

# *Love and the Covenant Called Marriage*

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*“And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:3-6).*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The home is kept by a covenant. When we mar that covenant we destroy ourselves, our future, and our country.

Our lesson is about marriage, not divorce. We will enforce and emphasize the covenant of God that is called marriage. The answer to divorce is marriage. When we marry well and improve our marriages, we have no problem with divorce. The solution to divorce is a holy, mature view concerning the covenant of marriage.

In Matthew 19 the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus regarding divorce. They thought that if they could get the Lord to contradict Moses, Hillel, Shammai, the public, or culture, they would condemn Him. Jesus restated God’s law concerning marriage. He has never had but one marriage law; there are no exceptions. His covenant is given in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Jesus said, “I am here to uphold, honor, and bring you back to God’s design for marriage.”

Mark says Jesus and His disciples went into a house and pursued the matter of divorce. At times we do not need to deal with controversial issues publicly. Many of us are more interested in divorce than in marriage. That is wrong. First and foremost we must be interested in God’s law of marriage. The key of life is found in God’s covenant called marriage.

## **I. THE WORD COVENANT**

The first word is *covenant*. We do not use this word anymore. Moderns hoot at it. Jesus said, “You need this word.” Let us go back to Genesis 2. God in the beginning made male and female. One plus one equals one. That is God’s law. God has not altered it or changed it. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Modern sociologists in the ’60s said that by the year 2000 marriage would be extinct. They said we were going to have something better. But in the ’70s and ’80s the relationships have gone to pieces. Communes have fallen by the wayside. Divorcees today still want the marriage vow. Sociologists were wrong. The covenant of marriage cannot be replaced.

Marriage is a vow. One stands before God and man and vows that he will be married to another person until death parts the union. It is a commitment, a covenant.

We have been told, “Let your word be your bond.” But the modern approach to marriage is this: “We will try it and see if we like it. If we do not like it we can always get a divorce.” People say, “Well, it just did not work out.” No, you have to make it work out. We have a modern myth: The co-captain of the football team marries the beautiful and ever-pleasant little cheerleader, and they just live happily ever after. This is a fairy tale. A marriage has to be worked; it has to be built; it has to grow, evolve, and mature.

The word *covenant* is a Bible word. It is seen from Genesis to Revelation. The word means that I have pledged, I have given my word. All of Christianity is a vow. In baptism a commitment is made. A person vows himself to God.

The Old Testament speaks of the covenant of the Sabbath Day. The Bible always calls it holy. Every covenant of God is holy. In the Old and New Testaments the words “covenant breakers” are used. Hebrews says Jesus came to give us a

new covenant, a covenant based upon the blood of Jesus.

We have a covenant with death. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment." We have a covenant with the judgment. We live daily under covenants or vows.

## II. THE WORD MARRIAGE

We have covenanted when we marry. Paul referred to this covenant in 1 Thessalonians 4:

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God (vv. 3-5).

A Christian has made a vow in marriage and he is to honor it. We keep our bodies, our vessels pure because this is the will of God. This is the covenant of God.

The Hebrew writer says, "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). The Bible also says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:5, 6). That is God's covenant called marriage. One plus one equals one; the male and the female, the twain, the two, become one.

*It was not good for man to be alone.* What does man need? He does not need an angel; he does not need an animal. God looked down upon Adam and said, "I made you out of dust of the ground. I have personally breathed into your nostrils the breath of life. You are made in My image. You need a woman." Thus, God made marriage.

You can laugh at it; you can deride it; you can hoot at it; you can call it a little sheet of paper. But Eve was made married. Man needs a wife; man needs marriage. Otherwise God is wrong. He made man, He made woman, and He made the law called marriage.

*Man needs a woman.* Jesus did not say, "For this cause shall a man leave his father's house

and be joined unto another man and the two shall become one." Homosexual churches and preachers exist in the United States of America. Marriage consists of a man and a woman, not a man and a man or a woman and a woman.

Romans 1 teaches that the last step in man's debauchery is homosexuality. That last step is upon us. The greatest threat today is the idea that a man ought not to be a man and a woman ought not to be a woman. That idea impunes God and the creation called marriage.

*Adam got excited.* I am not trying to be frivolous. Eve beat any animal he had ever seen. He awakened out of that deep sleep, looked at her, and said, "You are the bone of my bones and you are the flesh of my flesh. You have been taken out of my side. You are what I need. I am what you need."

Eve was not made a mate. She was made a *help-mate*. If you say, "I am a mate," that is not enough. You are a *help-mate*. You violate the covenant of God if you are just a mate.

But what happens in marriage? It is a vow to God; it is a vow to man; it is a vow to self; it is a vow to another. Moderns get married with less thought than picking out a car. They get all carried away, get married, and then split.

*Christianity has added a new dimension to marriage.* In Jesus Christ there is now a new vantage point, a new perspective. In Ephesians 5 Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." Abraham could not love that way; Moses could not; David could not; John the Baptist could not. But Hodge can. Paul also switched around and said, "As the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything." Ephesians 5:22-32 contains the most beautiful teaching in the world about marriage. It is given in the context of Christ and the church. The husband resolves to fulfill the needs of his wife. That is his life. And what is the consuming thought of the wife? "I will fulfill the need of my husband. I do not want to be understood; I want to be understanding," she says.

When a man is trying to meet the needs of the woman, and the woman is trying to meet the needs of the man, heaven comes to earth. When you stand with that Christian woman to get married, it ought to be the beginning of the most wonderful plan in your life. I have had people

tell me, "We were married all over again the night we were baptized. We received a new dimension, a new reason for being married." Their home was united; both have vowed their lives to God.

### CONCLUSION

Marriage is all important. Marriage involves your future, your home, and your children. What keeps people together today? It is the covenant.

I have read that Rome had the highest divorce rate of history. It is said that in the days of Rome a woman's age was determined by the number of husbands she had had. Homosexuality was rampant. Nearly all of the Caesars were homosexuals.

God decided for Adam. God made the selection. His covenant kept them together.

In Genesis Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to a strange land to get a wife for Isaac. Abraham did not want Isaac marrying anybody who would not respect God's covenant called marriage. Eliezer was like me. I do not want to be in the Cupid business. Abraham told him the angel of God (one of the first times an angel is mentioned in the Bible) would lead him. He found Rebekah. She got on her camel and came back with him. The only time the Bible mentions love at first sight comes up here. Isaac saw her and she saw him. It was love at first sight. At a time of bigamy and polygamy, Isaac and Rebekah never had any problems with their marriage. And it was a marriage picked out by a servant! Why was their marriage strong? They kept the covenant. The key to a strong, great marriage is respect and commitment to the covenant of marriage.

—Charles B. Hodge, Jr.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### *Taking Account*

Pythagoras said, "Let not sleep fall upon thy eyes till thou hast thrice reviewed the transactions of the past day. What have I done? What have I left undone?"

### *The Worth of Time*

When Benjamin Franklin was working in the back of his store in the room where his newspaper was printed, a customer came in, spent a long time looking at the books, then finally asked the price of one. The clerk quoted the cost as one dollar. The customer, thinking he could reduce the price, insisted on seeing Mr. Franklin, who, though busy as always, thought something urgent merited his attention. Astonished to find a man who thought he would sell the book cheaper than the quoted price, Franklin, to teach the customer a lesson, named the price at one dollar and a quarter. The surprised customer objected, "Why, the clerk said it was just one dollar!"

"True," said Franklin, "and I could have better afforded to take a dollar than to have been taken out of the office."

Thinking Franklin was joking, the customer repeated his inquiry, once more asking the lowest price. This time Franklin said rather severely, "One dollar and fifty cents!"

Openmouthed, the customer exclaimed, "Why, you just offered it to me yourself for one dollar and a quarter."

"Yes," replied Franklin, "and I could better have taken that price than a dollar and a half now." The customer left humiliated.