

MARRIAGE

1. Definition.

- a. Marriage is the exclusive, lifelong covenant commitment between one man and one woman, made before God and the community, to live together in organic unity as husband and wife, enjoying a monogamous sexual relationship and in most cases raising children together.

2. Reality.

- a. Marriage is on the decline in New Zealand. In 1971, 45.49 couples per 1000 people got married. In 2018, it was 10.76 couples per 1000 people.

3. Divine Institution.

- a. The four divine institutions applicable to the entire human race are: personal responsibility, marriage, family, and the state. All are types of government. They are in decreasing order of importance.
- b. This makes marriage the second most important divine institution. Successful marriages are foundational to successful families, which are foundational to successful states. Next to personal responsibility, marriage is the most important institution on the planet.
- c. When a marriage succeeds, the entire community is impacted positively. When it fails, the entire community is impacted negatively. Marriages are a matter of significant public concern, as the historical record of every civilisation demonstrates. When marriages crumble, civilisations crumble. It's only a matter of time.
- d. Marriage is a divine institution, not a human institution. It was established by God, not man. In Scripture, the designer of marriage, God, provides operating instructions for us to follow in our marriages. God designed marriage, so he knows best how it is to operate. God's design for marriage really works!
(1) **Ge 2:24-25** 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.
- e. The divine institution of marriage is to be held in honour by Christians.
(1) **Heb 13:4** 4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.
- f. Neither man nor the state has the authority to change or modify the definition of marriage. Every time man attempts to modify marriage, great and unintended harm results. Great harm is occurring in many lives today because of the very successful push of some to change the definition of marriage. In future generations, we will see reverberating harm caused by the insistence of the Baby Boom generation to change the definition of marriage.
- g. While marriage is to be the norm for most men and women, it is not God's plan for everyone. In Christianity, singleness has an honoured place. See *Singleness*.

4. Purposes.

- a. Three purposes of marriage apply to the entire human race:
(1) Close companionship.

- (a) Ge 2:18 18 Yahweh God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him.
 - (b) **Ge 24:67** 67 Isaac brought [Rebekah] into his mother Sarah's tent, he took Rebekah, she became his wife, and he loved her. Thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.
 - (c) **Dt 24:5** 5 When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be liable for any other public duty. He shall be free at home one year to be happy with his wife whom he has taken.
- (2) Satisfy the need for sex.
- (a) **1 Co 7:1-9** 1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ...9 If they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.
- (3) Procreate and raise children.
- (a) **Ge 1:28** 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.
 - (b) **Ex 20:12** 12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you
 - (c) Marriage unites a man and a woman as husband and wife so that children will have both a mother and a father. Men and woman are distinct and complementary, and human reproduction requires one man and one woman. The optimal environment for every child is with his or her biological father and mother.
- b. Three additional purposes apply specifically to Christian marriages:
- (1) Portray the oneness of the three persons of the Trinity.
 - (a) **Ge 2:23-24** 23 The man said: This is now *bone of my bones* and *flesh of my flesh*. She will be called woman because she was taken out of man. 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be *joined to his wife*, and they will *become one flesh*.
 - (b) Angels, by the way, do not marry and cannot portray the oneness of the Trinity.
 - 1) **Mt 22:30** 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.
 - (2) Portray the oneness of Jesus and the church.
 - (a) **Eph 5:22-32** 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Messiah is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Messiah, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Messiah loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own

bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Messiah does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Messiah and the church.

- 1) Christian marriage is one of our greatest evangelistic tools.
 - 2) Cf., *Before the Wrath*.
- (3) Sanctification.
- (a) Marriage is a sanctifying institution, the greatest training ground for our development into Christlikeness. Marriage takes us from being rough rocks to smooth stones. It indicates where we really are in our progress to spiritual maturity.
 - (b) “If you don’t treat your wife well, I don’t want to hang out with you.”¹

5. Basic Requirements.²

- a. **Ge 2:24-25 (KJV)** 24 Therefore shall a man *leave* his father and his mother, and shall *cleave* unto his wife: and they shall *be one flesh*. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.
 - (1) **Mt 19:4-5** 4 [Jesus] answered, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female 5 and said, Therefore a man shall *leave* his father and his mother and *hold fast* to his wife, and the two shall *become one flesh*?
 - (2) **Eph 5:28-31** 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 Therefore a man shall *leave* his father and mother and *hold fast* to his wife, and the two shall *become one flesh*.
 - (3) All three components—leave, cleave, be one flesh—are essential for marriage.
 - (4) The order is vitally important. Young men, don’t “cleave” until you “leave.” Certainly don’t “be one flesh” with a woman until you “leave” and “cleave.” Being one flesh with your wife must wait until the proper time.
- b. Leave.
 - (1) The new husband is to have reached a point in life where he is able to live independently from his parents. He must have become his own man. He must have a certain level of personal maturity. He must be able to provide financially for his bride and any children that may soon be born. He must have developed the leadership qualities necessary to lead the home (e.g., Zac Jenkins, Isaac Tan). It is a joy to see godly young men who are preparing themselves to one day lead a family. Young men should be aiming for the qualities listed in 2 Ti 3:1-13. See *Manhood*.

¹ Dr. Nathan Holsteen, Dallas Theological Seminary.

² See the marriage triangle in Walter Trobisch, *I Married You* (1971).

- (2) When we find our completeness in God, we then are able to bring a fulfilled person to our marriage.³
 - (3) It's unwise to pursue a wife before you have some clarity on your mission. Chase excellence, not women. Women want a man on a mission who is going somewhere. No woman wants the burden and stress of being a man's center. "Marrying me means joining my mission. If you won't join, then this won't work."⁴
 - (4) There must be a degree of separation between the new couple and their parents. The amount of separation depends on the circumstances. The objective is that new couple is free to make their own decisions as a "new organism." The husband especially needs space and time to establish his position of leader of the new family.
 - (5) Parents are to refrain from interfering intrusively in the life of the new couple. The new couple must be free to make mistakes or to do things differently than their parents (e.g., decisions concerning parenting, children's education, career, local church).
- c. Cleave.
- (1) דָּבַק: to stick to, cling, cleave to, like clods of dirt after a rain or the scales of a crocodile (*HALOT*, 209).
 - (2) Marriage is covenant commitment for life. "Till death do us part." Married couples should agree, at the outset, never to use the "d" word.
 - (a) **Mt 19:6** 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.
 - (b) **Ge 25:10** 10 There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife [e.g., my mom's decision to be buried at the cemetery in Fremont, Kansas].
 - (3) The couple's covenant commitment is as much for the the community as it is for themselves. It is a *public* commitment, not just a *private* commitment. This is why there does need to be an official public marriage ceremony. Western nations have become very cavalier about weddings (e.g., "Let's go to Vegas!"). Non-Western nations tend to be much more serious about the wedding ceremony (e.g., the Jewish marriage ceremony).
 - (4) The new couple is be considered by the community as one, new living organism. One must never seek to divide husband and wife on any issue. The leadership of the husband is to respected. The husband is to be acknowledged as the spokesman for the family.
- d. Be one flesh.
- (1) The new couple is no longer two living organisms but one living organism.
 - (a) "The Christian idea of marriage is based on Christ's words that a man and wife are to be regarded as a single organism—for that is what the words 'one flesh' would be in modern English."⁵
 - (b) **Eph 5:28-31** 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his

³ Jerry Cook, *Love, Acceptance, and Forgiveness*, 90.

⁴ Michael Foster.

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 104.

own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

(2) Marriage involves both physical and spiritual union with one's spouse. Sex is an important aspect of this unity, though not the only aspect.

(a) **1 Co 6:16** 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, The two will become one flesh.

(3) Sex consummates the marriage.

(a) Consummate: finish, complete, make (marital union) complete by sexual intercourse.⁶

6. Responsibility of the Husband.

a. A woman's primal need is love.

(1) **Genesis 29:31-35** 31 When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. 32 And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me." 33 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. 34 Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. 35 And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

b. The husband's primary responsibility is to *love* his wife.

(1) **Eph 5:25-33** 25 Husbands, *love* your wives, as Messiah *loved* the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should *love* their wives as their own bodies. He who *loves* his wife *loves* himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Messiah does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. ...33 However, let each one of you *love* his wife as himself....

(2) Send SHMILY messages to your wife (See How Much I Love You).

c. The husband may love his wife by following C-O-U-P-L-E:⁷

(1) C - Closeness: being close to her.

(a) **Ec 9:9** 9 Enjoy life *with* the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

(b) If you are married, you can't live as if you're single. It's that simple.

(c) This involves kiss her on the way out the door each day.

(2) O - Openness: opening up to her.

⁶ [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#). (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

⁷ Emerson Eggerichs, *Love & Respect*, 117-82.

- (a) **Song 2:10** 10 My beloved speaks and says to me: Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away...
 - (b) **Pr 31:11** 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her....
 - (c) **Mal 2:15** 15 So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.
 - (d) This involves sharing your feelings, telling her about your day, asking for her opinion, showing you want to talk, taking her for a walk, praying with her, and giving her your full attention.
- (3) U - Understanding: listening to her instead of trying to “fix” her.
- (a) **1 Pe 3:7** 7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, because they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.
 - (b) **Jas 1:19** 19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak....
 - (c) Crawl into your wife’s world and look at meeting her needs through her eyes.⁸
 - (d) This involves listening so you can repeat back what she said, not dismissing her feelings, retraining from interrupting her, praying for her.
- (4) P - Peacemaking: saying “I’m sorry” to her.
- (a) **Is 54:5-8** 5 For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. 6 For the Lord has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. 7 For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. 8 In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,” says the Lord, your Redeemer.
 - (b) **1 Pe 3:8** 8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.
 - (c) This involves letting her vent her frustrations without closing her off, admitting wrong and apologising, meeting her halfway, praying with her after a hurtful time.
- (5) L - Loyalty: proving to her that you’re committed.
- (a) **Ge 29:20** 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.
 - (b) **Pr 5:15** 15 Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.
 - (c) **Song 2:10** 10 My beloved speaks and says to me: Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away....
 - (d) **Tt 1:6** 6 ...The husband of one wife....
 - (e) **Mal 2:15-16** 15 Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 16 For I hate divorce, says Yahweh the God of Israel, and him who covers his garment with wrong, says Yahweh of hosts. So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.

⁸ Eric and Leslie Ludy, *When God Write Your Love Story*, 207.

- (f) **Heb 13:4** 4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.
- (g) This involves speaking highly of her in front of others, being involved in things important to her, not correcting her in front of the children, not looking lustfully at other women, including her in social gatherings, telling the kids, “Don’t speak to your mother that way!”, speaking positively of her at all times, never using the “d” word, installing a porn filter on your internet devices, keeping in close contact when on a business trip.
- (6) E - Esteem: honouring and cherishing her.
 - (a) **Song 8:6** 6 Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm. . . .
 - (b) **Pr 5:18** 18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. . . .
 - (c) **Pr 31:28-29** 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 29 Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.
 - (d) This involves speaking highly of her in front of others, opening the door for her, giving her encouragement or praise, noticing something different about her hair or clothes, being physically affectionally with her in public, making her feel first in importance, being proud of her and all she does.
 - (e) “Of one woman he said that ‘to have loved her was a liberal education’— which Thackeray considered ‘the finest compliment to a woman that perhaps ever was offered.’ [Richard] Steele described with emotion the joys of family life, the pleasant patter of children’s feet, the gratitude of a husband to his aging wife: ‘She gives me every day pleasure beyond what I ever knew in the possession of her beauty when I was in the vigour of youth. Every moment of her life brings me fresh instances of her complacency to my inclinations, and her prudence in regard to my fortune. Her face is to me much more beautiful than when I first saw it. . . .’”⁹
- d. For elders and pastors.
 - (1) A great marriage does not happen automatically if we are “living for God.”
 - (2) So goes the pastor’s marriage, so goes the church.
 - (3) Our marriage is a visible signpost. Our marriages are the loudest sermon we preach.
 - (4) “Investing times, energy, and money into your marriage is one of the greatest gifts you can give your church plant.”¹⁰
 - (5) So goes the family, so goes the church. The family is your most important ministry.
 - (6) Does your spouse have space to share with the leadership of your church how things truly are at home?
 - (7) As Christian married leaders, the goal of a good marriage is not about maintaining a basis for ministry.
 - (8) “If you lose your marriage, you lose your ministry.”

⁹ Description of Richard Steele, in Will Durant, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 340.

¹⁰ J. Scazzero, “The Emotionally Healthy Church Planter,” 42.

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