

MARRIAGE

The most important unit within society is the family, - *every* responsible religion is founded upon this assertion. Even in the most primitive and ancient cultures this was the case. Each social order has also acquired a ceremony out of which the concept of the family has developed; this ceremony, - whereby the man and the woman are joined together, - is carried out in such a way that is acceptable by their own form of civilization. Marriage is an institution shared by all religions (and none), it is timeless and truly is the bedrock of our society. J.C. Ryle, the first Anglican Bishop of Liverpool, said, “The marriage relation lies at the very root of the social system of nations”.

However, we are all too aware that divorce is a growing reality today. As long ago as the 16th century Martin Luther realised, “There is no estate to which Satan is more opposed as to marriage”. Divorce is on the increase (in the UK: in 1950 there were 33,000 divorces; in 2000 there were 155,000). The status of marriage is consequently less appealing (in UK: in 1950 there were 330,000 first marriages; in 2000 there were 180,000).

In our streets and schools we can see the consequence of the break-up of marriages. Children take advantage of warring parents; many children don't know who their fathers are; many have a rolling number of ‘uncles’ and ‘step-dads’. They grow up with a wholly distorted view of the real meaning of the marriage commitment ... and society sinks into even deeper chaos. To quote Ryle again, “The nearer a nation's laws about marriage approach to the law of Christ, the higher has the moral tone of that nation always proved to be.”

The Bible presents marriage in a very clear manner ...

THE PRINCIPLE OF MARRIAGE

- * Marriage is the union between a man and a woman. This is the teaching of the Bible, and the majority teaching of religions and civilizations.
- * The Bible expressly declares this basic truth in its ‘creation ordinances’, [Gen. 2:24](#) *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*
- * It is a monogamous relationship that consists of a lifetime commitment to each other. It is an unconditional commitment ... as we

promise when we took the vows; it is for richer, for poorer, for sickness and in health. It is to last for as long “as we both shall live”.

- * It is the most intimate of unions God blessed this world with!
- * Furthermore, God made it clear that this union consists of only one man and only one woman. There can not be a multiplicity of wives or of husbands. Bigamy and polygamy are not permitted by God.
 - * You may ask ... “What about some of the Godly men in the Old Testament who had many wives; these men were blessed of God?”
 - * Yes, but no matter who they were, if they acted in disobedience to God’s command, it is no excuse for what they did.
 - * Consider Abraham and how his adulterous relationship with Hagar worked out, - it caused acrimony between him and Sarah his wife; it was in disobedience and it was as a consequence of unbelief, - he didn’t really believe God’s promise that his wife would bare a child; ... and also, because of his disobedience we have two ‘parties’ today in the Middle East in conflict.
 - * Consider Solomon and his wives, [I Kings 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, ... 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord.](#)
- * The Bible is clear, - marriage is between one woman and one man, to be faithful unto each other for the rest of their lives. (I have a relationship with my wife that I don’t have with anyone else!)
- * What about ‘partnerships’? Perhaps marriage is not for everyone, perhaps it is perfectly acceptable to God for couples to ‘live together’?
- * “Living together” – outside of marriage – is completely unacceptable to the holiness of God. You may try to justify it by saying they are faithful to each other, and it is a better environment for their children to grow up in.
- * But the Bible calls it fornication (or where one or both parties have been married, adultery). The Bible says clearly, [Ex. 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.](#) It was so serious a command that, if broken, it carried the death penalty! ([Lev. 20:10 the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.](#))
- * The same truth that Moses taught continued down through the history of the Jews, [Prov. 6:32 whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.](#)

* ... Such serious consequences! ... And, yes, sexual sins *are* serious for fornication and adultery undermine the foundation of family life, the oneness and uniqueness of the marriage relationship.

* “Living together” is a sin and is contrary to God’s Word and must not be acceptable to God’s people, regardless of the fact it is happening all around us ... and regardless of the fact that even some in our own families may be doing it.

* It is wrong for it rejects the plain teaching of God’s Word. But as a believer ... if you have someone in your family who is living in a relationship with someone to whom they are not married, what do you do?

* Well, as a Christian you can never justify their sin ... no matter how well they are getting on together. Instead pray for them both that they would be married, and pray for the opportunities to encourage them in this direction. After all, if they tell you they are committed to each other, *why don’t they marry?*

* Another contemporary aspect we must address is the subject of *Civil Partnerships*, or ‘Gay Marriage’.

* There has been homosexuality since Gen. 10:22 ... Does God’s Word give permission to two men to ‘marry’ each other, or for two women to ‘marry’ each other?

* Again, some well-meaning people say homosexuals, - they are born that way (which they are not!) and they ought to have the right to marry and their faithfulness to each other ‘celebrated’ in the same way as a heterosexual couple.

* What does the Bible say? [Lev. 18:22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. ... 20:13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death.](#)

* Now, the Bible is not compromising in its language regarding homosexuality, - it is a perversion of how God originally made the relationship between man and woman.

* The Bible says, [Rom. 1:26 God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient \[i.e. natural\].](#)

* God's only form of union that He accepts, - His **principle of marriage**, - is the union of marriage between the man and the woman and anything else is disobedient to His will and His Word.

THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

* The *Confession of Faith* gives a threefold reason as to the purpose of marriage:

1. the mutual help of husband and wife,
2. the increase of mankind in accordance with God's laws,
3. the prevention of immorality.

* Marriage is a partnership of two equals. Thomas Adams, "As God by creation made two of one, so again by marriage He made one of two".

* Nowhere does the Bible teach the woman was made to become lesser than the man, instead she was made to become **an help meet for him** (Gen. 2:18 the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*)

* Matthew Henry wrote, "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him; but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved".

* Basically, the purpose of God for the marriage relationship is one plus one equals one.

* There is also another side to it that we cannot ignore (even though it mightn't fit well in our 21st century). Paul wrote, *I Cor. 11:3 I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*

* ... **the head of the woman is the man** ... *That* doesn't sit too well for women's 'libbers' ... but it is what the Bible says!

* We are not talking about the headship of man as understood in some forms of Islam ... where the woman has to walk so many steps behind her husband ... and she has to have her body veiled ... and she has next-to-no life apart from him.

* No, the woman is not a lesser being; indeed the Bible highlights their faithfulness in the supportive role of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, as Paul does also when he mentions women like Phoebe and Priscilla.

* The Bible teaches the headship of the husband within the context the role of the Son to the Father explains to us.

* The Son is not lesser God to the Father, - He is co-equal *with* the Father ... but the Son's purpose was different to that of the Father and the Son carried out the purpose that was His responsibility.

* In a similar way, the wife is equal to the husband but they each have their individual responsibilities within their union ... which is for the betterment of their union, and the husband carries the ultimate responsibility as being the head of the house. (This is the plain and simple teaching of the Bible.)

* Within this context – *alone* – God has decreed the covenant of marriage to exist and flourish. Within this context – *alone* – is the only right and proper, God-accepted, setting for children to be born.

* Furthermore, our *Confession of Faith* teaches the Biblical principle that “it is the duty of Christians to marry only ‘in the Lord’” ... thus being obedient to the *clear command* of [II Cor. 6:14](#) *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ... I Cor. 7:39 *The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.**

* ... Our relationship with God takes precedence. What if your spouse is not saved? The Bible teaches you that if you are married to a non-Christian you should seek to maintain the relationship, to raise any children as believers, and to win the unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:12-16; 1 Pet. 3:1-12).

* There is no evidence that Timothy's father was a believer (Acts 16:1), but his mother passed her faith along to her son (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).

* **The principle of marriage, the purpose of marriage ...**

THE PROHIBITIONS OF MARRIAGE

* These are made very clear in Lev. 18. It excludes any form of incest, marriage of parents, parents-in-law, children, sisters-in law ...

* God judges it as personal defilement and defilement upon the land (Lev. 18:23,24), abominations (v.27).

* No excuse or exceptions are made. For example, [Mk. 6:18](#), Herod married his sister-in-law and John the Baptist confronted him. [I Cor. 5:1ff.](#) tells us about the young man who was having an incestuous relationship with his stepmother; Paul told the church, [v.5](#) *deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

* To conclude our study this evening let's consider ...

THE PRIVILEGE OF MARRIAGE

* Yes, it is a privilege to be married. For some, God hasn't presented or opened the door for you into such a relationship and here is what His Word says *to you*, I Cor. 7:32 He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: 33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. 34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

* ... But each of us here this evening through grace *are* members of the Bride of Christ, - saved, purchased, bought, redeemed by His own precious blood shed at Calvary.

* You are married to the Lord! You are married to the Lord Who doesn't believe in divorce; He said, I hate divorce! (Mal. 2:16).

* There is coming a day when He will walk His Bride down the golden street of Heaven, - on each side of the procession will be the glorified angels, - but 'on the arm of the Saviour' ... He will have His Bride.

* He will walk her through the crowds, the praises of the angels will echo through Glory ... He will bring her in all her completeness and readiness and sanctified beauty to the Throne upon which His Father is seated ... and, - as part of His Bride, - He will proudly present you *not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing* (Eph. 5:27). ... Songs 2:4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

* Turn over to Rev. 22:17, the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

* I believe our marriages are a gift to us from God, - I thank Him for giving to me the gift of my wife. I'm privileged and blessed that we both are saved and part of the great Bride of Christ ... working for Him.

* If your wife/husband is not saved yet ... keep pressing God to save them, - He can do it!

* If your wife/husband has died in Christ you will be reunited with her/him again in Glory, - there is no doubt about it. Thomas Watson, the Puritan, said, "God's love ties the marriage-knot so fast that neither death nor hell can break it".

* In Heaven we shall all be part of that glorious body, Rev. 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.