

Celebrating Marriage

Celebrating the Promise of Marriage

I. Introduction

A. What to expect the next few weeks.

B. Our God is a _____.

C. _____ as Covenant.

D. Marriage is _____.

“As all social history books will tell you, marriage had its origins in ‘pre-history’ – in other words, the human race cannot remember a time in which marriage did not exist. There have been some efforts to make the case that this or that remote culture or small ethnic group has existed without marriage, but none of these efforts are widely regarded as successful” (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg. 253).

E. As a result of marriage being a Covenant Keeping idea of God’s, John Piper has argued that staying married is not mainly about staying in love but about keeping one’s covenant.

- Tim Keller has written, “Traditional societies made the family the ultimate value in life, and so marriage was a mere transaction that helped your family’s interests. By contrast, contemporary Western societies made the individual’s happiness the ultimate value, and so marriage becomes primarily an experience of romantic fulfillment. But the Bible sees *God* as the ultimate good – not the individual or the family – and that gives us a view of marriage that intimately unites feeling *and* duty, passion *and* promise. **That is because at the heart of the Biblical idea of marriage is the covenant**” (*The Meaning of Marriage* pg.80-81).

II. God’s Original Design for Marriage (Genesis 2:18-25).

A. _____ agreement – Marriage is God’s idea (Gen 2:18-22).

B. Built on _____ (Gen 2:24).

C. _____ (Gen 2:24).

“What, then, is a covenant. . . It is a relationship far more intimate and personal than a merely legal, business relationship. Yet at the same time, it is far more durable, binding, and unconditional than one based on mere feeling and affection; a covenant relationship is a stunning blend of law and love” (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg. 84).

D. Embraces _____ (Gen 2:24).

E. Joy through _____ (Read Gen 2:23,25).

- “With no knowledge of evil before the fall, even nakedness was shameless and innocent. They found their complete satisfaction in the joy of their one union and their service to God” (John MacArthur, *MacArthur Study Bible* pg. 20).
- “The legal bond of marriage . . . creates a space of security where we can open up and reveal our true selves. We can be vulnerable, no longer having to keep up facades. We don’t have to keep selling ourselves. We can lay the last layer of our defenses down and be completely naked, both physically and in every other way” (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg. 85).
- “Marriage was designed from the beginning to display the new covenant between Christ and the church . . . The very essence of this new covenant is that Christ passes over the sins of his bride. His bride is free from shame not because she is perfect, but because she has no fear that her lover will condemn her or shame her because of her sin. This is why the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is at the very heart of what makes marriage work the way God designed it. Justification creates peace with God vertically, in spite of our sin. And when experienced horizontally, it creates shame-free peace between an imperfect man and an imperfect woman” (John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage* pgs. 33-34).

III. _____ of Marriage.

“During the Enlightenment, things began to shift; the meaning of life came to be seen as the fruit of freedom of the individual to choose the life that most fulfills him or her personally . . . marriage was redefined as finding emotional and sexual fulfillment and self-actualization” (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg.28).

“Marriage used to be a public institution for the common good, and now it is a private arrangement for the satisfaction of the individuals. Marriage used to be about us, but now it is about me” (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg. 29).

A Covenant is . . .	A Contract is . . .
A sacred moral agreement Overseen by God	A common legal document regulated _____
Based upon trust between two people and God	Based upon _____ by two people
Accepted to embrace unlimited responsibility	Written to create _____ liability
Intended to be permanent	Embedded with an _____
Seeks joy through mutual sacrifice	Demands joy through _____

Adapted from a chart by Brad Hambrick – www.bradhambrick.com/weddingceremony

IV. Results of an Enlightenment View of Marriage

A. We selfishly seek someone who is _____.

“Some people are really, *really* the wrong person to marry. But everyone else is still incompatible . . . Over the years you will go through seasons in which you have to learn to love a person who you didn’t marry, who is something of a stranger . . . the journey may eventually take you into a strong, tender, joyful marriage. But it is not because you married the perfectly compatible person. That person doesn’t exist (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg. 38-39).

B. Dating and Marriage relationships are more about experiencing the high of _____ than sacrificial love.

C. _____ results when the romance has died.

Longitudinal studies reveal that two-thirds of unhappy marriages will become happy within five years if people stay married and do not get divorced. “What can keep marriages together during the rough patches? The vows; a public oath, made to the world, keeps you ‘tied to the mast’ until your mind clears and you begin to understand things better . . . By contrast, consumer relationships cannot possibly endure these inevitable tests of life, because neither party is ‘tied to the mast’” (Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* pg. 87).

V. Discussion Questions

A. What are some things from this talk that stood out to you (i.e. challenged, encouraged, equipped, or stood out to you)?

B. What have been some of your greatest joys in marriage that help you to be grateful that you have stayed married to your spouse? *If you are dating or engaged, what are some qualities you see in your partner that lead you to believe you two could stay married until death?*

C. As you reflect on this talk – take another look at the list I asked you to write down a few minutes ago. I asked you, “How have you allowed the cultural view of marriage being more about personal fulfillment than self-denial to influence your relationship with your partner?” Ask for forgiveness for unconfessed sin in this area – men go first.