



"A great marriage is not when the 'perfect couple' comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences."
—Dave Meurer

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Marriage—A God-Plane Relationship (Part One)

In the United States, marriage has been under assault for many years, at least for the last five or six decades. We could perhaps pinpoint the publication of the Kinsey Report in the early 1950s as a starting point of the major offensive against marriage. Very quickly after that, the sexual revolution lurched into full swing, launching the era of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. While we tend to confine this to the 1960s, that era has never really ended but only transformed over the years. Millions are using their "sexual freedom" to dally with multiple partners before marriage—and continuing the practice even after saying, "I do."

On January 1, 1970, California's no-fault divorce law went into effect, and before long many other states followed suit, easing divorce. In the same decade, feminism reared its head in two major efforts: the legalization of abortion and the push for an equal rights amendment to the Constitution. Abortion—of which there are about a million performed each year—made the consequences of illicit sexual activity easier to avoid.

The next decade saw the onset of AIDS, early on traced to perverse sexual activity among homosexuals, and the rise of the homosexual movement, which has pursued such goals as homosexual rights, hate-crimes legislation, and most recently, homosexual "marriage." Along with AIDS, gonorrhea, and syphilis, at least 25 new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)—some of which are viral like AIDS—have ravaged many who have participated in the "sexual revolution." Modern medicine

cannot really "cure" any of these, only make the symptoms more bearable (although antibiotics can kill Chlamydia and gonorrhea, scars and sometimes infertility may result). These diseases have reached pandemic proportions, as 15.3 million new STD infections happen each year, including over three million in teens.

All of this so-called progress has its effect on marriage. In addition, we cannot forget that potentially huge problems are inherent simply in two different people trying to create a life together. One that should not be minimized is each mate's unique set of sins and weaknesses that must be overcome. Everyone has "baggage," and when a man and a woman try to make a marriage work, they must be prepared to deal with such potential "skeletons in the closet" and their aftermaths.

As the end draws near, those who are married as well as those who desire to be married seem to have the deck stacked against them. Even in good times, marriage has its difficulties. There always seems to be communication problems because men and women do not communicate the same way. Men and women also typically approach life differently—men have a tendency to act first and think later, while women often let their emotions lead. The diverse backgrounds of the bride and groom can set up another possible obstacle, not to mention in-law problems, and when children arrive on the scene, childrearing problems. The inability to harmonize such differences makes many marriages unstable and prone to collapse. Marriage is not an easy proposition.

Marriage is a complex social institution, but it is an important, even vital, part of most people's lives. Although [God](#) has not commanded everyone to marry, the greater part of us do. Yet, not everyone is suited to marriage. [Jesus](#) teaches in [Matthew 19:12](#) that "there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs [decided not to marry] for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it." Paul echoes this in [I Corinthians 7:8](#), 32: "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am. . . . He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord." As Jesus says, remaining unmarried is fine if one can master his sexual drive and devote himself to God's work. God is able to work out a person's salvation without the aid of the marriage environment.

However, for the majority of us, the route of marriage is the one we are most likely to take. And, after [baptism](#), the decision to marry is the most important decision we can make, one we should consider most deeply, not only before we make such a sacred vow, but as we go through it. In fact, the marriage vow is merely the beginning of a process of refinement and growth that will not only bind husband and wife more closely, but also enhance the development of holy, righteous, godly character.

Notice [Genesis 1:27](#): "So God created man in His *own* image; in the [image of God](#) He created him; male and female He created them." In this one verse appears several important, foundational points that relate to marriage. The first is that God created both men and women in His own image.

Before God, a man and a woman are equal, meaning that both have the same potential: to be transformed into the image of God and inherit His Kingdom. Marriage, then, is a union of equals before God. However, Scripture clearly shows that God placed husbands in the position of authority—he is, as has been said, first among equals. Yet, though they are equal in potential, they may or may not be equal in many areas of mental and physical abilities, and they are certainly not the same in emotional makeup or strength. It is evident that men and women have different natural inclinations, skills, and abilities—all the while not making one better than the other.

Being fashioned after God's own body and mind implies that both have human equivalents of God's abilities, desires, goals, preferences, etc. While creating Adam and Eve, God took many of His qualities and distributed them between the male and the female human. Clearly, humanity's God-like qualities are not as excellent as His, since there is a great gulf between what God is and what humanity is, but we have human-level counterparts of what God Himself possesses. As Herbert Armstrong often said, we are made after the God-kind.

That fact makes the relationships that we undertake with others quite important. [Genesis 1:27](#) make it apparent that we are no longer dealing with just physical associations. In His first mention of mankind in the Bible, God begins by putting man's existence on a spiritual plane by letting us know that He made us in His image. Our relationships, then, also have a God-plane quality to them, suggesting that we need to take them very seriously.

Why? Because the goal of every human being, whether he or she realizes it or not, is to be just like God. Male and female, created in God's image, are on the same track to the same place. So, the relationship between a man and his wife assumes a very spiritual and imperative quality.

In Part Two, we will see that Jesus' teaching on marriage begins in the same place.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Choosing to Have a Good Relationship](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Martin Collins reveals that the Bible emphasizes marriage as the primary bond of society. The purpose for the marriage relationship is to depict the metaphorical marriage of Christ and His bride (the collective members of His affianced church). Ancient Israel violated this betrothal contract, embracing pagan idolatry, the metaphorical equivalent of spiritual adultery. Using a five point outline, derived from Len Wood in his book, "Tough Choices" [on marriage], Martin Collins, using abundant scriptural examples, gives us a formula for keeping our relationship with Christ chaste by making choices: 1. to be committed for better or worse, 2. to speak or not to speak, 3. to make our house a home, 4. to marry the whole family, 5. to live in love, 6. to stay till death do us part.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Sacredness of Marriage](#)

by James Beaubelle

Marriage and progressive forms of "marriage" are in the news a great deal these days. From its earliest chapters, Scripture holds the divinely ordained institution of marriage in high regard. James Beaubelle provides the reasons why God considers marriage to be so important to us, society, and His purpose.

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