

THE PURPOSE FOR COUNSELING

Introduction: Before we begin to explore what the Bible has to say about the different aspects of marriage, let's first answer the question, "Why Are We Here?" What is the purpose of marriage counseling? What exactly do we hope to gain by going through these lessons? To answer these questions, let me suggest three things:

1. To Gather Advice and Counsel Regarding Marriage
2. To Gain an Understanding of What Marriage Really Is
3. To Get Direction About God's Plan for Your Life

A Biblical Fact: "Good marriages begin long before the wedding ceremony."

Proverbs 20:18 NLT

Plans succeed through good counsel; don't go to war without wise advice.

Luke 14:27 NLT

And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:28 NLT

"But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?

Luke 14:29 NLT

Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you.

Luke 14:30 NLT

They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!'

Luke 14:31 NLT

"Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him?

Luke 14:32 NLT

And if he can't, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away.

Luke 14:33 NLT

So, you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.

Marriage is not something that should be entered into on the spur of the moment or taken lightly. A good marriage begins after lots of thought, planning, prayer, and seeking the advice of those we love and trust. It is a decision that's made after all these things have carefully been considered and factored into the long-term picture of what marriage looks like in our mind. Once we have an accurate picture of what marriage will look like, then, and only then, will we be able to make a wise choice about whether married life is the life we want and are willing to work for.

So, with that said, let's dive a little deeper into the three aspects of why we are here:

TO GET ADVICE AND WISDOM REGARDING MARRIAGE

The Bible teaches that wise people do not depend solely on their own thoughts, but they seek advice from those that are wiser than they are. Those who know more about the situation or topic than they do. Those who have been there and done that. Those who have experience in what they are about to do. Those who have studied the topic and have become knowledgeable about the subject. Look at these verses that teach us about the importance of seeking wise advice:

“Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers.” - Proverbs 11:14 (NLT)

“Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success.” - Proverbs 15:22 (NLT)

“The wise are mightier than the strong, and those with knowledge grow stronger and stronger. So don't go to war without wise guidance; victory depends on having many advisers.” - Proverbs 24:5-6 (NLT)

For a follower of Jesus, God is the ultimate Counsellor, or Advisor.

“For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: **Wonderful Counselor**, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” - Isaiah 9:6 (NLT)

“**I will bless the LORD who guides me**; even at night my heart instructs me. I know **the LORD is always with me**. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.” - Psalm 16:7-8 (NLT)

Proverbs 21:30 NLT

No human wisdom or understanding or plan can stand against the LORD.

God is a wonderful counselor because He created us and designed us to follow Him. He wants what is best for us and will never give us bad advice. He is with us all the time and will never forsake us, unlike human advisors. We can trust His advice. While human wisdom and understanding can be helpful, nothing will overturn God's advice.

God's advice is communicated to us through the Bible. The Bible is the Believer's source of truth and instruction.

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to **obey all the instructions** Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. **Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually**. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only **then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.**” - Joshua 1:7-8 (NLT)

These are the instructions God gave Joshua when he became the leader of the Jewish people right after Moses died. The only Bible they had at that time were the first 5 books of the Bible. The Law of Moses as it was called. God told Joshua to study it, meditate on it and obey it and he would be successful. The same holds true for us today.

The Bible gives us understanding and direction for our life.

“Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life. Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:104-105 (NLT)

The Bible helps us to see ourselves as we really are and then helps us change to conform to God's way.

“But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.” - James 1:22-24 (NLT)

“I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your laws.” - Psalm 119:59 (NLT)

When asking God for advice, we must be willing to look honestly at ourselves and do what it takes to bring our life in line with the truth of the Bible.

Now let's look at the second reason we are going through these lessons.

TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MARRIAGE REALLY IS

A goal of this series is to help us understand what marriage is really like so that we're not disappointed by false expectations. Many couples enter marriage with a "pie in the sky" idea of a marriage that is all wonder and honeymoon bliss, only to find out quickly, nothing could be farther from the truth. Marriage is work but it is worth the effort! Are we ready for the work?

Here are three basic facts about marriage that will help put things in perspective as we study together:

1. **Marriage is God's institution.** He designed it and created it. Therefore, He is the best person to ask about how it should be done.

*"Then the LORD God said, **"It is not good for the man to be alone.** I will make a helper who is just right for him." So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'" This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." - *Genesis 2:18-24 (NLT)**

2. **Marriage takes two people.** These two people must assess whether they are ready for marriage and then learn to communicate effectively. It goes without saying, they will need to be able to get along for the rest of their lives! These lessons will help us be able to determine how to do that.
3. **Marriage is hated by Satan!** Understand that marriage, since it is God's institution, is hated and attacked by the Devil. For this reason, it is best to identify potential problems now and address them, so they do not cause problems later. Get all the skeletons out of the closet and deal with them now so Satan can't use them against us later.

The third and final reason we are here is ...

TO GET DIRECTION ABOUT GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

God has a plan for each of us and he wants what is best for our life.

*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. **Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world**, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. **Then you will learn to know God's will for you**, which is **good** and **pleasing** and **perfect**.” - Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)*

*“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **so that you may be able to discern what is best** and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...” - Philippians 1:9-10 (NIV)*

A marriage that is put together by God and maintained by following God's plan is the closest thing to Heaven on earth we may ever know. However, a marriage that leaves God out and is entered into without thought to what God wants can be the closest thing to hell on earth we may ever know.

These lessons are designed and prepared in such a way to help prepare us for what lies ahead as we transition from the **Single Life** to the **Married Life** and experience a little bit of Heaven on Earth!

Next time we'll talk about establishing realistic expectations about marriage.