

The Meaning and Mystery of Marriage ▪ Genesis 2:18-24; Ephesians 5:31-32

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Intro: In case you are wondering that since I was off last week, I'm covering two passages this week to make up for it, that's not the case. We are jumping back into the Sermon On the Mount, and what we are hit with is Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce.

Now when I was training for the ministry, I heard the stats on divorce in the culture and the church. It went something like this:

Over half of the marriages in the US will end in divorce; and statistically there is no difference between church attendees and non-attenders. I heard that, and likely even passed on those stats.

- But that was based on some flawed research from the Barna Group years ago that they have since apologized for.

According to Wayne Grudem's book on *Christian Ethics* (2018)

—72% of Americans are still married to their first spouse (puts the divorce rate at 28%).

—Divorce rates peaked in the 1980's, but have been declining—though less people are also getting married.

—Divorce rates among church goers tends to be significantly lower, up to 50%.

Grudem "We have lived in 6 different states and two countries...active members in nine different churches...have taught for 40 years with hundreds of students, and the number of divorces we are aware of is absolutely tiny, certainly less than 5 percent of the married couples we have known, and probably closer to 1 percent"

- › *Alarming statistics send shock values in a preacher's sermon, but the reality says something else. Christians actually do hold a higher view of marriage as practice greater faithfulness in their marriages.*

Anecdotally, my experience is with Grudem's —the number of Christian friends in my life who have gotten divorces is "absolutely tiny".

- If it is true that Christians tend to stick to the marriages, it's only due to God's mercy in revealing to us *the meaning and mystery of marriage*.

(We will save the teaching on divorce for next week...spend our attention on Gen. & Eph. today).

The nature of marriage (Gen 2:18-24)

- This is the crowing point of the creation narrative. We also note that Adam was created *social —to be in fellowship (v18)*.

There is a void, an absence.

Kidner: "Man will not live until he loves, giving himself away to another".

- › We hear some serious gospel-echos in that...the ultimate good in marriage is the groom giving himself away for the bride, laying down his life.

Gen. 2 shows us 7 things about Marriage.

1) God initiates and gives the marriage to Adam (v18)

2) God gave Eve as a companion, "Helper fit"

(Lit: help is opposite him. Think of a puzzle. They work because the pieces are cut to be opposite of each other, so they fit.)

My wife knows her puzzles—apparently there is a brand out there called "The Perfect Snap".

- › That's how God designed the One Flesh Marriage Union.

3) God entrusted Adam with authority/headship (naming Eve, v23)

4) God creates the marriage to be a permanent bond (v24)

I remember someone teaching on biblical marriage once, and he glued two pieces of paper together as a visual—they came back and tried to separate them after the glue dried...you can't, without a lot of damage to both.

5) God created One Adam for One Eve (*this needs to be stated in a day of “non-binary, same sex relationships that are so flagrantly open).

While we were visiting our family up north, my sister told me of a young girl in their neighborhood who has been telling everyone she is non-binary. She's 11 years old.

May God have mercy to recuse many out of such moral confusion.

6) God gave this relationship *for joy* (v23) —the first time we see a human voice utter poetic expression is when he gets his girl.

7) God establishes the marriage as a covenant (v24).

Do you see *God's fingerprints* all over this?

Jesus reinforces that marriage has God's fingerprints all over it (Mt. 19:6): “What therefore God has joined together....”.

Marriage as *covenant* is where we want to camp for a bit.

—Cleave/hold fast (expresses the exclusive devotion we are to have toward God: Dt. 10:20, 11:22, 30:19-20).

Deuteronomy 10:20 ESV

You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear.

- An adulterous wife:

Proverbs 2:17 ESV

who forsakes the companion of her youth
and forgets the covenant of her God;

- If time allowed, we could also look at [Malachi 2](#).

([Mal. 2:14](#)) “Your wife by covenant”.

Marriage is a covenant secured by vows.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 ESV

Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

Ecclesiastes 5:4 ESV

When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow.

This also entails that the vows exchanged in a marriage ceremony are *no empty tradition*.

Usually couples on the wedding day are focused on the various details: Venue, guests, food, pictures of course, and flower arrangements.

Yet the most significant thing that happens is when the man and woman each say:

“I take you, _____, to be my wife, to
have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse,
for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to

cherish, until we are parted by death.”

- › *Covenants are not throwaway, disposable relationships.*

Covenant is at the very core of how God loves us....The New Covenant in Christ's blood.

Covenant is the *main lens* to see marriage and live it out.

It means stability, longevity, faithfulness, love.

Covenant keeping is the backbone in marriage—not staying in love or having all of our needs met.

Covenant-making is the way to *pursue marriage* and *persevere in marriage*.

Friends, I urge you to see marriage and to think in terms of covenant...not feelings, not having needs met, or “Love Languages”, but covenantal commitment, which the Bible gives us an entire framework for.

How do we learn this?

Know God. Know God more.

If we know God in Christ, we will know what covenant loyalty is.

The mystery of marriage (Eph 5:31-32)

- The lovely thing about how the Apostle Paul writes is that he can be giving very practical instruction, then make a connection to the gospel without breaking cadence.

(Eph. 5:31-32)

The mystery of marriage is a pattern, a prototype, a foreshadowing of something greater: *The mystery of the gospel.*

Gospel--Self-giving love and forgiveness

Which is the true glue that holds marriage together—tons of self-giving love and forgiveness.

› *The message of the entire Bible: God pursuing a bride for his Son.*

I heard people say that the Bible is one big love story. That's not too far off—if the love story has the Lord Jesus at the center; if it has blood, a cross, and empty tomb, then yes.

We see marriage at the very beginning of the Bible (Gen. 2); it's also at the very close of this age.

Revelation 21:2 ESV

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

- Our human marriages only prepare us for the eternal—they are *temporal*.

Matthew 22:30 ESV

For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

- Jesus says clearly that our earthly marriages are not part of the new creation.
- At the most practical level, most people get married in our culture because they think life with the other person will be happier than life without.
- Biblical marriage is rooted in happiness.

Deuteronomy 24:5 ESV

“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.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 CSB

Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun, all your fleeting days. For that is your portion in life and in your struggle under the sun.

Marriage is meant to bring joy and happiness—but again, it's *something temporal; it's a foreshadowing of something vastly greater.*

I wonder if that is where people start believing the whispers of the enemy.

They plod at marriage through some difficult or dry seasons, and conclude: I'm no longer happy in this....there is something else that will make me happy.

- › Marriage was not created to bring consummate happiness to us.

—The loving union we have with Jesus is described in ways that far surpass anything.....beyond comprehension.

“A Profound Mystery”

Calvin: “Our Lord shows us that when he has joined us to his only Son, he has done so high and profound a work that overtops all our capacity to understand”.

Ephesians 3:19 ESV

and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

That seems to be on target with ultimate/consummate happiness that *will never fail us.*

1 Peter 1:8 ESV

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

“No marriage is or can be a final experience...every human marriage is truest to itself when it points beyond itself”. *Ortlund, R. C., Jr. (1996)*.

Conclusion:

I hope that God continues to give grace and strength to persevere (and delight) in marriage.

May we continue to stay faithful and true to His Word in a culture of confusion and low commitments.

But may our deepest sense of worth, value, identity, and hope be centered always and only the Lord Jesus Christ.