

Christian Marriage - Built on the Rock

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We know the story. Boy meets girl. An attraction develops. They start living together. If family or friends object, their response is, "Everybody's doing it. It's our business. After all, what's a piece of paper?"

On the subjects of sex and marriage, modern society is long on information but short on truth. The results are epidemic: rejection, heartbreak, shattered families, devastated lives, abused children, financial hardship, disease, and death.

We need to get back to basics and realize and reaffirm the foundational facts essential to right relationships.

God, not man, created marriage. Marriage is God's property; it is not a product of human development. We cannot do with marriage what we want because marriages do not belong to us; they belong to God.

God has a stake in each marriage, and we all have a stake in each other's marriages. Take a concrete block out of a wall; the wall will not collapse, but it is weakened. Take out enough blocks, and the wall will fall. If one marriage crumbles, society will survive, but it is weakened. If enough marriages fail, the social structure will collapse, and we are all affected.

Because the integrity of marriage is vital to the well being of the human race, God has established some laws to protect it. He is committed to each marriage, and He will support it with His authority and resources.

God created marriage to establish the basic structure of society within which to perpetuate and develop humanity physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. (See Genesis 1:28; Malachi 2:15.) Keep in mind that marriage is not built on children. Children are temporary members of the home. Marriage is a couple relationship built by God. Children raised under that strong couple bond are blessed.

God created marriage as a safeguard against immorality. (See 1 Corinthians 7:2.) God created marriage as a primary relationship to provide companionship and completeness. (See Genesis 2:18.)

God created marriage to provide man and woman with the greatest opportunity for the development, expression, and fulfillment of love. Marriage is not kid stuff - it is for adults only. It is a permanent relationship with another person that demands maturity, discipline, and mutual giving in love. Marriage is a workshop for building Christian character, for developing fruit of the Spirit.

It starts with dating. Dating leads to a more serious relationship. It is part of a selective process that should be both prayerful and thoughtful. Physical desire is not the driving force, as is the case with those who do not know God. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.)

The principles of pre marriage derive from what the Bible says about marriage itself and about other interpersonal relationships. The sacredness of marriage sets the standards of pre marriage. If there is to be mutual respect in marriage, it must be developed here.

Then comes the wedding. God loves weddings - He conducted the first one. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding.

The purpose of the wedding is to affirm mutual assent, to declare to each other before God and man the moral and legal vows without which there is no marriage. A wedding demonstrates the couple means business. They prove their love by surrounding each other with the moral and legal protection of the marriage bond.

Yes, there is a piece of paper. It means they have committed to each other and to marriage itself, a commitment that they accept as legally binding.

God put marriage into society and holds society responsible to uphold it. Marriage is a sacred covenant recorded on earth as well as in heaven. (See Malachi 2:14.) That piece of paper has God's endorsement.

God structured marriage as a monogamous, heterosexual fusion. (See Matthew 19:5,6.)

Marriage is honorable in all. (See Hebrews 13:4.) Your little darling might not have married the right person; however, she is married, and God honors marriage. Never try to break up someone's marriage just because you don't approve of it. Even if the marriage itself was wrong, it is still a marriage, and God tells us to honor it.

The bond of marriage is so sacred it has been chosen to represent the bond that exists between Christ and His bride, the Church. (See Ephesians 5:32.)

Marriage is for keeps. God hates divorce. (See Malachi 2:16.) Jesus made some sobering statements on the subject. (See Matthew 5:32; 19:9.) If we regard marriage as God does, we will hate divorce as He does.

We need to discard some widely accepted cliches regarding marriage. Marriage is not a partnership; it is a merger. It is not a 50-50 proposition; it is 100 percent both ways. It is not a union; it is a unity on three levels - physical, intellectual, and spiritual.

Human sexuality is much more than a biological function. It is a vehicle for the mutual total giving of a man and woman in the closest, most intimate physical relationship possible. In this relationship everything

within the one person reaches out and embraces everything within the other. In this embrace each is saying to the other, "I give myself completely to you, and I accept your complete self-giving to me."

This exclusive, mutual self-giving exists only when each has surrounded the other with the total commitment of the marriage bond. For this reason sex outside of marriage is a lie. It says something to the other that cannot be true because the absence of the marriage bond proves it to be untrue.

The man and woman may claim they are going to get married, but they have not yet. The moral and legal bond of marriage is not in place before God and man. Until it is, self-giving does not yet exist, and sexual activity is an immoral violation of human sexuality.

The intellectual unity of marriage involves the entire inner personality. It is a unity of goals, values, interests, experiences, and emotions. It is a blending of minds, sharing of feelings, with mutual understanding and consideration.

Love is a decision, not an emotion. It is a decision to take responsibility for someone else's well-being and happiness; a decision to be open, to communicate, to share feelings, to risk being vulnerable; a decision to get into the other person's world and let him or her into yours, to find common ground and cultivate it; a decision to change, to become what you ought to be, to bring a better and kinder you to the relationship.

The highest unity in marriage is spiritual. Many couples are trying to build their relationship on each other and mutual interests. That is not the foundation. Christ is.

God prohibits spiritual incompatibility. (See 2 Corinthians 6:14.) This is not an excuse to leave an unsaved spouse; rather it is the basic rule for the believer in choosing a spouse. (See 1 Corinthians 7:12,13.)

Marriage is designed to be a relationship where two people live for each other and both live for God. They love each other more because they love God most.

Marriage is like two sides of a mountain with Christ at the top. As two people move toward Jesus, they move toward each other. When they meet Him, they find each other.

Two people close to God cannot be far from each other. A marriage built on the Rock will not go on the rocks.