

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

Instructor

Dr. John P. Davis (John), Pastor of Grace Fellowship Chapel in Long Island City, NY (www.gfcny.org). You may contact me by email at softailpastor@yahoo.com

Course Description

This course will discuss the ideal of marriage, the effects of sin, and the power of redemption. The covenant of marriage will be defined and discussed in biblical terms. The teaching of both Jesus and Paul will be examined on the subjects of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The course will discuss six continuing tasks for building a strong marriage. A manual for marriage counseling will be introduced.

Schedule of Classes

Week One	Pursuing God's Design in Marriage
Week Two	Pursuing God's Design in Marriage
Week Three	Pursuing God's Design in Marriage
Week Four	What did Jesus teach about divorce?
Week Five	What did Paul teach about divorce?
Week Six	Building a Marriage to Last
Week Seven	Counseling for Marriage Readiness

Assignments

Reading: Read Genesis 1-3; Matthew 5, Matthew 19; Mark 10; Romans 7, 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5. List as many principles regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage that you find in those texts. Hand this paper in on Week Seven.

Memorize the following verses in the NIV and be prepared to write or recite them each week.

Week Two	Genesis 1:26-28
Week Three	Genesis 2:24
Week Four	Hosea 2:19-20
Week Five	Matthew 5:32
Week Six	Matthew 19:4-6
Week Seven	Ephesians 5:33

Grading

The final grade will be based on your having memorized the assigned verses, having read the assigned texts, and handing in the list of principles from those texts.

Pursuing God's Design for Marriage (Part One)

Introduction

Let me begin today with this word of encouragement to those of you who are not married. You may have the tendency to think that because you are not married that this series does not relate to you. Please understand that everyone – married or not - has a role in upholding God's design for marriage. Every departure from God's design for marriage – illicit sex, casual divorce, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, etc – violates and attacks God's design for marriage.

Marriages are in trouble in America. Dr. Fred Lowery in his book, *Covenant Marriage*, offers a statistical snapshot of marriage in America.

1. *The median age for divorce is twenty-eight.*
2. *Eighteen percent of divorced persons say they are very unhappy.*
3. *Bible-belt states lead the nation in divorce.*
4. *One out of two marriages ends in divorce.*
5. *Sixty-five percent of new marriages will end in divorce.*
6. *Marriages have a seventy-five percent failure rate.*
7. *Christians in mainline churches are divorcing more rapidly than non-Christians (27 percent to 23 percent).*
8. *Fifty-five percent of children will see their parents divorce before they leave home.*
9. *Young women whose parents divorced are three times more likely to have an out-of-wedlock child than women whose parents stayed together.*
10. *Young men and women whose parents divorced are more than twice as likely to cohabit before marriage.*
11. *The number of unmarried persons living together increased 72 percent in the last decade.*
12. *Sixty-two percent of today's 'twenty-somethings' believe that living together before marriage is a good way to avoid future divorce.*
13. *Half of today's currently married stepfamilies with children cohabitated before tying the knot.*
14. *Grown children of divorced parents are less likely to be happily married and more likely to divorce than children who stayed together.*
15. *By the year 2010, it is estimated that America will have more stepfamilies than nuclear families.*
16. *Eighty-one percent of divorced and separated Americans still believe that marriage should be for life (Lowery 2002, 17-18).*

These are tragic statistics, yet they what they detail is not inevitable. Because of the grace of God, there are those who have suffered the tragic consequences of divorce whose lives and whose children are wonderful examples of the power of the cross to contradict statistics. We worship with some of them this morning.

Nevertheless, it is the moral and spiritual duty of all believers in Jesus Christ to uphold the ideal of “***one man and one woman in life-long marital union under God.***” Though, as we will see, sin has severely marred the image of the ideal, the ideal of God’s design for marriage is yet to be pursued and honored by all. The last statistic is encouraging: *Eighty-one percent of divorced and separated Americans still believe that marriage should be for life.*

In order to pursue God’s design for marriage, there are three parameters that must be kept in mind. I find these three parameters in the chronology of events that take place in the opening chapters of Genesis.

These three parameters are as follows:

First we have ***The Ideal of Marriage***

Gen 2:22-25

22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. 25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Here we have “*one man and one woman in life-long marital union under God.*”

Secondly, we have ***The Reality of Sin***

Gen 3:6-8

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

The entrance of sin causes the first husband and wife to hide from each other (ashamed of their nakedness) and to hide from God. The marital ideal has been corrupted.

Thirdly, we have ***The Power of Redemption***

Gen 3:15, 21

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" . . . 21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

God promises a Redeemer who will crush Satan and God graciously provides an adequate covering for the shame of Adam and Eve. He then graciously banishes them from the Garden to allow them to live with a sense of loss so they will not take sin and rebellion for granted.

So there are three things we must always keep in mind in any discussion of the subjects of marriage, divorce, and remarriage:

1. We must always keep in mind the ideal of marriage.

2. We must always keep in mind the reality of sin.
3. We must always keep in mind the power of redemption.

Think with me for a few moments this morning about these three things.

Why do we need to keep in mind the ideal of marriage?

The covenant of marriage was established prior to the entrance of sin into the world (Genesis 2:24). When we discuss the issues of divorce and remarriage we must keep in mind that these we face these issues because sin has entered the world. We must also keep in mind that Christ has entered the world and offers redemption. We must apply the redemption of Jesus Christ to any lessening of the marital ideal, whether that is within an unbroken lifetime commitment, or to divorce, or to re-marriage. The goal is always to uphold and pursue the ideal.

- God has given us a divine, authoritative pattern for marriage. The concept of evolution has not only been applied to biology but to the social sciences as well. It is common today to think of marriage as a socio-cultural development of time and accident. One attorney, Logan Lundie, defines marriage in this way:

Marriage as a socially created concept, can have a multitude of 'meanings'; each dependent on the individual involved. While many religions have attempted to 'define' its limits and expectations, it is ultimately (at least in my humble opinion) a union between two people. It signifies the bond and commitment that those two have with one another and can serve to legitimate that union through its public nature. It is only legitimized through society as much as it is a public declaration (<http://www.peak.sfu.ca/the-peak/98-1/issue10/cletter.html>).

Mr. Lundie sees marriage as a social creation that involves two people regardless of their gender.

Both Jesus and Paul would disagree with Mr. Lundie. They affirm the words of Moses as recorded in Genesis.

Listen to Jesus:

Mark 10:6-9

6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Listen to the words of Paul:

Eph 5:28-33

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ

and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Both Jesus and Paul agree with Moses that God's design for marriage is ***“one man and one woman in life-long marital union under God.”***

Let me say that our system of jurisprudence has been based upon this understanding and that though civil unions are recognized in some states between those of the same sex, the legal definition of marriage in the US remains as the life-long union of a man and woman. Here is an example of a legal definition of marriage;

A contract made in due form of law, by which a free man and a free woman reciprocally engage to live with each other during their joint lives, in the union which ought to exist between husband and wife. By the terms freeman and freewoman in this definition are meant, not only that they are free and not slaves, but also that they are clear of all bars to a lawful marriage (<http://www.lectlaw.com/def2/m087.htm>).

This is not the case in other countries such as Canada:

On July 12, 2002, the Ontario Superior Court ruled that the existing definition of marriage is unconstitutional, and needs to be redefined. Two of the three judges went on to say that parliament should adhere to the court's new definition: marriage is the union of 'two persons', instead of 'a man and a woman' (<http://www.fotf.ca/familyfacts/takeaction/081402.html>).

There is a major push in our society from both feminists and the homosexual movement, against the biblical view of marriage. George Barna, the Christian pollster made this comment: “Americans will soon believe that a life spent with the same partner is both unusual and unnecessary” (quoted in Lowery 2002, xv).

To depart from this is to sow the seeds of destruction within any society.

- There needs to be a standard - a way to describe what a proper marriage should be. God designed marriages as the primary social unit of society.
- Sinners always will settle for less than the standard so that lowering the standard, insures a lower view of marriage.

Regardless of our own failures and struggles and contrary to the mores and social values of our society, as Christians we uphold and continue to pursue the biblical ideal of marriage – ***“one man and one woman in life-long marital union under God.”***

Secondly, why do we need to keep in mind the reality of sin?

It reminds us that the ideal has been marred in many ways – in all of our lives, in all of our marriages.

It reminds us that the ideal though not a perfect reality is yet the goal.
It keeps us humble because all marriages are affected by sin.
It keeps us from being harshly critical of others whose struggle is more obvious.
It keeps us from being surprised by the imperfection of marriage.
It keeps us from being naively optimistic.
It drives us to seek God's grace daily!

Thirdly, why do we need to keep in mind the power of redemption?

It reminds us that, wherever there is repentance and faith, all of the benefits of redemption are available to those pursuing the marriage ideal.

It reminds us that there are no limits to the power of Jesus Christ to transform husbands and wives into people of grace and commitment.

It reminds us that there are no hopeless marriages when Christ is worshipped as Lord.

Sin is the cancer that eats away at marriage. The gospel is the only divine remedy for human sin.

The gospel is at work reconciling sinful individuals to a right relationship to God

The gospel is at work redeeming and sanctifying sinful men and women

The gospel is at work redeeming and sanctifying sinful husbands and wives who have never been divorced

The gospel is at work redeeming and sanctifying sinful husbands and wives who have suffered divorce

The gospel is at work redeeming and sanctifying sinful husbands and wives who have remarried.

The gospel is at work redeeming and sanctifying children who live in homes that are ravaged by sin and children that are suffering the pangs of divorce.

How does the redemption apply to the failures in attaining the ideal that God has for marriage?
Or we can ask, are there limits of redemption when sought by sincere, repentant, believing individuals?

How does the work of Christ apply to where you are?

Are you in what you feel to be a good marriage? How does the redemption in Christ sanctify that?

Are you in a troubled marriage?

Are you in the pangs of divorce?

Have you suffered divorce? What do you do now?

Let me close with a few recommendations:

- The gospel is the only hope of reconciling sinful individuals to a right relationship to God
- The gospel is the only hope of redeeming and sanctifying sinful men and women
- The gospel is the only hope of redeeming and sanctifying sinful husbands and wives who have never been divorced
- The gospel is the only hope of redeeming and sanctifying sinful husbands and wives who have suffered divorce
- The gospel is the only hope of redeeming and sanctifying sinful husbands and wives who have remarried.

- The gospel is the only hope of redeeming and sanctifying children who live in homes that are ravaged by sin and children that are suffering the pangs of divorce.

It is in the gospel alone that we find forgiveness, transforming power, and hope. So come to Jesus and keep coming – day in and day out – keep coming – for He alone can enable you to pursue God’s design for marriage.

Pursuing God’s Design for Marriage Part Two

Introduction:

I am speaking on marriage. Last week, I spoke on the parameters that we must keep in mind when thinking about marriage.

1. We must always keep in mind the ideal of marriage.
2. We must always keep in mind the reality of sin.
3. We must always keep in mind the power of redemption.

I am going to continue the theme of pursuing God’s design in marriage. All marriages are at various stages of achieving harmony and unity. At some point everyone faces challenges and struggles in their marriage. James Dobson tells the story of the husband and wife who got up for work one morning a bit late. The wife was hurriedly putting on her dress and asked her husband to zip it for her. It was her favorite dress and had just come out of the cleaners. He tugged on the zipper. It began to move but must have got caught on a loose thread. He pulled harder and harder until the zipper ripped off. His wife was livid. She screamed a few choice words at him, put on another dress and went to work steaming mad. She stewed all day long over the stupidity of her husband. She left work still angry, pulled into her driveway at home, saw her husband’s car in the garage and his legs protruding from out under the car. She smiled to herself, walked over to him, reached down, grabbed his zipper, and pulled – zip, zip, zip – ‘there,’ she said, ‘we’re even.’ She smiled and walked into the house –only to find her husband standing in the kitchen. With a look of shock on her face she sheepishly asked, ‘but who’s that out there under the car.’ He replied, ‘that’s our neighbor Joe helping me with the exhaust system.’ Quickly, they went to the garage only to find Joe out cold. When she grabbed his zipper, the natural reaction was to sit up and he hit his head and knocked himself out.

At one point or another all marriages experience anger, harsh words, bitterness, revenge, foolish actions, and embarrassment. These things can sever the life-cord of a marriage and drive people to a divorce court or these things can test the commitment of a marriage to continue to pursue God’s design.

What is God’s design? I repeated over and over that marriage is ***“one man and one woman in life-long marital union under God.”*** This morning I would like to expand on that definition.

What follows is my definition of marriage based on a number of biblical texts. Marriage may be more than what this definition entails, but it is not less than this.

Definition: *Marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman (Hosea 2:19-20; Malachi 2:14) for a life-long union (Mark 10:9 is Jesus' interpretation of Gen. 2:24), ordained by God for mutual support and fulfillment (Genesis 2:18); reflecting, as male and female, the glorious image of God (Gen. 1:26-27); and serving God through a commitment to procreation and dominion over the world (Genesis 1:28).*

Today and next week, I will discuss this definition of marriage.

Marriage is a Covenant Relationship (Malachi 2:14: *You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant* **Proverbs 2:17:** *who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. {[17] Or covenant of her God})*

In the Ancient Near East, the covenant was the way that people, who did not have blood ties, formed relationships with each other. Covenants were formed as treaties between nations, or households (as with Jacob and Laban), or individuals (as with David and Jonathan). Often the covenant was accompanied by ceremony, such as the offering of a sacrifice after which both parties would eat of the sacrifice in a covenant meal. The covenant was written down originally on a stone tablet (such as the 10 commandments) and later in a document. The covenant, even among pagans, was not primarily a legal or moralistic document, but a religious one. It was also a serious one. Remember the ceremony in which God sealed his covenant with Abraham.

Yahweh engaged in a ceremony that confirmed the inviolability of His covenant with Abraham and his seed. In obedience to God Abraham gathered, divided, and arranged selected animals on the ground. In the darkness of the evening, Yahweh, in a visible manifestation of Himself, passed alone through the midst of the divided animals, thereby taking upon Himself an oath of self-malediction (Robertson 1982, 130).

The significance of this ceremony lies in God's asseveration, wherein He solemnly swears death upon Himself should He fail to fulfill His promise to Abraham (Robertson 1980, 130-1).

The vow that two people make in marriage is a covenant that binds them to each other according to the terms of the vow. Most vows include "till death do we part."

Marriage then is a solemn covenant relationship which is witnessed by God (Pro. 2:17).

The vow (covenant) that a man and woman make to each other is the promise which determines all of their future actions toward one another.

Are you keeping your promise? Divorce is a confession of failure to keep your promise in one of life's most serious undertakings.

Marriage is a Life-long Union (Gen. 2:24: *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*)

We can conclude from the narrative in Genesis 2 that God's mode of creating the woman lays the moral foundation for the ordinance of marriage. His forming of Eve from Adam's rib speaks of the inseparable unity of Adam and Eve. These words are not the words of Adam but of Moses as he draws from this the lesson that he wants to teach Israel regarding marriage.

Those lessons are as follows:

Marriage is a union of male and female.

Marriage is a monogamous union.

Marriage is a life-long union.

Marriage is the priority human relationship.

Marriage is a union with gender-based role distinctions.¹

Woman is in some way dependent upon man (1 Cor. 11)

Woman is to be cherished by man (Ephesians 5 - bone of my bones - "cherish and nourish as own flesh.")

Divorce is a violation of this unique, sacred, life-long union.

Marriage is for Mutual Support and Fulfillment (Genesis 2:18- *The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*)

It is striking that after the seven-fold repetition of "God saw that it was good" in chapter one, God now says that something is not good - for man to be alone. So God makes a determination: "I will make a helper suitable for him." The Hebrew word for helper is usually used of divine assistance, though it is used three times of military aid. To help someone does not mean that the helper is stronger than the helped (imagine Dawn and Wendy putting their finger to 300 lbs), it only means that the strength of the helped is inadequate by itself. The word translated as "suitable" is a prepositional phrase that literally means "matching him." The idea is one of complementarity not identity. It is not just assistance that Adam needs but mutual support that companionship provides.

Unlike the first chapter, God does not act immediately. He first allows man to feel his loneliness as he sees the animals pass by in pairs and realizes that among them was no suitable companion for man.

He then puts man to sleep (lit. a heavy sleep). Man is passive as God performs His mysterious operation. He takes one of Adam's ribs. Perhaps Matthew Henry describes this the best when he said: "Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

The ideal of marriage is set forth in a vivid way portraying the key elements of harmony and intimacy.

God then miraculously fashions the woman from the rib and brings her to Adam. God introduces Adam to his marriage partner. Adam, on meeting the perfect helpmeet is filled with

¹ Whatever this may entail or however it may be worked out, no one can avoid recognizing that a man enters a marriage as a man and a woman as a woman. The NT makes it clear that the order in human creation has implications for marriage and the church. Our purpose in this study is not to define those roles..

ecstasy and bursts into poetry. “bone of bones and flesh of flesh” is the Hebrew equivalent of our referring to “blood relationships.”

He then calls her “woman.” Though they are equal in nature, the fact he names her is an indication of her subordination to him.²

All that this text teaches us about the glory and wonder of marriage accents the tragedy of divorce. Divorce destroys the wonderful harmony and intimacy that God designed for husband and wife.

Conclusion:

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to marriages that reach for a different standard. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives submit to and reverence your husbands as the church does to the Lord.

It is the same attitude of repentance of sin and faith in the risen Christ that transforms marriages as it transforms lives.

Our failures to pursue God’s design in marriage are not a failure of the gospel’s power but our failure to repent and believe – it is our failure of pride and unbelief.

Any marriage will take a radical change in it direction when husbands and wives repent of their sin and turn in faith to a powerful savior.

By God’s grace let us pursue godly marriages.

May we keep covenant with our spouses!

May we nurture and enjoy this life-long union!

May we humble ourselves to share the work of survival that we may enjoy mutual fulfillment.

Pursuing God’s Design for Marriage Part Three

Introduction:

In this series on marriage I have emphasized the parameters that in which any discussion on marriage must take place.

1. We must always keep in mind the biblical ideal of marriage.
2. We must always keep in mind the reality of sin.
3. We must always keep in mind the power of redemption.

In this lesson I am going to continue the theme of pursuing God’s design in marriage.

Marriage may be more than what this definition entails, but it is not less than this.

² to give a name to something in the ANE was to assert authority over it.

Definition: *Marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman (Hosea 2:19-20; Malachi 2:14) for a life-long union (Mark 10:9 is Jesus' interpretation of Gen. 2:24), ordained by God for mutual support and fulfillment (Genesis 2:18); reflecting, as male and female, the glorious image of God (Gen. 1:26-27); and serving God through a commitment to procreation and dominion over the world (Genesis 1:28).*

Last week we looked at three parts of this definition:

- **Marriage is a Covenant Relationship**
- **Marriage is a Life-long Union**
- **Marriage is for Mutual Support and Fulfillment**

Before we look at the last two part of this definition, let me give you an example of the low regard in our country for marriage as a covenant.

Divorced couples in Albuquerque, New Mexico, can take advantage of a new business in town. The company is called Freedom Rings: Jewelry for the Divorced. Founded by jeweler and divorcee Lynn Peters, the company makes custom jewelry out of wedding rings. Each customer at Freedom Rings pays a fee, and the ring-smashing ceremony begins—complete with champagne and music. Just before the smashing the M.C. says, “We will now release any remaining ties to your past by transforming your ring—which represents the past—into a token of your new beginning. Now take the hammer. Stop for a moment to consider the transformation that is about to begin your new life. Ready? With this swing let freedom ring!”

She then uses a four-pound sledgehammer to whack her emblem of love and fidelity into a shapeless piece of metal. And the ceremony ends. The fact that women are pounding their wedding rings into pendants and men are grinding theirs into golf ball markers doesn't surprise me. We've all heard the divorce statistics. But let's focus on the women for a moment: How many American women stop short of divorce, but would love to make a clean break from their marriage if it were convenient? How many Christian women feel the same way? (Brian Peterson, New Man, October, 1994, p. 8).

What kind of marriage needs to be pursued in order to enjoy God's design for marriage?

A Marriage That Reflects the Glorious Image³ of God (Gen. 1:26-27 - So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.)

Verse 26 “Let's **us** make man in **our** image ...” and Verse 26 “God created man in **His** image...” It is important to note the implied plurality in unity in the Godhead (“our image” - “His image”) after which pattern humans are created. This image is one of nature (being) as well as relationship (function). In some sense the image of the Trine God implies the necessity of

³ The image of God is not explained in the Genesis text. We are only told that the consequence of that image is being appointed as divine representative over the created world. The NT usage of “image” (Col. 3:10) leads us to conclude that image essentially refers to the spiritual, moral nature of man. What we can conclude from Genesis is being made in the image of God fits man alone for communion with God. As someone has said, “Man is God's nearest of kin.”

relationship in order for it to be functional. Humankind (“*God created man*” Hebrew - *adam*) is created as the image-bearer; male/female comprises humankind.

It is this fact that lays the foundation for the plurality with unity of the human race and for the priority of the Great Commandments (love God and love others) and the Great Commission. All humans derive their nature and origin both from God and from Adam. All humans *naturally* speaking are family members. We are to love God because we derive our nature from Him; we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, because we share a common father, Adam. Because of sin the family is divided between the redeemed family of God and the family of Satan (John 8:44). In the Great Commission we are to rescue all from the clutches of sin, because in some distant sense they are lost family members.

How then does this apply to marriage? The following can be implied:

1. Husbands and wives share “Likeness to God.”
2. Husbands and wives share “Likeness to each other in bearing the image of God..”
3. Husbands and wives share “Unity as part of the human race.”
4. Husbands and wives share “Difference as male and female.”

Ideally then, before the entrance of sin, husbands and wives would have sought to glorify God by displaying His image – (amongst other things, the image of God is the capacity to live in loving community), i.e.

- they would have valued *loving community* above all things;
- they would have sought to enhance the image of God in each other;
- they would have enjoyed complete unity as fellow-members of the human race;
- they would have enjoyed fully all that it means to be male and female;
- they would have appreciated their differences without being threatened.\

“The common, natural difference between the men and women of our culture, often invisible during courtship, become clearly apparent in marriage. Good work will (must) celebrate and make use of these differences. But poor work results from one’s disappointment over the differences. If either partner tries to change what cannot be changed in the other, that is poor work; and poor work leads to discontentment in all areas of the marriage” (Wangerin, 31).

Sin has affected all of the above. Prior to the fall husbands and wives enhanced the glory of the image of God; now they have the choice of either enhancing or degrading that image.

“When the likeness between them is self-importance (and not a common obedience to the same God) it causes an intense distrust” (Wangerin 71).

“Sin, the arrogant, personal drive to god-likeness in authority and solitary self-importance, has so snarled the marital bond that, though we will always desire to live with another human, yet living together causes pain” (Wangerin 72).

It is not a secret that many marriages are in a state of crisis in America. Communication is one of the common problems. Brent Barlow in the Salt Lake City *Deseret News* offers the following illustration.

A woman went to a lawyer and said she wanted a divorce. The lawyer got out his note pad, and proceeded to ask her some questions.

“Do you have any grounds?” he inquired.

“Oh, yes,” she replied. “About three-quarters of an acre.”

The lawyer paused for a moment, then queried, “Do you have a grudge?”

“No,” the woman answered quickly. “But we do have a lovely carport.”

Again the lawyer paused and then asked, “Does he beat you up?”

“No. I get up before he does every morning,” the woman reported.

Finally the lawyer blurted, “Lady, why do you want to divorce your husband?”

“It’s because,” she explained, “that man can’t carry on an intelligent conversation.”

Whether it’s the problem of communication or finances or sexual issues, sin distorts the image of God in the marriage relationship.

Redemption brings the grace for forgiveness and the grace for transformation to restore all that is lost in the fall.

There is much that could be said about being made in the image of God; however, in reference to marriage I only want to say that husband and wives must keep in mind that both of them are created as bearers of the image of God and as Allender and Longman put it so well, we will either enhance or degrade the image of God in our spouses.

Unity	Plurality
Man	Male and female
God	Trinity

Let me add that the biblical ideal of marriage provides the model for the church – marriage is unity in diversity as is the church. It is diversity that brings beauty – color and contrast, mystery and wonder to a marriage relationship.

Look at a piece of white poster board on which is painted a white house on white snow covered mountains under a white sky. Many marriages and churches have the same kind of blandness. Diversity and difference that is appreciated and artistically blended creates beauty.

Every husband and wife needs to reflect on their spouse and ask:

- What makes us similar as humans create in God’s image?
- What differences did God ordain that I can appreciate and value?

Marriage as Serving God (Genesis 1:28 - God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.")

The human race has at least two God ordained purposes:

1. Procreation - Procreation is the fruitfulness resulting from God's blessing the union of a husband and wife. Reproductive technologies have made it possible now to propagate the human race apart from marriage.
2. Dominion - Dominion is the faithfulness resulting from God's blessing.

Procreation increases the number of those who will glorify God.

Dominion extends the range of glorifying God.

Dominion is both a male and female responsibility that may take place within or apart from marriage. However, increase in dominion requires increase in procreation which requires increase in marriage. This is why all people, single or married, should be committed to upholding marriage for without marriage there can be no legitimate propagation of the race.

This is why capital crimes (crimes punishable by death) are crimes that attack life in some way that threatens the existence of the human race. (Murder, kidnapping, adultery, homosexuality).

So, this is marriage as God originally ordained it. This is the ideal to be pursued even in a sinful world.

Conclusion:

This is what God intended marriage to be: *Marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman (Hosea 2:19-20; Malachi 2:14) for a life-long union (Mark 10:9 is Jesus' interpretation of Gen. 2:24), ordained by God for mutual support and fulfillment (Genesis 2:18); reflecting, as male and female, the glorious image of God (Gen. 1:26-27); and serving God through a commitment to procreation and dominion over the world (Genesis 1:28).*

We cannot and should not underestimate the power of seeing our marriages as a covenant before God and of pursuing covenant love in our marriage. Elizabeth Achtemeier has given us a wonderful description of covenant love. Listen to these words!

I will be with you, no matter what happens to us and between us. If you should become blind tomorrow, I will be there. If you achieve no success or no status in our society, I will be there. When we argue and are angry, as we inevitably will, I will work to bring us together. When we seem totally at odds and neither one of us is having needs fulfilled, I will persist in trying to understand and in trying to restore our relationship. When our marriage seems utterly sterile and going nowhere at all, I will believe that it can work, and I will do my part to make it work. And when all is wonderful and we are happy, I will rejoice over our life together, and continue to strive to keep our relationship growing and strong (Achtemeier 1976, 57).

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce (Part Four)

INTRODUCTION

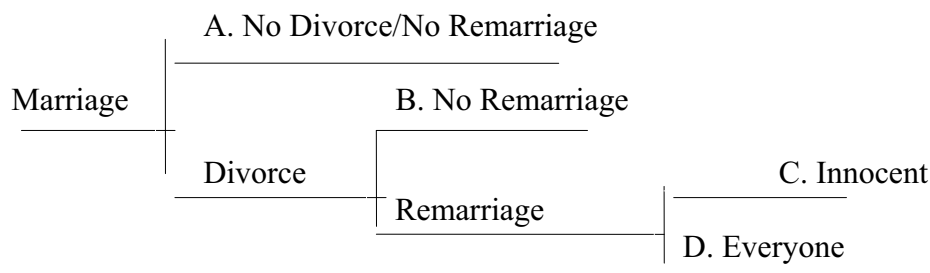
The covenant of marriage was established prior to the entrance of sin into the world (Genesis 2:24). When we discuss the issues of divorce and remarriage we must keep in mind that these we face these issues because sin has entered the world. We must also keep in mind that Christ has entered the world and offers redemption. We must apply the redemption of Jesus Christ to any lessening of the marital ideal, whether that be within an unbroken life-time commitment, or to divorce, or to re-marriage.

So there are three things we must always keep in mind in any discussion of the subjects of marriage, divorce, and remarriage:

1. We must always keep in mind the ideal of marriage.
2. We must always keep in mind the reality of sin.
3. We must always keep in mind the power of redemption.

Tonight we will look at what Jesus had to say about divorce. We will see that Jesus does not recommend divorce though he recognizes the reality of it. His focus is on God's ideal for marriage from the beginning.⁴ Jesus upholds the OT law by asserting that only adultery⁵ is a basis for dissolving a marriage. His point is that remarriage, apart from adultery, brings about an act of adultery in the new marriage.⁶ Jesus' teaching makes clear that unrighteous divorce (i.e. apart from adultery) causes adulteration in marriage.

There are four Possible Conclusions of Divorce and Remarriage from Jesus' teaching:



⁴ Mark 10:9; Gen. 2:24

⁵ Adultery would not be a basis for remarriage, because under Old Testament law the adulterer was put to death. We do not know how often this was practiced. At some point divorce became a substitute for death. Even God Himself spoke of His covenant relationship with Israel in terms of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

⁶ Though a marriage may be legally dissolved for reasons other than adultery, in God's eyes, though they are not still "married in His eyes" as some would say, the two are still obligated to renew the marriage covenant which they have sinfully broken. As Jay Adams says, "They are obligated to be reconciled in remarriage so that they can renew the contract and continue to pursue their vows. That is the point (cf. I Cor. 7:10,11). As Paul says, they must remain unmarried not only in order to be in a position to be reconciled but ... also in order not to commit adultery" (Adams 1980, 67).

The Relevant Passages of the Teaching of Jesus are as follows:

Matthew 5:31-32 *"It has been said,"⁷ "Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce." But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.*

Matthew 5:31-32 Ἐρρέθη δέ· "Ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, δότω αὐτῇ ἀποστάσιον. ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται.

Matthew 19:9 *I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.*

Matthew 19:9 λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται.

Mark 10:11 *He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.*

Mark 10:11 καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· "Ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται ἐπ αὐτήν·

Luke 16:18 *Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

Luke 16:18 Πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ γαμῶν ἑτέραν μοιχεύει, καὶ ὁ ἀπολελυμένην ἀπὸ ἀνδρός γαμῶν μοιχεύει.

Mark 10:12 *And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."*

Mark 10:12 καὶ ἐὰν αὐτὴ ἀπολύσασα τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς γαμήσῃ ἄλλον μοιχᾶται.

The teaching of Jesus has for its background Deuteronomy 24:1-4. What he says addresses the debate between the Hillel and Shammai rabbinical schools over the phrase "he has found some uncleanness in her." The Hillel school taught that divorce was allowable for any trifling thing that displeased the husband. The Shammai school taught that divorce was allowable for only adultery. In this case the Shammai school is not correct because under OT law the penalty for adultery was death; neither is the Hillel school correct because the focus of the Deuteronomy passage is not on the shameful indecency⁸ nor on permission for divorce, but rather on the abomination discussed there.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 reveals that Moses was not giving an allowance for divorce but rather regulating divorce that already was taking place and prohibiting remarriage when one who was divorced remarried and then was unmarried again.

⁷ Jesus is referring to their misunderstanding of the Mosaic regulation. His standard formula for citing Scripture is "it is written."

⁸ This Hebrew phrase *erwath dabar* means "some indecency or impropriety of behavior" that is repulsive to the husband (Murray 1961, 12). The same phrase is used in Deut. 23:12-14 where the reference is to the repulsiveness of human excrement. We can only speculate as to its precise meaning in Deuteronomy 24.

The earlier English translations led many to conclude that there were two directives in Deuteronomy 24:1-4:

- 1) *let him write her a bill of divorcement* (as if Moses was commanding this)
- 2) *let him not take her again to be his wife* (i.e. after she has married again).

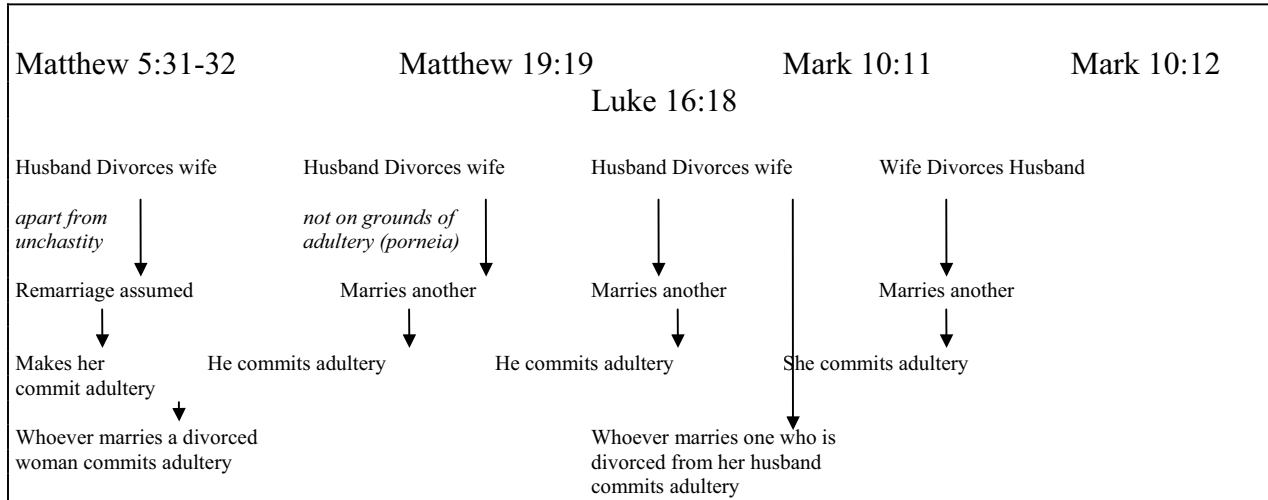
Deuteronomy 24 (KJV) *1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give [it] in her hand, and send her out of his house. {some...: Heb. matter of nakedness} {divorcement: Heb. cutting off} 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's [wife]. 3 And [if] the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth [it] in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her [to be] his wife; 4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that [is] abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee [for] an inheritance.*

The newer translations more accurately catch the force of the Hebrew by having only one directive from Moses: *her former husband who divorced her must not take her back*. The statement about writing the bill of divorce is taken as a condition of what follows.

Deuteronomy 24 (NKJV) *1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts [it] in her hand, and sends her out of his house, 2 "when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's [wife], 3 "[if] the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts [it] in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, 4 "[then] her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that [is] an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you [as] an inheritance.*

Moses was not prescribing divorce he was prohibiting a defilement of the land by what is considered as a gross abnormality – that a woman would return to her first husband after she was married to another and then found to be single again either by another divorce or the death of the second husband. What this passage does establish is the sacredness of the marriage bond and the unique relationship that exists between marriage partners. It warns against the frivolous severance of marriage relationships.

These Gospel Passages on Divorce are Charted as follows:



Conclusions from Jesus’ teaching on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

1. The ideal of Genesis 2:24 is upheld - one life-long marriage.
2. Adultery is a legitimate, though not necessary, cause for divorce.⁹
3. Divorce wrongly obtained is sin¹⁰ - sin that needs to be and can be forgiven (Rom. 5:20).¹¹
4. Unrighteous divorce causes adulteration in remarriage.¹²
5. This adulteration in remarriage is an act of sin - sin that needs to be forgiven and can be (Rom. 5:20)
6. Remarriage, even in adulteration, is still a marriage.¹³
7. Nowhere does it indicate in Scripture that adulteration is a continual state.¹⁴

⁹ Adultery is grounds for forgiveness as much as it is for divorce.

¹⁰ It is important to keep in mind that sin that is blatantly being practiced is subject to church discipline. The church should begin disciplinary action toward anyone who initiates divorce for unbiblical reasons.

¹¹ As Jay Adams says, “I am not encouraging divorce anymore than God encourage robbery, adultery, homosexuality, lying and murder by declaring that such sins are totally forgiven in Christ and put in the past (1 Cor. 6:11).

¹² An unwilling recipient of divorce should wait for remarriage until it is clearly impossible to restore the original marriage. Impossibility occurs when there is the death of the spouse, the remarriage of the spouse, or adequate period of time to determine the resolve of the spouse to not restore the marriage. The willingness to restore the original marriage is indicative of a heart that is humble before God (Illustrate with Harlen and Sandy).

¹³ The original marriage bond is broken when the new marriage is consummated. This does not mean that adultery establishes the new marriage. Adultery formally breaks the original marriage; only a mutual covenant can establish a new marriage.

¹⁴ Adultery is a state when people co-habitate apart from marriage.

8. The “innocent” party in a marriage severed due to adultery, may remarry without adulteration.¹⁵
9. The “guilty” party is guilty of sin.¹⁶ Sin that needs to be forgiven and can be.¹⁷

¹⁵ Because the spouse’s adultery has broken the marriage.

¹⁶ Again this is a matter of church discipline.

¹⁷ Once forgiven there is nothing that says the guilty party can’t remarry, if there is no possibility of restoring the original marriage.

Paul's Teaching on Divorce (Part Five)

INTRODUCTION

The covenant of marriage was established prior to the entrance of sin into the world (Genesis 2:24). When we discuss the issues of divorce and remarriage we must keep in mind that these we face these issues because sin has entered the world. We must also keep in mind that Christ has entered the world and offers redemption. We must apply the redemption of Jesus Christ to any lessening of the marital ideal, whether that be within an unbroken life-time commitment, or to divorce, or to re-marriage.

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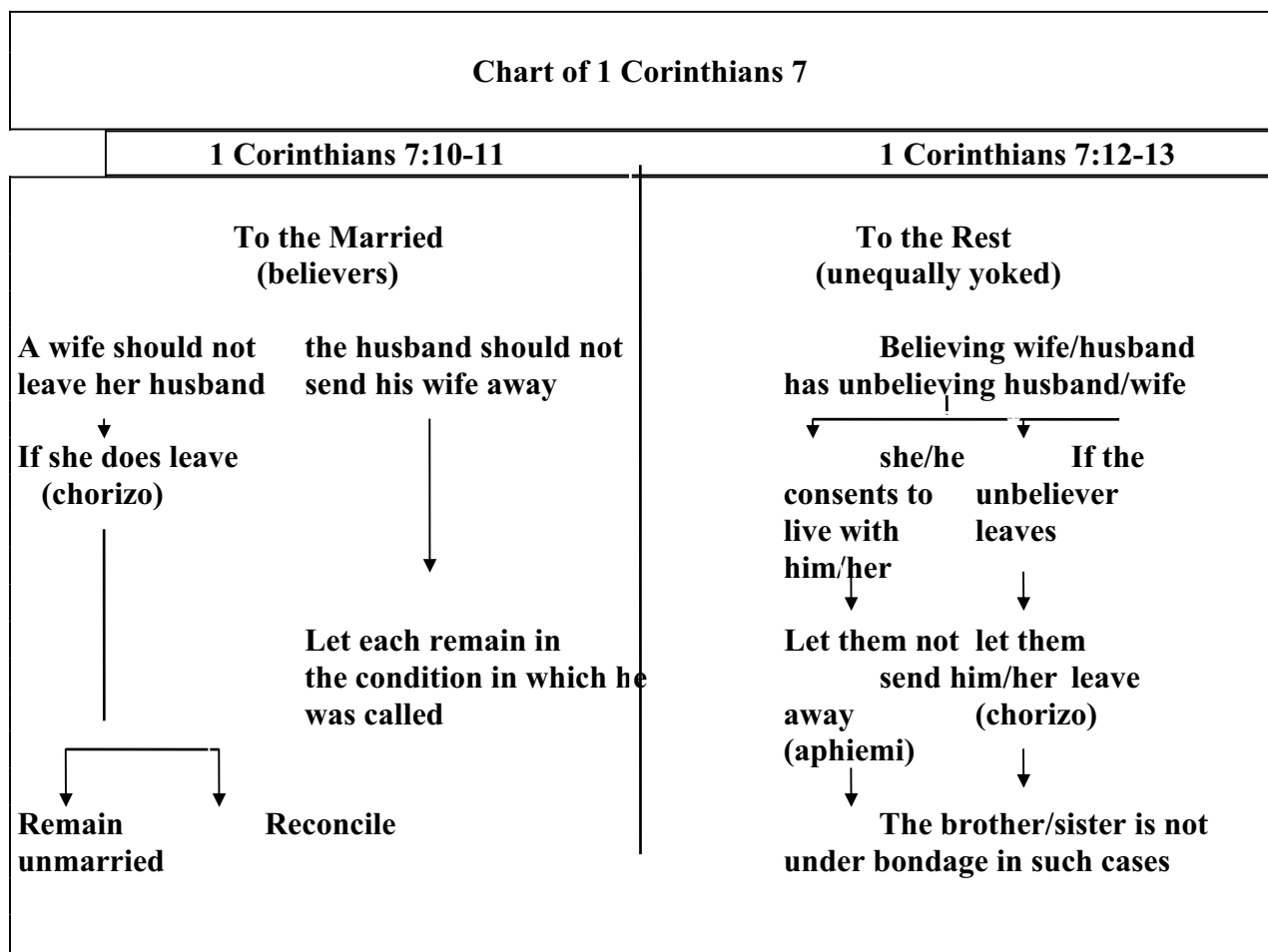
²⁴ Because the spouse's adultery has broken the marriage.

²⁵ Again this is a matter of church discipline.

²⁶ Once forgiven there is nothing that says the guilty party can't remarry, if there is no possibility of restoring the original marriage.

Relevant Texts from the Pauline Epistles

1 Corinthians 7:10-15 10 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. 11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. 12 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.



Verses 10-11 lead to these conclusions:

1. Paul sees his teaching on Christian marriage as being consistent with the teaching of Christ. He does not deal with Jesus' exception clause because the issue in Corinth was divorce for ascetic reasons,²⁷ not for adultery.

²⁷ i.e. some took Paul's strong teaching against wrong sexual relations to the point of avoiding sex even in marriage, consequently, if sex is defiling in some way, then the unmarried state would be preferable.

2. Christian marriages should stay together. This is always the ideal to be pursued.
3. If this mandate, for whatever reason is violated, a second command is given to those in Christian marriages. There are two choices, remain unmarried or be reconciled²⁸ to your spouse.

Verses 12-13 lead to these conclusions:

1. Paul introduces a situation not dealt with specifically by Jesus Christ, i.e. the marriage of a believer and unbeliever.²⁹
2. The Christian should not be the initiator in the non-Christian's departure.
3. Should the non-Christian want to stay in the marriage, the Christian should agree and use the situation for the glory of God (1 Peter 1:1-6).
4. If the non-Christian chooses to abandon the marriage, the Christian should let him/her go.
5. In this situation, there is no injunction to remain unmarried. The marital bond is severed in this case.³⁰

.Romans 7:1-3 1 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is release from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

These verses lead to these conclusions:

1. Paul is here teaching on the believer's relationship to the law. He is not giving a discourse on marriage and divorce.
2. He illustrates the believer's freedom from the law by his having died through his identification with Christ.
3. He uses the ideal of marriage, not the exceptions, to illustrate that principle.
4. In the ideal of marriage, only death could sever the marriage and give freedom to the surviving spouse to be remarried.
5. All that can be said from this passage is that Paul upholds the ideal of marriage.

²⁸ If Christians can not be reconciled to each other, how can they be the model of reconciliation for a broken world (Fee).

²⁹ This may have come about in either of two ways: 1) through the disobedience of the believer in marrying a non-Christian, ca. 1Cor. 7:39, 2 Cor. 6:14-16; 2) one of the spouses in a non-Christian marriage becomes a Christian.

³⁰ Some take this to mean only "the separation from the obligation to perform marital duties." I take this to mean "the dissolution of the marriage bond."

BUILDING A MARRIAGE TO LAST (Part Six)

The Six Continuing Tasks for Building a Marriage from *As For Me and My House* by Walter Wangerin

Wangerin in his great book on marriages suggests that there are six tasks that husbands and wives share in growing a marriage. Let me share them with you..

The First Task: Truthfulness and Dependability.

Truthfulness

- “Truth” must be reproduced in a marriage (121). *Truth must be reproduced in marriage because it is so commonly broken by the natural shock of living together and truly discovering one another.*
- The definition of “truthfulness” (121-2). *Truthfulness: Hides nothing in lying; Neglects nothing important; Distorts nothing, either consciously or unconsciously; Communicates as accurate a picture as possible of anything it chooses to offer, whether of the world, or of yourself, or of your spouse.*
- Two “cares” in speaking the truth (123). *Care for the topic to get it right; Care for your spouse that he/she hear it right.*
- How the “cover of the virtue of honesty” is misused (123). *By using the guise of “being honest” to criticize, to wound, to snap her into shape, to improve your own life (pretending perhaps to improve hers).*
- A spouse should above all others speak the truth to his spouse (123). *Because you above all others can be trusted to not conceal what would truly improve your spouse.*

Ephesians 5

Dependability?

- The definition of dependability (124). *Dependability is truthfulness in action - in your actions. It regards your promises, whether spoken or unspoken, and your spouse’s reasonable expectations, that you will in fact do what you pledge to do, that you will fulfill anticipations. It secures, now, the future in deed .*
- The description of the work of dependability (124-5).
 - *to make your promises wisely, realistically, according to your true abilities, according to your spouse’s real need;*
 - *to remember the specific promises and your general marital duties in a hectic world;*
 - *to make these promises a fixed priority in a world that will entice you to other interests;*
 - *to accomplish all the little pledges ungrudgingly, gracefully. Each is a nail. Behold, you are building a lodge against the future, a structure in which to house the marriage hereafter.*
- How breaking a promise destabilizes a home (125). *A home is not build on words but deeds. Some make promises for tomorrow that allows them to escape the burden of today. When that*

trust is betrayed, she will be doubly suspicious of the future. The very purpose of a promise is to assure stability in spite of the uncertain future.

- *“Dependability is a struggle against self-centeredness (126). Your previous pledge shape your activities, your schedules, your priorities, and your labor. Dependability requires that you will sometimes sacrifice the unforeseen opportunity, that you will decline certain personal advantages, that you will not be blown about by every whim or new event.*
- *Both truthfulness and dependability help spouses in the discovery of their identity (130-1)? Identity is discovered in relationships. “We seek ourselves in others’ eyes.” The careless world mirrors the individual to himself and tell him who he is. The problem is that the world is careless and unconcerned for the truth. We all need one human being whose truthfulness has been proven in dependability, whose truthfulness we can trust, who neither mocks us or flatters us, but reflects us accurately. “The blessing of -- and the necessity of-- truthfulness in marriage is no less than that one assures the other of his her identity.”*
- *The ability to trust creates a safe haven in a chaotic world (132). “A home is built of trust and the assured stability of human relationships; within my home I am secure against the shocks of a haphazard, hateful, fraudulent world.” Uncertainty and mistrust cause people to either fear the world of fight back - dog eat dog.*
- *Truthfulness and dependability help prepare for coming crises (133-4)? “Every ‘little’ promise kept is a new nail in the entire structure of the home, to make it proof against an outrageously deceitful world, to build trust, and by trust to build one sure place of peace.” Trust cannot be created during the crisis. The proofs for trusting must precede the need for trusting.*

The Second Task: Sharing the Work of Survival.

- *What it means to share the work of survival (137-8). -- To make of all the myriad duties, jobs, and toilings one single work in which you both participate. “when all the wife does and all the husband does are done to serve the third being, the relationship, when each detail of their toiling is a service to that, then they are sharing. Surely this will ask for a wise division of labor; nevertheless, each remembers the spouse not only in but also by everything he or she does. It is possible to do what we do, as insignificant as it may appear to be, in celebration of our marriage, in service to the marriage, and in remembrance of one’s spouse.*
- *What did God intend husband and wife to be in their shared work (140)? They were meant to be “helps” perfectly fit for each other, not nuisances to be excluded from the more elevated, more important work; not mere beneficiaries of one spouse’s work (as in ‘I pay for the car and the house; I support you; that ought to be enough’); not mere ornaments purchased by and awarded to one’s spouse’s work”*

Formulate a plan on how to apply these four ways to turn individual duties into shared, marital activity.

1. Let the division of labor be willing, conscious, and mutual.
2. Divide the labor according to the natural differences of the spouses.
3. Show a continual, sincere, interest in your spouse’s work.
4. Show that all your work ultimately serves the marriage.

The Third Task: Talking and listening.

What are the four activities in dialogue (157)?

1. One partner talks, while
2. The other partner listens. And then
3. The second partner talks, while
4. the first partner, now, listens.

There are two problems that trouble this four part task:

1. “Sin persuades us that the most important object is to talk, to be heard, and that the greatest frustration is that the other does not listen” (157).
2. “Few people are born with the native ability to talk well, fewer still know by nature how to listen” (158).

There are three elements for every conversation (159-166):

1. Shape both what you say and how you say it to the person listening.
Use sight, touch, and sound. When you use these three, you have the ability to know how your partner is responding.
2. Know clearly who you are and how you seem to your listener to be, because you are the instrument that communicates.
3. Be aware of the actual purpose of the conversation.
Good talk (1) is clear about its real purposes and (2) chooses purposes meant to serve the marriage.

Good listening includes three “works” (166-170):

1. Show the listening.
2. Empty your heart in order to listen.
“I am here for you. The time is yours. In this moment you have the freedom and the right to take us where we both shall go.”
3. Holy listening produces the spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Fourth Task: Making Love

** What does “making love” mean:

“... making love means that in the sex act the couple make manifest their love for one another” (173).

“Love isn’t made in bed, as though sex could manufacture what didn’t already exist; rather, an existing love makes sex a lovely thing” (173).

“There is, in fact, at the beginning of marriage a making, a creating, of a personal sex life. Husband and wife commit themselves to the slow and tender task of creating their own unique patterns of sexual expression” (173).

** There are four problems that hinder the mutual creation of a couple’s sexual practice

1. To keep silence before one another for any reason, for shame, or embarrassment, or the foolish notion that one does not talk about sex.
2. To assume that either spouse knows what is sexually best for both before they have discovered their best in experience together.
3. To allow passions alone to lead, giving up a mutual and loving control, so that sexual desires hurtle to their own conclusions.
4. To bring to the marriage bed prefabricated answers about right sexual behavior.

**

“What is sexually right for us? The answer is learned only in the marriage, by actually practicing sex together with a constant and dear concern for the other’s experience and an open expression of one’s own. Doing is discovery” (175).

** What is the “law” for love-making? “... the sexual practices of a marriage must be created by both partners in dear regard for one another and in clear disclosure, each to the other, of personal needs and tendencies. Both! The only law for ‘making’ your means of ‘love’ is that you be servants of one another” (183).

** What influences people to accept external standards of sexuality:

1. The stern church (175-8).
2. Talk show sex (178-180).
3. Individual expectations about sex (183-5).
4. The use of sex for bargaining and manipulation (185-188).

V. The Fifth Task: Healing

- Discuss the definition of healing. “ *‘Healing.’ It recognizes that the spouse will suffer, and that intrinsic in your promise to be faithful is your promise to heal his suffering, always to be her first physician--to ‘keep’ your spouse in sickness as well as you keep him in health*” (219).
- Discuss the three miraculous acts of healing:
 1. *Nursing . In this you are able to serve your spouse without immediate reward, with no compensation at all, since sickness is precisely the inability to return one kindness for another.*
 2. *Building a house of mercy. This requires that you assure your spouse that you will not fail her in sudden need, that you will be merciful when she breaks, that you will be a healer when she is most weak.*
 3. *Sympathizing. This is to experience with someone his own experience; to feel with someone his own feelings; to suffer with someone the suffering he or she knows in that same moment; to abolish internal loneliness by entering into the experience of the one you love.*
- What does living the problem of the hurting by having a ‘hearing heart, not a calculating brain’ mean? (224).

- How does sympathy enable a person to be “whole in spite of sickness” (225)?

VI. The Sixth Task: Gifting and Volunteering

- Discuss this definition: *“Your gifts and your active volunteering of yourself must be above and beyond all routine, all exchanges, all expected courtesies, all duties, all the commandments to which you are beholden. This task is pure grace, motivated by no other reason than your love for your spouse” (241).*
- Discuss the difference between other gifts and “true gifts”. *True gifts are gifts that satisfy a personal need that your spouse did not recognize in himself (but you did) or else a need that your spouse could not admit or would not satisfy on his own (but you could and would).*
- Discuss the difference between required tasks and “volunteering (246-8). *True volunteering obeys no law, seeks no return, pays no debts, plans no praise for yourself, nor proves your goodness - but proudly, purely is meant to demonstrate by your time, your energy, and your action no more than this: “I love you.” It is what you do unbidden unexpectedly.*
- Verbalize your commitment to your spouse to be a gift-giver in your home.
- Write a new covenant of marriage to be given to your spouse in some more private moment.

