



“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,” Matthew 19:6.

Jesus Teaches About Marriage

Lesson Aim: To cultivate those qualities which make a Christian marriage and home.

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Topic: Divorce; Marriage.

What is your opinion concerning the institution of marriage? Do you consider it a holy institution set among men by divine wisdom, or is it merely a barbed wire fence to keep passion under control? Someone may ask, “Does it matter what one thinks of marriage?” It does matter. Marriage is ordained of God!

The institution of marriage is being attacked today. (1) It is attacked by promiscuous people who declare that it is outdated and should be done away with. (2) It is attacked by secularists who call it a mere civil contract with no religious implications. (3) It is attacked by careless people who advocate such freedom of divorce laws that one may enter and terminate marriage relationships at will. Yes, marriage is under attack.

Why is the institution of marriage important? It has been truly said that as goes the home so goes the nation. No nation is strong when its homes are weak. A good marriage is the foundation of a good home. Marriage is essential to the welfare of society.

The Bible declares that marriage is ordained of God. It is governed by certain principles set forth in His Word. Today's study is concerned with the teachings of Jesus on the subject of marriage. It aims “to cultivate the qualities which make a Christian marriage and home.”

I. AUTHOR OF MARRIAGE, 19:3-5

God Himself set the institution of marriage among men. He is the Author of marriage and the home.

A. God made humans both male and female, verse 4. He intended that they marry and produce children. He would have made all people of the same sex (or even sexless), if He had not purposed marriage and procreation. All that He does is according to a plan. He made men and women different physically and psychologically. The mother instinct is in girls, and the father instinct is in boys. God made them that way. There is an element of holiness in man's physical frame. He is designed by the hand of God Himself.

B. God made male and female to match each other, Genesis 2:7-25. God created man and put him in the beautiful Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. Seeing man was lonely, God said, “. . . **is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him,**” verse 18. Where would a companion for man be found? God brought every beast of the field and fowl of the air before man. Adam named each of them. **“But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him,”** verse 20. Man was totally alone. There was no other of his kind in all of creation.

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took a rib from his side, and made a woman. God brought the woman to the man. Upon seeing her, Adam exclaimed, “(At last!) *This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man,*” verse 23. She was the “help meet” whom Adam needed.

“Help meet” means “one to match; one to answer back; one of like nature.” God created the woman to match the man. A man and woman complement each other. There is the heart of the marriage relationship.

C. God brought male and female together in the first marriage bond, Genesis 2:22. The Bible pictures God's forming the first marriage union when, **“He made a woman, and brought her unto the man.”** They were each the only creature in all the universe which would match the nature of the other. God knew that they would “cleave” each to the other. He evidently approved that relationship since He made them so and brought them together to His evident satisfaction. The relationship of each married couple hallowed when it is remembered that God brought the first man and woman together in such a union.

D. God set the union of male and female as an exclusive bond in marriage, Genesis 2:24. Marriage is the deepest corporeal and spiritual unity possible among humans. Monogamy (having only one partner in marriage) is the divinely appointed intention.

There is a close bond between parent and child, but a person leaves father and mother to be joined to a married partner. Marriage is, therefore,

the pre-eminent of the two. Celibacy is no more a sacred state of living than marriage.

Does it seem that those comments have gone beyond the teachings of Jesus since they reviewed the teachings in Genesis? They do not! Jesus' interpretation of marriage is based upon the truths taught in Genesis 1 and 2. His views on marriage could never be understood unless one knew God's purpose in marriage from the beginning.

II. NATURE OF MARRIAGE, 19:5b-5a

A. Marriage is a physical union. Love unites the hearts of husband and wife, but God declared that in marriage “. . . they twain shall be one flesh.” Marriage relationships do not make of two one spirit, but one flesh. In the mind of God, the proper marriage involves normal sexual union.

Only when sexual relationships are taken from their proper context (the marriage relationship) and used for the wrong purpose (satisfaction of lust rather than sharing unity in love) or expressed in an improper way (perversion in any of its forms) do they become base and evil. Both man and woman were made in the image and likeness of God. God put the sex drive in them both. Expression of that part of their natures, within the marriage relation, is not only permissible, but it is required, I Corinthians 7.

Saying “I do” in a wedding ceremony does not make two people “one flesh” before man and God. It is their physical union. Marriage is the union of two persons as “one flesh.”

B. Marriage is an exclusive union.

(1) It excludes parents. A man will “leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.” Parents should take solemn warning to refrain from tampering in the marriages of their children. Far too many times “in-laws” have brought dissension and divorce to a marriage. A man's supreme devotion upon earth should be to his wife. A wife's supreme devotion upon earth should be to her husband. Only God is to have an allegiance superior to that which one feels toward his married partner.

(2) It excludes other lovers. Adultery is so serious a sin that it merits the death penalty according to God's law, Leviticus 20:10. It not only defrauds one's married partner, it also destroys God's picture and purpose in marriage.

(3) It excludes any other married partner. God's intention is that one man be married to one woman for life. Be careful of anything more than that.

C. Marriage is a divine union. Jesus said, “What God hath joined

together, let not man put asunder,” verse 6. Note the expression, “. . . God hath joined together. . .” It does not mean that God selects the marriage partner for each person. It means that a man and a woman who are joined in marriage are joined under God, even if they are not Christians. It is His will that the marriage bond be entered and homes be established. Marriage is not a Christian ordinance. It is a divinely ordained union.

D. Marriage is a natural union. God made male and female each for the other. He wrote marriage into their nature. Jesus assumed that it was so natural for men and women to marry that He said only a few exceptional people should not marry, Matthew 19:10-12.

Just as the glove was made for the hand, the hat for the head, the tire for the wheel, the propeller for the airplane, so the man and the woman were made each for the other. It would be most unnatural (and chaotic in society), if people did not marry. Marriage is a natural union.

III. PERMANENCE OF MARRIAGE, 19:6.9

A. Permanence is indicated in the nature of the marriage union. In marriage, two people are no longer separate individuals but one.

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh . . .” verse 6. Such a union defies separation.

A man should no more wish to part with his wife than to part with his head or his heart. She is a member of his body, Ephesians 5:28-31. God Himself joins them. They two become one just as the body, which is united by God, is one. God's intention is that marriage would be permanent. He wrote that intention into the nature of the marriage union.

B. Permanence is indicated in the prohibitions against breaking it. **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,”** verse 6. God ordained marriage. He joins the husband and wife together as one. (“Joined together” literally means “yoked together.”) Jesus used a grammatical form which indicates that the union which God forms in marriage is to be true always. God's ideal and man's desires may not coincide, but from the beginning God intended the marriage relationship to be permanent. What God joins, no man should attempt to break apart.

C. Permanence is indicated in the prohibition of commonly accepted grounds for divorce, verse 8. Divorce was common among the Jews. Those who heard Jesus' teachings knew that He was condemning the custom. “Why did Moses require a bill of divorcement be given a woman when her husband sent her away, if divorce was never intended?” they asked.

Moses had permitted divorce. He said a “bill of divorcement” could be given a woman and she could be “sent away,” if he found some “uncleanness” in her. What was meant by an “uncleanness” in the woman? Opinions varied. One rabbi said that it must be something disgraceful. Another said that it could be any small matter. The result was that it became customary for a man to put away his wife “for every cause”—“on any grounds he chose.”

Jesus repudiated the commonly accepted grounds for divorce. He said, **“From the beginning it was not so.”** That is to say, God never intended it that way nor ever approved such a custom. Thus Jesus withdrew “incompatibility” and all kindred excuses for suing for divorce. How would He evaluate our divorce laws?

D. Permanence is indicated by the seriousness of the offence that is sufficient to warrant a termination of the marriage bond. Jesus gave one ground for divorce: fornication, verse 9. Adultery breaks the marriage bond and permits, but does not require, divorce action by the innocent party.

If a husband and wife are one body, divorce is like amputation. It is a last resort. It is done only when all other possibilities are exhausted. Adultery was permitted as a ground for divorce, but it was so serious a sin as to warrant the death penalty. How permanent God intended the marriage union to be!

IV. TERMINATION OF MARRIAGE, 19:7-9

A. Divorce defeats God's purpose in marriage. He purposed that one man should be married to one woman for life. Together they are to reflect the divine image as they complete each other's life, rear their children, and experience spiritual victory. Divorce defeats that divine purpose. “So long as you both shall live” is the expression of God's original design as to the duration of the marriage union.

B. Divorce is permitted under rare circumstances. God did allow Moses to put a divorce provision in the law, Deuteronomy 24:1-4. It was intended, however, to protect the innocent and not to liberalize divorce practices.

In ancient times, a woman had to be supported by a man. There were four possibilities open for a woman to receive support: her father, her husband, as a servant, or a prostitute. Once married, a woman could never become the wife of another man without becoming an adulteress. Moses permitted a “writ of divorcement” to be given a woman that she might have proof of the termination of her marriage and be free to marry again. Thus she

would be saved from a degrading life. The Biblical permission for divorce was to protect the innocent.

C. Divorce is clarified by Biblical principles. A right to divorce carries with it the right to remarry. Note these guidelines set forth in the Scripture.

(1) Fornication (adultery) is the only permissible reason for divorce in the teachings of Jesus, Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:12. Paul seemed to add desertion as a valid reason, I Corinthians 7:12-15.

(2) The innocent party is free to remarry when the married partner has committed adultery, Matthew 19:9.

(3) Neither party is free to remarry when separation was not caused by unfaithfulness. In such cases the marriage bond has not been broken, Matthew 5:32. The one who remarries would thereby commit adultery.

(4) Neither the one who sues for the divorce or the one sued is free to remarry unless adultery is involved, Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18.

(5) Divorce for adultery is permissible, but not mandatory. If one is joined to an unfaithful partner, he may sue for divorce, but he is not required to do so.

(6) Either a man or a woman may sue for a divorce in the case of fornication, Mark: 10:12.

(7) Permission for divorce, as expressed in the Mosaic law, was sufferance but not approved. God did not intend that husband and wife divorce. It is a rebellious consequence of human sin.

(8) The right to divorce is accompanied by a right to remarry. That principle is not specifically stated in the teachings of Jesus, but it is evidently implied. He prohibited remarriage by one who does not have proper grounds for divorce. The condition is that anyone who has a Scriptural divorce can enter another marriage relationship without sin.

A high and holy relationship is involved in marriage. It was instituted of God for the good of man and woman for the procreation and training of children, for the stability of society, for the preservation and promotion of religious faith, and thus for the glory of God.

Use those principles as a rule to test your own home. Is yours a marriage over which God would pronounce a “well done”? If not, start right now to make it all the God intended Christian marriage to be.

Marriage is ordained of God.

Questions

1. What is marriage?
2. How is marriage attacked today?
3. In what way is God the author of marriage?
4. Why does God approve monogamy in marriage?
5. In what way is marriage a natural union?
6. What unity joins husband and wife?
7. How did Jesus differ from current opinions on divorce?
8. What are the grounds for divorce before God?
9. How can you make your home what God intends it to be?
10. How can you help strengthen the homes represented in your church membership?