

Biblical Portrait of Marriage

I. Introduction - In providing this biblical portrait of marriage we want to answer what is God's purpose for marriage?" I am persuaded that there are 3 main purposes that should be kept in view when looking at marriage:

A. Barbara Ehrenreich – “Renewable marriages [which] get reevaluated every five to seven years, after which they can be revised, recalibrated, or dissolved with no, or at least fewer hard feelings” (Time Magazine).

B. “In a modern western culture, where the main idol is self; and its main doctrine is autonomy; and its central act of worship is being entertained; and its three main shrines are the television, the internet, and the cinema; and its most sacred genuflection is the uninhibited act of sexual intercourse. Such a culture will find the glory of marriage in the mind of Jesus virtually incomprehensible” (John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, pg. 20).

II. Looking upward – marriage is for _____ (Isaiah 43:7; Psalm 115:1).

- “The proper understanding of everything in life begins with God . . . He created us “in His image” so that we would image forth His glory in the world. We were made to be prisms refracting the light of God’s glory into all of life” (John Piper, *Desiring God* pg. 56).
- “The ultimate thing we can say about marriage is that it exists for God’s glory. That is, it exists to display God . . . Marriage is patterned after Christ’s covenant relationship to his redeemed people, the church. And therefore, the highest meaning and the most ultimate purpose of marriage is put the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display. That is why marriage exists. If you are married, that is why you are married” (John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage* pg. 25).
- “. . . [glory] is the exercise and display of what constitutes the distinctive excellence of the subject to which it is spoken; thus, in respect to God, His glory is the manifestation of His divine attributes and perfections . . .” (Merrill Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* pg. 479).
- “Now what attribute is God about to show to Moses? His petition is, ‘Show me thy glory.’ Will he show him his justice? Will he show him his holiness? Will he show him his wrath? Will he show him his power? Will he break yon cedar and show him he is almighty? Will he rend yonder mountain and show him that he can be angry? Will he bring his sins to remembrance, and show that he is omniscient? No; hear the still small voice – ‘I will make all my goodness pass before thee.’ Ah! The goodness of God is God’s glory. God’s greatest glory is that he is good. The brightest gem in the crown of God is his goodness” (Charles Spurgeon).

- *As I have contemplated this grand vision of marriage myself, here is my best attempt at defining God's grand vision:* Marriage is to be the uniting of a man and a woman who are so satisfied in God that each person, regardless of circumstances, willingly and joyfully lives for the good of one's spouse in abiding friendship in such a way that it points to the goodness and glory of God.

III. Looking inward – marriage is for _____.

- “Genesis 2 is not speaking primarily to Adam's experience of being lonely as much as it is revealing his nature as the person God created him to be. Because God created a communal being – someone designed for relationships – creation is incomplete without a suitable companion . . . Just as human beings were created with a vertical need for God's companionship, they are also created for the horizontal companionship of other people” (Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making* pgs. 9-10).
- “Here is what I want you to consider: What if the physical, “the release,” as you call it, isn't the thing? What if it's not the point of sex? What if the deepest purpose and meaning of sex is not physical but emotional and spiritual? And what if the physical desire is a God-given gift to compel us to take advantage of all the other benefits that sex brings? This is where a Christian understanding of sex is so much better and greater than the alternatives. It heightens the purpose and importance of sex by celebrating all that sex is and all that it is meant to be, for it is here that the physical, the emotional and the spiritual come together in the most powerful way. Literally: the most powerful way. There is nothing in the human experience that brings these three together in such dramatic fashion and this is exactly why sex is reserved for the marriage bed. God wants marriage to be a unique kind of relationship and nothing marks marriage's uniqueness more than sex (“The Thing About Sex” by Tim Challies).

- “Both women and men get to “play the Jesus role” in marriage – Jesus in his sacrificial authority, Jesus in his sacrificial submission. By accepting our gender roles, operating within them, we are able to demonstrate to the world the concepts that are so counter intuitive as to be completely unintelligible unless they are lived out by men and women in Christian marriages” (Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg. 179 written by Tim Keller with Kathy Keller).

1. Husbands

- a. _____ (John 14:1-6; Matthew 4:19; John 13:1-20; John 15:13).
- b. _____ (Matthew 6:33; Genesis 3; John 15:15; Ephesians 5:26).
- “When there is no bread on the table it is the man who should feel the main pressure . . . This is implied in Genesis 3 where the curse touches man and woman in their natural places of life . . . Evidently God had in mind from the beginning that the man would take special responsibility for sustaining the family through bread- winning labor, while the wife would take special responsibility for sustaining the family through childbearing and nurturing labor. Both are life-sustaining and essential. The point of this Genesis text is not to define limits for what else the man and the woman might do. But it does suggest that any role reversal at these basic levels of childcare and breadwinning labor will be contrary to the original intention of God, and contrary to the way he made us as male and female for our ordained roles” (*Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem pgs. 34-35).
- c. _____ (Luke 22:32; John 8:1-11; Luke 7:36-50; John 17:12)..

2. Wives

- a. _____ committed to friendship and oneness (Genesis 2:18; Psalm 27:8-9).
- “Helper is used primarily to describe a companionship, not a fellow laborer. The reason we know this is true is that the word helper is often used to describe God’s relationship with his people. When used this way, it does not refer to God as our co-worker or employee, but God as our ultimate companion, who brings things to the relationship that we could not bring ourselves (Ps. 27:9; 33:20-22)” (Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*).
- Proverbs 2:16-17 – “So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.”

b. _____/supportive of the husband's leadership (Eph. 5:22-24; John 8:29).

c. _____, using your gifts to serve your family and God's people (Prov.31:10-31; John 12:25-28).

IV. Looking outward – marriage is for serving God by _____ (Malachi 2:15; Gal. 5:13-14).

- “The whole business of marriage . . . [is] the loving joyful service of God, as we look outward from our marriages and as couples seek to care for God's world together . . . This is delight with a shared purpose, intimacy with a common goal, and companionship in a task that stretches beyond the boundaries of the couple themselves . . . proclaiming Jesus Christ is at the forefront of that service” (Christopher Ash, *Married for God* pg. 33,37,44).

V. Conclusion

“Marriage . . . is a momentary gift. It may last a lifetime, or it may be snatched away on the honeymoon. Either way, it is short . . . Very soon the shadow will give way to Reality. The partial will pass into the Perfect. The foretaste will lead to the Banquet. The troubled path will end in Paradise. A hundred candle-lit evenings will come to their consummation in the marriage supper of the Lamb. And this momentary marriage will be swallowed up by Life. Christ will be all and in all. And the purpose of marriage will be complete” (John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage* pg. 178).

VI. Discussion Questions

A. What did you hear in this talk that was most encouraging and/or helpful?

B. Considering what you heard tonight, share one way in which your relationship (marriage, engagement, or dating) is doing well and one area where it needs to improve?

C. In this talk it was stated marriage is for God's glory; marriage is for friendship, and marriage is for serving God by serving others. What is your reaction to these three purposes? Discuss your reaction as well as if you think other purposes could be added.