

God-Ordained Institutions: Marriage and Family, Part 2

Introduction

Part 1 (Steve Pack)

Why is marriage so good?

- Marriage is part of the “very good.”
- Marriage provides a means of friendship/companionship.
- Marriage helps fulfill God’s design.
- Marriage is a type of Gospel witness.

Why is marriage so hard?

- The Bible tells us the truth! (Our fallenness)
- Conflict is inevitable.
- We’ve stepped outside God’s intended design.

How can we cultivate the good?

How can we navigate the hard?

Fairytales typically end right after the marriage ceremony with the words “and so they lived happily ever after.”

As if all the challenges of life in this world people experience before they’re married magically vanish when they say, “I do.”

High school students who have watched their parents’ marriage self-destruct express fear to enter marriage themselves.

Our fallenness mars God's very good design. At its most basic level, God's good design is that marriage be a lifelong covenant companionship.

Proverbs 2:16-17

16 So you will be delivered from the forbidden forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, **17** who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.

Context: receive my words, seek wisdom
Wisdom is skillful living—rooted in the creation mandate to humans as God's image bearers, who are to fill, subdue, and exercise dominion over the earth—to manage it wisely as God's vice-regents

Malachi 2:13-15

13 And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. **14** But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. **15** Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard

yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

Godly offspring—connection to the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply so that you can fill the earth and manage it well; and connection to the plan of redemption

Follow God’s design—benefit.
Violate God’s design—harm.

How can fallen but redeemed people pursue God’s design for their marriage?

How does the redemption that Christ has accomplished recover God’s design for our relationship with Him and our relationship with others?

If believers married to each other would live together as those who are redeemed and born again, they would have far greater success in cultivating a healthy, happy marriage. The ways God teaches us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ in a church family apply directly to the closest of neighbor relationships—that of husband and wife, only intensified.

It’s more demanding to do so when you are living together because there’s no time off, so to speak, and what you are shows up more. But it’s also more rewarding because you

have so much more opportunity to sow a good harvest.

In 30 years of pastoring I've never come across a marriage in trouble where one or both persons in the relationship were not violating clear directives from Scripture about how believers are to live together in loving unity. If a couple treated each other the way they typically are careful to treat believers they're not married to, their marriage would improve.

Further, I've never seen a marriage in trouble that did not recover if both persons returned to biblical living toward one another. Sometimes even one of them can turn the tide. God honors those who honor Him.

That is why I want us to read through the whole chapter of Ephesians 5, not just the verses that directly address husbands and wives. The context of how redeemed people are to live before God and with one another gives us insight into how Christ's redemptive work impacts a Christian marriage, which God designed to display what the gospel of His steadfast love looks like in daily living.

If you are not married at this time, this passage teaches us how to live toward one another in love as brothers and sisters in Christ so that we are building one another up

rather than tearing one another down. Your relationship to Jesus Christ makes you an ambassador for Him in all your relationships, whatever they are and however they change during your life's journey. In a few weeks we will focus on what God says to those of you who are not married at present, including the advantages you have to serve the Lord even more effectively. Being unmarried does not cripple you from fruitful living. Whether or not you have had the benefit of observing a good marriage relationship, whether or not you have suffered through a bad one, this passage gives you God's loving wisdom in how we live toward one another, married or not.

Ephesians 5:1-33

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1. Be Loving (1-2).

Imitators of God as His children.

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is

sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

1. Be Loving (1-2).

2. Be Pure (3-14).

Children of light—good, right, and true.

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

1. Be Loving (1-2).

2. Be Pure (3-14).

3. Be Wise (15-17).

Use your time (your life) living according to God's will.

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. **25** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **26** that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **28** In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, **30** because we are

members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

4. Be Spirit-filled (18-33)

- Addressing one another
- Singing and making melody
- Giving thanks
- Submitting to one another

Wives, to husbands as to the Lord.
(See 1 Peter 3:1-6—Submit even to a husband who is not obeying the Word. Win him without words by your respectful and pure conduct, imperishable beauty, and fearless hope in God.)

Husbands, love your wives sacrificially—nourishing, cherishing
(See 1 Peter 3:7: Live with her in an understanding way. Honor—value her.)

Chapter 6 goes on to talk about godly relationships between children and parents who belong to the Lord.

Children—obedient honor (6:1-3)

Parents—patient training and instruction (6:4)

Conclusion

The steadfast love of God that you have come to know through the gospel of Jesus Christ is what makes a good marriage possible. And a good marriage displays God's steadfast gospel love. That is its greatest purpose.