

7. Wedlock or Deadlock?

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Over a half of marriages in America broke its wedding vows with many reasons. It used to be not uncommon to meet an couple married for over 20 years. Now, if you see someone who married for 20 years, people look at them with some sort of mixed feeling of "How-Did-You-Manage-To-Stay-Together-So-Long?" and admiration.

An old Arab proverb states that marriage begins with a prince kissing an angel and ends with a baldheaded man looking across the table at a fat lady.

Socrates told his students, "By all means marry. If you get a good wife, twice blessed you will be. If you get a bad wife, you'll become a philosopher." Socrates was a very good philosopher.

Some says, "Marriage is like a fly on a screen door. The one from outside wants to get in, the one from inside wants to get out."

As a non-believer that I was, I wished marriage came with some sort of owner's manual like a car. But now as a believer in Christ, we have this book "the Bible" as our marriage manual.

If I have to choose one subject that is very personal other than salvation by Jesus Christ, it would be about marriage. About eight and nine years ago, my marriage was on the rock and it was heading to the dead end. Although a woman doesn't like to draw the line, but when she does, you are doomed. I was faithful to my bride, and was with her physically, I was not with her emotionally. My wife, Karen, fed up with my stupidity and drew the line. I was desperate and realized that I really messed up my marriage bad. Through that valley deep experience, the Lord taught me one of the biggest lessons in my life about loving my woman as Christ loves His church.

It was one of those lessons that I would cherish for the rest of my life. Because of that valley deep experience, I felt His presence so strong and so near me that I could almost touch Him. He embraced me when I was desperate and was crying out to Him. I wouldn't trade that precious experience with all the money in the world, but I wouldn't give a dime to have that pain again.

A. GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

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

Everything God created was good and He made comments about them, too. But after He created a man, He said, "It is not good." God says that we men need helpers.

The marriage is ordained by God. It is not some smart marketing package someone pulled off. It was initiated by God and it is very close to His heart.

If you have any doubts, let's remember that the marriage was the first ordination by Him to the mankind at the Garden of Eden. The first miracle recorded in the Gospels was turning water to wine at a Jewish wedding. May I remind you one of the last things happens in the Book of Revelation is the spiritual marriage, "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb" between Christ our Savior and the bride which is the body of Christ.

Gen 2:21-23 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam 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."

Adam fell into a deep sleep while God was creating a woman for him. Instead of chasing after a good looking female monkey, Adam rest in Him. Do I believe that God has a choice of the person for each of us? Yes, I do. What if we go against God's desire for us and marry to someone else? Would God be surprised? If He was surprised by our choice, He wouldn't be the God of the universe. But He would still bless that marriage if we choose to follow Him.

I asked you underline the phrase "He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman." What is the reason why God took a rib out of the man's side? Why not from the head? Why not from his feet? God didn't make her out of his head, so that she can rule over him; He didn't make her out of his feet, so that he can trample over her; God created the woman out of the man's rib from his side under his arm, so that he can protect her; close to his heart, so that she can be loved by him.

Gen 2:24-25 Therefore (1) a man shall leave his father and mother and (2) be joined to his wife, and (3) they shall become one flesh. And (4) they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Here are four timeless principles from the Word of God that give a marriage its strength:

1) SEVERANCE - *a man shall leave his father and mother*

Without any other people in the marriage including his and her parents, marriage is between husband and wife. In-laws must not be in marriage equation.

2) PERMANENCE - *be joined to his wife*

No use leaving from their parents, unless man and woman cleave to one another. The word "Cleave" means "to adhere, to stick, to be attached by some strong tie." This verve requires action from both sides, not just one side.

3) UNITY - *they shall become one flesh.*

This one remarkable phrase baffles theologians to explain the complete meaning according to Eph 5:31-32.

To understand and practice this element, we must rule out a few thing. Polygamy, adultery, promiscuity and homosexuality must be not in the picture. Does it mean that a person who once was promiscuous before his or her marriage cannot have UNITY with the spouse? That would be difficult because of the past memory. But with repentance in God, it is possible. Because God makes all things new. It is more than a physical meaning, but spiritual meaning.

This not only applies in marriage, but also it applies in adultery.

1 Corinthians 6:16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh."

4) INTIMACY - *they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed*

The intimacy between husband and wife goes beyond knowing each other physically, but it goes to a tender, intimate and personal knowledge.

The leaving, cleaving and knowing each other results in a new identity in which two individuals merge into one - one in mind, heart, body and spirit. This is why divorce has such a devastating effect.

B. A COVENANT, NOT A CONTRACT

Marriage is not a contract we sign often in business world. It is a covenant between man and woman and God. Here are the differences:

- A covenant is based on trust between parties.
- A contract is based on distrust. That is why we have to sign so many times when we buy a car or house.

- A covenant is based on unlimited responsibility.
- A contract is based on limited liability.

- A covenant cannot be broken if new circumstances occur.
- A contract can be voided by mutual consent.

Love is an active power that we control by our own wills. We can choose to love or not to love. That is why I don't buy the story of "There is no love between us." from the couples who want divorce. If they truly want to recandle the marriage, there will be a beautiful love again with their efforts.

C. PROTECTING THE MARRIAGE

1) Having a right priority in our lives

The priority in our lives should be starting with God first, your spouse second, your children third, then the rest of people and things follow. Did you notice that I have not mentioned one person in this list? Who would that be? Myself and yourself. Everyone else should come before ourselves. Whether it is your desire to rise to the top of your corporate ladder, or fancy life long dream career or your favorite sports, nothing should come before your God and your marriage. I saw one too many marriages go down because husbands or wives expect the others to sacrifice for their careers.

Mt 19:6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

Take it from the idiot who went through that stupidity and have learned in a very difficult way. If you put your spouse's needs and desires before yours, God will honor you and might even grant your desire. Most of all you will have a happy marriage.

Selfish individuality leading to separateness between husband and wife can be witnessed all around us and most of them end up in divorce court.

2) Keeping marriage bed pure

It used to be mostly husbands' problem - getting involved with other women than their own wives. Now, with free casual sex which is nothing more than nicely packaged garbage from sex driven men, many wives don't even think twice about having sex with someone else other than their husbands.

Heb 13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

We often call marriage "Holy Matrimony." Why? Because God honors it. When we break the marriage we are in, we are dishonoring our God.

Whether it is actual physical adultery, or looking at dirty skin magazines, or watching R-rated or X-rated movies, or visiting internet porno web sites, mesmerizing muscle bulging hunks from soap operas & movies or having sexual fantasies with someone else other than our spouses, they all must be removed from our hearts for the purity of our marriages.

3) We must understand the difference in wiring of men and women.

By now, you are thinking, "No duh?" I am not talking about physical differences. I am talking about how men and women reaction in emotion.

The reaction to emotion of men and women is so much different. One of the good examples can be found in military. I don't care what the Women's Lib Movement says about equal opportunity for men and women. They don't have the foggiest idea about how men and women react in the battle field. For an example, let's say, shots and explosions happen all around while two female soldiers with other male soldiers in a platoon are advancing. At that moment, the best friend of a female soldier gets killed, she has to deal with her grief and sudden rush of emotion right on the spot with crying and screaming, not necessarily because of fear, but the loss of her friend.

On the other side of the battle field, a male soldier gets shot and killed. His best buddy is going to explore with his anger against the enemy who shot his friend. So he would rush to the enemy line and kills the enemy and returns to his buddy's dead body and breaks down in emotion. That is why women are not fitting for the battle field.

We are going to deal with this aspect more in-depth in next couple of weeks, but you ladies need to understand that respecting your husband is more important to him than doing laundry and cooking his favorite meals for him. You husbands, your wife needs your affirmation of your love for her that you love her only no matter what.

4) Never, never talk bad about your spouse in front of anybody, not even a joke.

You might think it is funny and it might be nothing more than a joke, but your spouse might take it into his or her heart. I see many husbands and wives talk about how heavy or short or wrinkly or whatever their spouses are. You may not see the immediate result of that stupid joke, but your spouse will remember it, especially your wife.

One more thing, never to compare your spouse with someone else's spouse unless you have a death wish. If you get nailed because of that kind of stupid remarks from your spouse in the future, I won't feel sorry for you.

D. APPLICATIONS

-HOW TO MAKE THE MARRIAGE STRONGER

Give your spouse nothing but **B • E • S • T**.

1) Bless each other - Bless your spouse with your words constantly from your heart. Look for something good your spouse does, instead of bad things. Then commend him or her, praise your spouse for work that person does, how he or she carries himself or herself in apparel and makeup. Send him or her cards in mail. Leave a love note for your spouse.

2) Edify each other - Build up your spouse with your words to him or her and to other people. Tell others how you are blessed to have your spouse. Pray for that person to be what the Lord wants him or her to be, not the way you want. But expect that the Lord will work on you before He works on your spouse. It can be rather a painful, but it's worth.

3) Share with each other - Share your spouse's desires as yours. Be attentive to him or her when he or she talks to you without watching TV, or reading newspaper, or doing something else. Give him or her your full attention. Honor what he or she likes more than what you like.

4) Touch each other - Now, guys, don't get excited here. I am not talking about sexual touching. I am talking about physical gestures toward him or her. Winking at him or her across the room, smiling at your spouse, squeeze hand or shoulder when you pass by. Give him or her a quick kiss on the neck or cheek.

I know that we will not achieve perfection in our marriage with this four week series study. But as we follow God-given pattern of Genesis 2:24, we will discover the thrills and wonders of marriage He planned for us, and we will fulfill the purpose He has set before us of showing His love to others who are so desperate for hope.

Any promise is hard to keep, but the wedding vow is just totally impossible to keep, apart from the supernatural empowering of the Holy Spirit. If you will each keep your relationship with Jesus strong, being filled with the Holy Spirit, then your relationship with each other will grow stronger and stronger. But remember, the Bible says that apart from Jesus, we have no power at all to live a holy and loving life.