness of marriage and justifying alternatives to divine directions, it's time to "examine yourself" (2 Co.

13:5). Do you view the Bible as a blueprint? Mistaking the marriage mandate is worthy of condemnation, but if one can't agree with something so simply explicit as marriage, how much more is he likely to pervert? Neither the radio DJ, the politician, the famous actress nor the friend should be the standard by which we interpret the marriage institution. It came from God and was given to man as a gift, a blessing and a privilege.

Permanence Of Marriage

Adam Comeaux

As our study of the Bible progresses, we learn certain concepts such as temporal and eternal. The temporal most often refers to this life on earth, and eternal to the life in the hereafter. These concepts are also referenced in describing certain things within the temporal realm. Such would be the case with the Old and New covenants, animal sacrifice and the sacrifice of the Christ, the miraculous age of the apostolic times and modern day christianity, the Jewish synagogues and the church, etc. God has clearly deemed certain things in this life to be considered temporal and others permanent. Societies from the beginning of time have sought to override these important concepts in order to push their own agendas. That which God has deemed temporal, society attempts to make permanent, and that which is deemed permanent, society attempts to make temporal. Such is the case with the divine institution of marriage. Like in the days of old, the heart of man is calloused, and shows great disdain for this divine union. This insolence can be seen through various facets, but we are going to focus our attention upon one particular aspect, the permanency of marriage. Various arguments are given to persuade man, that if he so chooses, marriage may be nothing more than a temporal fling. We are going to set forth counter arguments to show the fallacy of these notions and by doing so, show the permanency of marriage.

At the start, I feel it necessary to set forth those things we are not advocating in order to evade confusion amongst the readers. First, in this context, the term permanent or permanency only makes reference to things within the realm of time and space. Jesus makes it very clear that marriage does not go beyond this life (Mt. 22:24-32). Secondly, we are not advocating that permanency of marriage goes beyond all circumstance, such as death or adultery, to prohibit remarriage (I Cor. 7:39, Mt.19:9). Finally, we are not condemning all those who are divorced and have not remarried. There are factors that can lead to divorce which are beyond the control of a spouse, such as abandonment. However, the Bible does condemn marriage that involves ineligible parties. More is said concerning the above mentioned in other essays.

Now, based on what the Bible says concerning the design of marriage, God's view of marriage, and the congruent factors involved between the marriage couple, and God and his people, we can set forth arguments to show the permanency of marriage.

Moses explains in the creation of man and woman, husband and wife, God designed for the two to become one. Inspiration tells us man and woman "cleave" and "become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). The Hebrew Term in Genesis 2:24 rendered cleave is *dabaq*. According to Hebrew scholars, Brown, Driver, and Briggs, it is defined in the following manner; *to cling, stick, stay close, cleave, keep close, stick to, stick with, follow closely, join to, overtake, catch, to be joined together, to overtake*. Based on this observation, the making of one flesh between two people, is a result of the cleaving or adhering of man and woman. It is interesting to note that, not only does cleave signify something sticking to another, the Hebrew word for "glue" is derived from *baraq*. This is the same Hebrew word used to describe Eleazar, one of David's mighty men of valor, as his hand clave to his sword while defeating the Philistines (2 Sam. 23:9, 10). We are given an impression as to the intensity of the idea from the fact that his hand was weary as a result of cleaving. He was not merely holding the sword in battle; he was gripping

his sword with such force that the sword would have figuratively become part of his hand, his arm, part of himself. The term loses no significance when applied to the marriage bond. Marriage was designed in such a way, that the two involved were to be so tightly compacted together that they become one (Mark 10:8).

We are given further insight as to the significance of this idea in the answer given by Jesus to the Pharisees in Mark 10:7-9. In a ploy against Jesus, the lawfulness of divorce for any cause is posed. Jesus shows how divorce for any cause was not the initial design of marriage. He explains certain things were suffered because of calloused hearts, but from the beginning God made the two to become one. Then Jesus adds, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (v9). The Greek word *chorizo* is defined to separate, divide, part, to separate oneself from. If we take into consideration what it means to cleave and apply the definition and what Jesus has said concerning "putting asunder," we must conclude that God designed marriage to be a permanent union between man and woman. We must further conclude that man does not have the right to even cause a hair line crack between the marriages that God has joined. While this is the design, it is often ignored. Therefore, God has ordained the right of divorce in certain cases. However, when two become one, it is meant to be permanent.

As mentioned afore, man does not always follow the preset guidelines. Regardless of what the Bible says, man says and does otherwise. Because of this, God has provided certain means by which some may divorce and remarry. While this has been done, the Bible explains God's view regardless of the situation. Approximately 100 yrs after the return from captivity, the prophet Malachi is sent by God to preach to the Jews. They had become indifferent, were going through the motions, the priesthood was corrupt, and there were those who were divorcing their wives for heathen women. As a result of this, God was not accepting their offerings. The Jews would obviously respond with concern as to why they were being rejected.

The prophet explains exactly why they were being rejected in Malachi 2:14-16. They had done that which God *hates*, that is, putting away the wife of their youth. The wife they were joined to in the sight of God, the wife with which a covenant was made to which God had witnessed, that union was put asunder. A strong word is used to describe God's view of their actions, that word being "hate." This word signifies God's view of divorce and the permanency of marriage. While the door of opportunity is given to victims of adultery, it does not mean it should always be taken. The fact that God hates putting away ought to make us consider resolving, if possible, the marriage bond. The notion that we must or should divorce is often consumed like prey. While Malachi is addressing the putting away of Jewish wives for heathen wives, when taken into consideration the design of marriage, and how we are not do anything to separate that bond, God's hatred towards putting away must be applied across the board. This no doubt, is the thought behind Mathew 19:8. Jesus explains that Moses allowed divorce because of harden hearts, "but from the beginning it was not so." Jesus was taking them back to the beginning, the initial design of marriage. Divorce for any cause was not the design in the beginning because God hates putting away. Therefore, in the design of marriage and through God's view of putting away, we must conclude that marriage was meant to be permanent.

While sufficient evidence has been given to support the permanency of marriage, I feel it productive to focus our attention on the congruent relationship between the marriage couple and Christ and the church. This context is the perfect illustration for showing the understanding it takes to make marriage permanent. Paul sets forth, in Ephesians 5:20-33, a powerful lesson concerning Christ and the church, by way of the husband and wife relationship.

He begins by pointing out a few similarities. Both Christ and the Husband are the head. Both the church and the wife are to submit themselves to the head. Christ love for the church and the husbands love for his wife are

to be the same. A detailed expression of that love is given by an explanation of what Christ has done for the church and why. This is likened to the husband's love for the wife. Then Paul by inspiration speaks profoundly concerning the union of the church to Christ by way of the marriage bond. Paul makes reference to Christians as being "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (v30). As children of God, we have become, as it were, a part of Him, and the only way we can become a part of Him is by being sanctified (v26) because He will not have spot, wrinkle, or any such thing (v27). Then Paul quotes Genesis 2:23 in reference to this union, this cleaving of sorts. As the man and woman cleave and become one, so does the Christian and the body of Christ. The Christian becomes a permanent part of the body of Christ, by continuing to honor the covenant they made with God, as the marriage will remain permanent if the husband and wife continue to honor the covenant they made with themselves and with God.

The permanency of marriage can also be seen by the results of the temporal marriage. When man begins to tamper with divinely ordained law, he only unleashes chaos and despair. The affects of permanent marriage made temporal are seen all around us. Broken homes, kids without fathers or mothers, foster children and the adoption system are all manifestations of society's agenda to make that which is designed for permanency, temporal. Who knows not the situations of those in adulterous relationships, oblivious to God's design of marriage, who come to understand the truth of the gospel, but fail to obey because of the unwillingness to separate themselves from the adulterous relationship. It's only then they see the devastation divorce causes and the webs of sin that are weaved. All could have been avoided, if the permanency of marriage was understood and honored. What God has joined together man must not separate lest he suffer the futile consequences.

Marriage was designed to be permanent. This should bear upon the minds of all who are married, and yet to be married, the importance of the relationship and bond

that is to be. Teach yourself, your friends, and your children the permanency of marriage in order to insure the church will continue to grow and society will continue to prosper from Godly homes.

Fidelity In Marriage

Jacob Campbell

God's plan for marriage is one man for one woman for life. Complete devotion and faithfulness to one's mate is expected and demanded. From the many warnings issued in God's word, however, we conclude that infidelity in marriage always has been and always will be a prevalent problem. As long as men and women are uniting in marriage, Satan will be there to do all in his power to divide them. None are immune to the temptation to wander outside the boundaries of matrimony. None are above being pressured to compromise their wedding vows. A man after God's own heart once fell prey to the temptation (2 Sam. 11:1-5). Right now you can think of a number of once-respectable men and women who became unfaithful to their mates. You know of several Christians whose lives have been made a mess because they committed adultery. Rule number one in preserving fidelity in our marriages is to acknowledge the threats which are potentially dangerous to us; not to ignore them or think ourselves above the temptation or pressure to fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

Though infidelity is such a widespread problem, however, and though Satan has many effective means to destroy fidelity in the home, it is not as if remaining faithful to one's spouse for a lifetime is an impossibility. The temptation to wander outside of marriage is ever present, but it is not so great that it cannot be overcome; that is a fact (1 Cor. 10:13). Infidelity is most likely to occur where couples have not prepared to defend themselves against it. Such is really the case with any sin. When we take no preventive measures, temptations are more likely to

overtake us. It is not even necessary that we should seek them--they will find us. The following instructions should be followed by every married person concerned about the success of their marriage. They are practical and Biblical; they cannot be ignored.

1. Know what the Bible teaches on the subject. First things first. To ensure happiness and success in marriage, consult the one who established it, designed it, and is to govern matters pertaining to it--God. Has God spoken on the subject of marriage, on fidelity in marriage, on preventing unfaithfulness? Are there inspired words which may strengthen and protect our homes? The Bible actually has much to say on the subject of marital fidelity (and infidelity). Being acquainted with what it teaches is a must for every child of God who hopes to have a successful and God-blessed marriage.

Concerned with the threat of sexual infidelity, the wise man implored his son to meditate on the commandments and laws which he had been taught because they were light and a lamp "to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman" (Prov. 6:20-24; 7:1-5). Knowing God's word is a preventive to any sin (Ps. 119:11). We should familiarize ourselves with the history of David and Bathsheba, and regularly read the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the book of Proverbs. "Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell (5:5)...a wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away (6:33)...She hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her (7:26)." The Song of Solomon should be regular reading for married persons, as well as Ephesians 5:22-33 and other applicable passages. You may benefit from the advice and experience of others; you might improve your marriage from reading helpful books and articles written by marriage counselors, etc.; but, instead of letting "experts" and counselors be the final word on how to build successful marriages, why not let God first speak and allow the rest to serve as supplemental material? We often

get it reversed; we study our marriage improvement books with the Bible as a complementary resource. Instead, allow the God-breathed book which is capable of equipping our marriages for every good and necessary work to serve as our guide, our foundation, our handbook (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Do a lot of reading directly from the Bible; make God's thoughts your own, and pay particular attention to passages which speak specifically on qualities which sustain marriage and passages which emphasize the danger of infidelity.

2. Instill a healthy jealousy into your marriage.

Love does not envy (1 Cor. 13:4), but it is jealous. Love is "intolerant of rivalry or unfaithfulness;" it is "vigilant in guarding a possession." A devoted and loving husband does not think it humorous for others to flirt with his wife; he takes offence. A wife who loves her husband will not tolerate other women speaking of him in suggestive or inappropriate ways. Love will not allow another to dance in close quarters with its mate, whether seriously or in jest. Love says "she belongs to me, and no one else. Anything that suggests otherwise will not be tolerated." God was jealous for his bride Israel (Deut. 4:24; 32:21 Jer. 3:6-8) and Christ is jealous for his bride, the church (1 Cor. 10:21-22). "Godly jealousy" (2 Cor. 11:1-3) belongs in the married relationship. Keep to yourselves, husbands and wives, and get everyone else away from what is yours exclusively. Following this "small" step will strengthen your marriage.

3. Avoid harmful influences. In spite of the warning to "be not deceived," many Christians still deny that "evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33). Some really think that lewd friends, promiscuous talk, and lascivious environments will not corrupt their good conduct. God has spoken, however, and the determination is that bad associations and influences do destroy pure minds and godly living. Where I go, what I see, and whose company I keep affect my morals ("manners" KJV). A steady intake of lewdness, indecency, or suggestive behavior or speech will affect us adversely. Being in

settings where indecent clothing is the norm is a good way to plant seeds of improper thoughts, which in turn prepares the ground for improper behavior. Watching TV shows and movies which are regularly filled with lasciviousness or depict adulterous “affairs” in favorable light (e.g. many soap operas, *Desperate Housewives*) will inevitably lead to a hardened heart insensitive to sin. The heart must be protected, for out of it flow the issues of life (Prov. 4:23), including adultery (Matt. 15:18-19). Keeping garbage out and instead filling our hearts with good, noble, and honorable things (Phil. 4:8) are vital aspects of protecting our precious homes. Strengthen your marriage with godly friendships, innocent forms of recreation in which both husband and wife can be involved, and surroundings that build up rather than corrode.

4. Render to one another due benevolence. Many more Biblical principles and commands could be considered in the context of this study, but, for sake of space and due to the lack of teaching on this particular aspect of marriage, we will limit the rest of our considerations to this final point.

If you and I are concerned about and devoted to preserving a loving marriage, we must understand, appreciate, and apply the following section of Scripture.

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”

(1 Corinthians 7:1-5)

Just as having one’s own husband or wife is a barrier to fornication (7:1-2), so is a proper giving-and-receiving

relationship a barrier to infidelity, or adultery (7:3-5). Let us allow our focus to be directed to several key words or phrases in this text in order to appreciate the thrust of Paul's message to married couples. First, husbands and wives are to "render due benevolence (7:3)." *Render* means to give up, to pay off, or to discharge what is due. It is the same word used by Christ in Matthew 22:21, "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," when teaching his followers' obligation to hand over to Caesar that which the king had every right to demand and receive. *Due* expresses debt or obligation. The Greek word from which it is taken is variously translated indebted, behoved, owed, or bound. *Benevolence* is good will or kindness. In this context the particular kindness or blessing in view is unquestionably the undefiled bed of marriage ("come together" 7:5; cf. Heb. 13:4). What we have in 7:3, then, is the charge for husbands and wives to pay up or hand over the favors and kindnesses which they owe and are bound to give their mate. Men and women enter into marriage with the understanding and justified expectation that they are entitled to certain privileges and blessings in the marital relationship which cannot fully be had outside of it.

Second, note that husbands and wives must not "defraud" each other of those rights and blessings which are to be given and received in marriage (7:5). To *defraud* is to keep back by fraud, to cheat, or to rob. Thus, God considers it robbery or cheating to withhold from one's mate the blessings and privileges to which they are entitled in marriage.

Finally, consider that faithfully giving due benevolence is to characterize every marriage "that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (7:5)." *That*, or "in order that," denotes the purpose for or result of rendering due benevolence. One reason husbands and wives ought to faithfully and consistently meet the conjugal needs and rights of their mate, says Paul, is to prevent our falling prey to the temptation to satisfy the flesh out of lack of self-control (incontinency). In other words, faithfully giving and receiving the special privileges and blessings designated for

marriage are key ingredients for marital fidelity, and for loving, lasting, and happy marriages.

The sexual relationship is the particular “benevolence” or conjugal right under consideration in 1 Corinthians 7. It is not, however, the only blessing that husbands and wives are obligated to give and entitled to receive in marriage. The principle that rendering due benevolence prevents infidelity applies also to these other marital rights. Some of the greatest needs that are to be met in marriage include the following.

(1) *Affection*. A marriage which lacks affection is less than what God intended it to be, and is at greater risk to suffer failure, including unfaithfulness. Wives are to love their husbands (Titus 2:4); literally, they are to be fond of or affectionate to their husbands. Husbands are bound to cherish their wives (Eph. 5:28-29), praise and compliment them (Prov. 31:28), romance them (Song of Solomon), treat them with sensitivity (1 Pet. 3:7) and let bitterness cease (Col. 3:19). Where affection and romance fail, marriages are ready to be invaded by Satan and his destructive temptations. Women naturally need more affection, and they more easily and readily give affection; for men the need is generally not as great, and there is a struggle to be as affectionate as their wives would like them to be. Men, if you are serious about pleasing your wife, protecting your marriage, and preventing infidelity, then get serious about learning to be affectionate and romantic. Meet this particular need (and marital right/obligation) and your marriage will flourish.

(2) *Companionship*. God intended for husbands and wives to be best friends, soul mates, kindred spirits, companions. To husbands God said, “she is thy companion, the wife of thy covenant (Mal. 2:14).” Companionship implies togetherness, unity, sharing, consideration, and communication. Married couples need to spend time together, be open and honest with one another, be patient with each other, and treat each other as friends. These qualities are lacking in far too many Christian marriages.

(3) *Admiration and respect.* Husbands like to hear that their daily work is appreciated and respected. Wives love to be told how well they multitask at home. Husbands appreciate being supported in their role as head of house (cf. Eph. 5:33; Titus 2:5). Wives appreciate recognition for their fulfilling the difficult role of guiding the home (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14). Husbands are encouraged when they are complimented for their integrity. Wives are refreshed when they are praised often for their virtue. A steady stream of admiration and respect will cause us to grow in love and happiness, and help shield our marriages from outside temptations.

(4) *A man for a husband and a woman for a wife.* Wives want their husbands to act like men; husbands want their wives to act like women. A godly woman wants her husband to lead, provide for, and protect her. A godly man seeks a wife who is discreet, chaste, and who loves children. Men love for their wives to dress nicely, to speak gently, and to carry themselves in an entirely feminine manner. Women love for their husbands to sweep them off their feet, keep their bodies fit, crush cockroaches, and wear Brut and Old Spice. God design for marriage is for husbands to act like men, and wives like ladies (1 Pet. 3:1-7), and complying with that design will enhance our happiness and contribute to long-lasting fidelity.

(5) *Sexual companionship.* As has been noted already, the “due benevolence” about which Paul specifically wrote in 1 Corinthians 7 is the sexual relationship which belongs in every marriage, and only in marriage. We would never want to be crude or speak out of place, but the point must be made emphatically and clearly. Paul wrote with forthrightness and clarity. Where a husband and wife do not regularly share their bodies with one another, there will be a much greater risk of infidelity. That is the precise meaning of 1 Corinthians 7:2-5. To withhold that marital right is to invite Satan’s strong temptations into your home. Happiness, longevity, and fidelity in marriage are dependent upon taking this obligation seriously.

It is worth noting that, according to one expert, “most affairs start because of a lack of affection (for the wife) and lack of sex (for the husband).”

To summarize, if we are really intent on strengthening our marriages and encouraging fidelity, we must identify, understand, and fulfill the basic needs and marital rights of our spouses. Where husbands and wives do not “render due benevolence,” whether that be affection, sex, companionship, respect, or any other need which is to find its full expression in marriage, Satan is always there waiting to present us with someone else who will. Are you interested in strengthening and preserving your marriage? Render to one another due benevolence that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

CONCLUSION

There is no need for our marriages to stand on shaky ground. Though temptation is a reality of life and for marriage, God has provided every resource and instruction necessary to ensure happiness and fidelity in marriage. Some have been noted in this brief essay. Applying them is up to us.

Marriage As God Would Have It

P.D. Wilmeth

The Bible is literally honeycombed with instructions concerning marriage. This is only what one might expect from such a book regarding a matter which universally, keenly and deeply affects the whole human race and touches on the most powerful springs of human life and action.

Indeed, any book which professed to give an account of the origin, purpose, regulation and destiny of mankind would not be complete if it did not make known the will of

God on this subject. Let us now move back to that first wedding and get a look at the scene.

A Look At The Scene

God made them different. Man is first of all different from the brute — the animal kingdom. He is different in his power of intelligent comprehension. He is different in his sensibility and appropriate intellectual feelings. He is different in that he possesses a moral sense of what is right and wrong. He is different in his power of intelligent choice. In dominion, he has control over all the animal kingdom. This is his “colonist’s charter.” Moreover he possesses a spiritual nature. But there are essential differences in the sexes.

This does not mean that woman is inferior to man. Man may have, on the whole, greater physical strength and endurance; but she has a finer grain of character. The viewpoints of both sexes are often dissimilar. God made them different and the differences are complementary to each other. The wisdom of the Creator is seen in the design of these different creatures, man and woman. The Scriptures bear evidence of these differences and take them into account.

“Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers not be hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). In the next place we learn...

2. God made them for each other. Jehovah created man alone. Man was left in the lonely condition for some period of time — which is not clearly defined as to length — and Jehovah said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18).

It is not necessary here to suppose that God changed His plans, or discovered by experiment, as human beings do, that His original design was not perfect. The whole process of creation was progressive. It was especially a system of development from one stage to another.

Woman was created and given to man. Upon receiving her, 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. 2:23). In presenting her to man, and ordaining the marriage relation, Jehovah said, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

Let us remember that woman was made from man’s side; not from his head to rule over him, nor from his feet to be his slave, but from his side, nearest his heart, to be his companion, his helper, and his inspiration. Paul said, “let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2).

3. He made them a model for all humanity. When He created woman and gave her to man, Jehovah said, “they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). This was said in ordaining marriage. This is marriage. The two became one — a new one. Neither were the old “ones” but a “new one,” formed by the union of body, mind, and spirit — a blending of two personalities into one.

Jesus taught that, according to God’s original plan of marriage, the husband and wife are joined together for life and should not be put asunder by man. This is still the Biblical model, the ideal, and the correct one for all time. Jesus did not say much about marriage, but what He said was very much to the point. He pointed out that in heaven, people neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:23-30) — that marriage is a relationship of this earth only.

The only other things the Savior said about marriage is his quotation of this original ceremony in the Garden of Eden, with one significant addition that is now a part of many ceremonies — “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” There was no provision in that plan for dissolution of the marriage except by death. Jesus did not change that.

There is absolutely no place in Gods plan for polygamy, trial marriage, or any kind of sexual relationship

outside of marriage. Such practices are abominable in the sight of God. They degrade and have a tendency to completely destroy the holy relationship of marriage.

There are only two words in the vocabulary of “love.” They are “you” and “always.” “You” because love is unique, and “always” because love is timeless. No one ever said, “I will love you for two years and six months.”

The Purpose Of Marriage

It is for companionship. Jehovah said, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). It takes a marriage partner to round out ones life and make it complete. This is the social aspect of life.

Marks gospel reads, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh; so that they are no more two, but one flesh” (Mk. 10:7-8).

Writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul said, “Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25-26). In verse 28, we read, “So ought husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” What a marvelous truth! This is the cement, the mortar, that holds two people together in the most joyous relationship in all of life.

2. Marriage is for the perpetuation of the race. This is the biological aspect of marriage. This is the order in which God created the race of man: “Male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Gen. 1:27-28).

It is the positive and emphatic assertion of the Bible that the union of the sexes in marriage, with the command to be fruitful and multiply, is Gods own ordinance, and one which was given to them as a good thing, a needful thing, and a blessed thing. It should be further observed that these statements are clear, universal, and permanent. They express fundamental principles which are of vital interest

and importance to all mankind. They belong to the race of man. On this injunction, the race has been perpetuated.

It is a trite — but true — statement that the home is the basic unit of society. The history of mankind bears unmistakable evidence that the home and family determine the character of any civilization and the power of any nation. The sanctity of home life has ever been the safeguard of the family. We must ever keep this relationship intact and for the purposes God intended.

The privilege of bringing children into the world is denied the unmarried. To them, the very act necessary to accomplish this is sin. To the married it is a high privilege and a duty — where it is not impossible or altogether inexpedient. And a home is never as happy and secure without children as with them.

3. To prevent immorality. Paul said, “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:1-2). We learn that whoremongers and adulterers are condemned to the lake of fire. “But the fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

But in marriage, we escape the horrible sin of immorality. The Hebrew writer said, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

Conclusion

The whole teaching and commandment of Jehovah in the matter of marriage is that it's a lifetime contract with all its attendant blessings, joys, and responsibilities which are mutual in their enforcement. When one chooses a husband or wife, according to Gods law, it is a choice for life, until the hand of death severs the relationship.

Husband and wife are joined in marriage for life, and neither can put this asunder except at the peril of his own

soul. Therefore, any second union while both parties are alive is adultery and not “true marriage,” if the exception Jesus gave in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 does not prevail. It is clear that in the mind of God marriage cannot be dissolved except for fornication, and the state cannot put asunder that which God has joined.

The state, or human laws, cannot grant the liberty of divorce with the right to remarry for any cause without running counter to the will of God. No one can follow human laws of divorce and enter into a marriage union without defying God and rebelling against the basic principle in the marriage relationship. Let us invoke the blessings of God upon every union where Christ can be honored, and where husband and wife may loyally obey Him as their Lord and Master.

An Excerpt From Thomas B. Warren’s Book:

Marriage Is For Those Who Love God And One Another

While I believe that marriage counselors and physicians may be very helpful, and while I believe they have said and written many good things about marriage relations, I do not believe that people can make of their marriage what they should without being guided by Bible teaching. I believe firmly that the Bible gives the answer to the basic problems which arise in marriage. Therefore, I heartily commend the prayerful study of it to everyone who is planning to be married or who is already married.