



The Good News

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How the Christian should view Marriage

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If you watch much television, you're aware of how the entertainment industry portrays marriage; you're aware of the statistics regarding the percentages of successful and failed marriages; you're aware of the media's intent to establish same-sex couples as equal in the eyes of the law to heterosexual families. It is common to hear people speaking out against the issues listed above and against the reasons underlying the issues themselves; invariably, the phrase "sanctity of marriage" is uttered at some point during such expressions of opposition to the increasingly secular view our society is taking toward the institution of marriage itself.

Something we don't hear a lot about, however, are the elements of marriage that *make it* a sanctified institution ordained by God. How often do we as Christians focus on the nature of marriage? Already mentioned is the very source of our need for investigation: God deemed it necessary for mankind. Why? What exactly is marriage, and why is it so important that God brought it to man?

God's Word is scattered with remarks about marriage and about the elements that make a strong marriage. Any investigation needs to start at the very source, in this case the Word of God itself. Chances are, if you're married you heard the individual performing the marriage read Gen 2:24 and/or Eph 5:31 at some point in the ceremony; it's the first mention of marriage and it describes the actions necessary for a marriage to take place. Other verses (1 Cor 7:39, Mat 19:2-9) reiterate those actions to some extent while also making clear that marriage is a lifelong commitment: we are to have one spouse. Still others speak to some of the practical applications of marriage, that it is a means to avoid sexual temptation by the husband giving himself physically to his wife, and the wife reciprocating (1 Cor 7:1-5). These verses can help us understand what marriage is, but what about the why of it? An indirect explanation is given by God in various

verses throughout the Bible (such as Prov 18:22, 19:14, 21:9) as He describes the value of a good wife to her husband and the importance of maintaining the sanctity of the marriage bed (Heb 13:4). But it is in Eph 5:22-33 that we see a more explicit description of why marriage holds such a high place in God's providence to mankind. God tells the wives to submit to their husbands *as to the Lord*. That phrase alone carries a weight that many wives have great difficulty bearing in our society. God goes on to explain the symmetry between marriage and Christ's church, equating the husband's place in the marriage with that of Christ's place in His church: the head, the leader of the body/family. The wives' submission is to be like that of the body of Christ's submission to Christ Himself. The similarities don't end there, as God then points out the husband's responsibility toward his wife being like that of Christ's sacrifice for His church; husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and sacrificed Himself for the body of Christians. Husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies, caring for and feeding her needs spiritually, emotionally, and physically as the husband would his own needs. Like the church came first for Christ, the wife shall come first for the husband in all things. Think back to Gen 2:24—do we not become a part of the body of Christ when we join ourselves to Him, just as a man and woman become one in God's eyes when they are joined in marriage? These similarities are by design and it's why marriage is so much more than two people deciding they like each other, living together until they decide they want something else and then moving on. It is a constant reminder of the nature of the Christian's responsibilities to Christ and the relationship each soul has with their Savior. A strong marriage founded in God and His Word is a visible example of the nature of Christ's relationship to us, His church.