

MARRIAGE, MAKE IT OR MAUL IT

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Marriage, what does it mean to you? Marriage, to a man it should mean that there is a lady in your life that you intend to love so much that you will sure that she is the happiest woman in the world. Marriage means to you that you're going to do your very best to give your entire energies and all of your life to make her happy. You will forget about yourself, about everything that you want, and the things you want to do and the things that you want to buy, and the things you want to be, because here is this precious lady in your life and you are going to make her the happiest lady in the world.

Marriage, what does it mean to that husband? He will provide for her. He will protect her. He will nourish her. He will cherish her and he will give himself away to maker her happy. Husbands, look your wives in the eyes tonight and see if that's really your aim in your marriage?

Wives, what does marriage mean to you? That here is the most precious man in the world; and you will devote yourself to making him happy and you will see to it that he is cared for; that he is cherished; that he is respected; that he is lovingly followed; that his home is as castle would be to a king; and you will do your best all of your life to make him happy.

Christians, that's what marriage is all about. That's what love is really all about. And far too many of us have entered into marriage with the idea of what it can do for me. The happiness that I can get out of it rather than the happiness that I can give to it, and provide to my partner in life. We are talking about a companionship, a partnership. We are talking about a mating. We are talking about those that are lovers. We are talking about those that are true friends. No more intimate friendship in all the history of the world than between husband and wife. And if you have entered into it with the idea that you will get so much out of it and that this one ought to make you happy or this man ought to make you happy then you probably do not deserve to be married. You're not ready for it yet emotionally. You're not a loving person, you're a selfish person.

Love is an unquenchable good will for someone else. It is an unconquerable benevolence, to where you are always giving, and giving and giving and not taking. No, love doesn't think about taking. Love thinks about giving. Marriage therefore, is where two people in love, express themselves to see who can give the most to each other to make happiness in a wonderful association and companionship in this life.

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The things we are addressing at this time are most important. If I am speaking to young people who are not married, more than likely four out of five of you will marry in this life. If I am speaking to people that are married, more than likely four to five out of every 10 of you will be divorced, or will suffer a divorce in your lifetime. I hope I'm not speaking to the average

American citizen. But I have seen far too many homes broken in the church; far too many selfish, ungodly actions and homes are broken and children are wounded in ways that they can never recover. Some of you have bitter, painful thoughts right now as you think of times in your life, when perhaps your parents broke up, or perhaps you, yourself have suffered the breakup of a marriage. And the wounds and the pain God never intended that be a part of our lives as Christians.

Marriage, you can make it or you can ruin it.

It is a very serious, sober thing and a happy marriage; a good marriage; a strong marriage is not something that is going to happen to you accidentally. It will not come accidentally, it will come only because the right principles have been applied in the right situations. I want to suggest several things about this business of marriage.

First, Look at the Scriptures. Start in Matthew 19: and I think you will see that point number one is that marriage is from God. It is divine. It was instituted, begun by our Lord. It was designed by him even in the garden of eden. These Pharisees come to Jesus and they are trying him over these questions of divorce under the law of Moses. He may not deal with the law of Moses or their question even, but he said "have ye not read (verse 4) that he who made them from the beginning, made them male and female." Now that is a rather interesting statement. Remember we do not have a unisex. We have two sexes. We have the male and the female

sexes, complimentary to each other; necessary to each other. God designed it that way. It was creation, it was his design.

All of this modern psychotherapy and psychiatry that steps in and tries to make such a breakdown between the different roles of the male and female are unfamiliar with God's original design in creation. No, women can't be as men and men cannot be as women. There are roles and responsibilities and there are certain things to be fulfilled for ultimate happiness. There are major differences between the male and female sexes which go far beyond just the physical differences. We'll discuss some of those.

"He who made them from the beginning." Notice that word beginning. If you are in Mark 10 you would find that Jesus said, "from the beginning of creation." The word creation is actually used. Back there in the Garden of Eden this was the design from God. It was male and female.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh, so they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

There is no doubt that anyone who reads this and has any belief at all in the Bible as God's holy word, regardless of what translation you may be reading, you have to come down to the conclusion that marriage is ordained of God. It was begun; it was designed; it was instituted by God. It is God's creation. It is not an evolvement and development of the cultural history

of man. Ever since there has been a man and woman there has been a marriage, has there not. Look at Romans 7, Paul is giving an illustration of the passing away of the law of Moses; and people being joined to the new law of Christ. He points out in verse one, "Are ye ignorant brethren? I speak to them that know the law, that the law has dominion over a man so long as he liveth? The woman who hath a husband is bound by law to her husband while he liveth, but if the husband dies she is discharged from the law of the husband; so then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if the husband die, she is free from the law so that she is no adulteress though she be joined to another man.

Now we realize that this is simply an illustration that Paul is using to talk about the law of Moses and the law of Christ. He will go on to make the application which is 5-7, and incidentally through this chapter. But you see he is saying there is the law of the husband. Look very carefully at verse 2. "She is discharged from the law of the husband." That's not the law of Christ. That's not the law of Moses. That's the law of the husband. That's the law that God put in place, in force at creation that is involved between men and women who desire to live together and that has been in place ever since the garden of Eden. That law or that instruction from God is older than what we know about the Law of Christ. The law of Christ was not revealed until thousands of years later. But here is a law that, as long as there are male and female sexes, as long as they desire to live together and have a home and children, that they have this set of instructions or this law that's called the law of the husband.

I don't mind calling it the law of the husband and the law of the wife. I don't mind referring to it as the laws of marriage because these are the laws or these are the instructions that God has given, even older than the church itself.

Then look at 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul is dealing with some things that are rather delicate in this chapter; "Concerning the things whereof ye wrote (he is evidently answering some question they had sent to him) it is good for a man not to touch a woman. (To touch her means sexually touch. Doesn't refer to shaking hands or touching with the hand but has reference to the idea of sexual caresses and sexual intercourse.) but because of fornication let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband." (Now part of the design that God has for marriage is that man belongs to the woman and the woman belongs to the man. They equally belong to each other. So every woman has her own man and every man has his own woman, or wife.) Let the husband render unto the wife her due and likewise also the husband. The wife has not power over her body but her husband, likewise also the husband has not power over his own body, but the wife."

Paul is using a delicate language here for sexual intercourse. And he is pointing out that because of fornication, the desire for physical love is pure and holy and righteous and it is to be greatly involved in marriage. It is to be enjoyed. It is to be that time when one gives a commitment. It is a speaking of, I belong to you, showing this to the other and Paul is saying here that because of these describes that God has put into the nature of both the man and the

woman, that marriage is the proper place for fulfillment of these sexual liberties. Sexual intercourse or sexual activity is not necessarily there for there to be a marriage, but these are sexual privileges that only the married are given by God.

There are some marriages, perhaps many marriages, where there will be no sexual privileges exercised, but they may still be married. There may be physical impairments. There may be physical injuries. There may be age. There may be numerous things but what Paul is saying here is for the normal and average situation God put the sexual desires within men and women and the place for the expression of these is within marriage. Never, never outside of marriage. Then he says, verse 5, "defraud ye not one another except it be by consent for a season that you may give yourselves to prayer, that ye may be together again that satan tempt you not because of your incontinency." Now he is still speaking about the desires that may overcome the sensibilities or the balance of both the man and the woman. Loneliness is one of the hardest things in all of the world with which we deal. And so it is that he is pointing out that God designed that man not be lonely. Woman might be lonely. It has been said by one person that the only thing that God ever created that he said was not good was a bachelor. Because he said that it was not good that man should be alone. I hope you understand that I am saying that with a good deal of humor. It is not sinful to live the single life at all.

But God did say that the general design of humanity is not for man to live alone nor for a woman to live alone. They belong together. They are really designed to be mated together,

physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally, in every way that personhood can be expressed. That's the way God designed and that what it is when you talk about marriage.

Now there is one other passage to which I want to call your attention. Hebrews 13:4ff "Let marriage be had in honor unto all, and let the bed be undefiled, for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." Marriage is divine. It was instituted by God. In its design it is pure and high and holy and whatever instructions are given by God are those that will make the marriage the very happiest. It does not matter what the modern counsellors and psychiatrists say because today we have many forms of marriage that God did not design. We have co-habitation. That's sort of a dignified word for some men and women that want to live together without being legally married, or morally married in any sense. They just decide they will have a live in spouse, but not a married spouse. All of the sexual privileges they are going to take but none of the commitment. None of the responsibility. None of the really giving of self but each taking what they want. And taking, and taking, and taking and so they are officially co-habiting, and getting just what each one wants out of it rather than the idea of giving and commitment and love, and sharing.

Oh, I hear all of these ideas about how happy some people are that are living together but you should read the statistics and see what happens. That's not God's design and it does not bring about ultimate true happiness that is available for that man and for that woman. Certainly there are those in the field of psychology that will tell us that trial marriages are fine. Live with

her for a little while and see if you want to get married. See if you are sexually compatible. As one old man in tennessee said one time, "Preacher, I'd never buy a mule if I didn't try her out first." How crass, how gross, how ungodly, how vulgar, how uncaring, how bemeaning to women. The idea of trial marriages is ridiculous in its concept. That's not really what builds a marriage. There are other things that go together that put a marriage on a place of happiness and fulfillment and joy and peace.

Then there are those that practice polygamy. That's not practiced a great deal in America today though it is still practiced among some Mormon people in Utah and Arizona and Idaho but its not generally practiced in our western world as it is in some of the others. I attended a Chinese Buddhist funeral when I was in Bangkok Thailand a year and a half ago. The man had five wives. Two of his children had been baptized into Christ and present at the congregation with which I was working at the time and so they invited me to go along. It was a very interesting funeral. Here were five wives and I don't know how many children. That's not God's design. That's certainly not equality for women as God designed and created her. All five of those women belonged to this man but to which did he belong? None of them! They were all committed to him but to which one was he committed? None of them! I realize God suffered these things in old covenant days but it was never his design.

Sadly some of our missionaries in Africa and in the Far East teach that it is alright to continue in polygamy. I say this first hand. I've been there. I've talked to them. I know what many of

them teach. And it has been done since world war I. When some of our older, most respected missionaries went over into the African countries and they gave in to the culture and they said if someone comes to be a christian and has multiple wives he can keep those wives and be a faithful Christian because of the circumstances of culture. They made a distinction later that said if someone becomes a Christian first they cannot go into polygamy or else it would be adultery. The church would not fellowship them. How unequal? How inconsistent? How ungodly? You and I do not know very much about this but I can give you details and names. I know whereof I speak, first hand. Polygamy has never been the divine institution of God.

Celestial marriage is another. Celestial marriage is that which is practiced by the Mormon church. The idea is that a man has his terrestrial wife but if he sees other women in that congregation or town where he lives, he can go to the temple and be married with a celestial marriage because he wants her to be one of his wives over yonder and bear his children over yonder. I don't know what else that would be except lusting after some other man's wife. That's bound to be what it is.

There is the idea that people are not under any covenant law of God until they become a Christian; that God's instructions has nothing to do with anybody that is not a member of the church. A very popular idea among a number of our preachers today. Several books have been written on it and many debates on it. It will not withstand the scrutiny of the scriptures. Not at all! The idea of not under covenant, not under bondage is ridiculous. Man has always

been under the law of the husband, the law of the wife, the law of creation. That's why Jesus did not say he was doing something new, he was going back to the beginning. Matthew 19. Well these are some of the ideas about marriage that are not divine.

There are those who believe the deserted person (1 Corinthians 7) have a Pauline privilege. A christian lady is deserted by a non christian husband, they say she has every right to marry again. The Bible doesn't teach it.

There are those who also teach that both parties to the breakup of a marriage can remarry whether they are guilty or not guilty. If you continue on reading in Matthew 19 you will see if a man puts away his wife saving for the cause of fornication and marries another commits adultery. And he that marries her when she is put away commits adultery. verse 9. I am convinced and I believe that means if adultery breaks up a home that the innocent party is given by God, the right to re-marry. The guilty part is never given any right to marry again. That's not to be found in the word of God's book. These are some of the ideas that men had advanced but they are not divine ideas.

Remember, marriage is from God. He gave us the instructions and we can abide by them. In fact we will be happier and it'll be easier to do what God says about it than to do what man says about it.

I didn't mention homosexual marriages. I hoped I wouldn't have to. I don't want to say anything about that particularly but there are those who say that's alright too.

2. Marriage is for the birth, preservation and nurturing of Children.

The wonderful privileges that men and women have in marriage where they can practice sexual love in the freest sense, in the privacy of their home and their life, and they can find the greatest expressions of commitment and love and giving that can physically be done will often times, of course, produce children to that union. And there is something particularly expressive about their being one flesh, because now if a child is born, it is that they have partnered in this. Man cannot do it alone, and neither can the woman do it alone. Here is the sublimest and the highest of all the physical partnerships that will ever be encountered by a human being. To partner with someone of the opposite sex in this beautiful thing called marriage, to bring children into the world. And the responsibilities and the joys of that kind of situation are almost unable to be described adequately.

Who can say to that mother as she nurses that child to her breast how much that child means to her. Who can say to that father with his buttons busting over pride that he has helped in the creation of this wonderful brand new soul that is a product and expression of their love for each other. How terrible it is for a mother or a father to go back against that kind of commitment and neglect that child even to the point of breaking up a home and wounding that child forever.

3. Marriage is for companionship.

It is not good that man should be alone. Marriage is for companionship and the true personhood, the true personality of man and of women, can best be found in the partnership and the mating that is to be found in marriage. There is no deeper, grander, nobler, higher, sweeter expression at than when the man gives himself completely to loving his wife and her to loving her husband. No, I am not speaking here only of physical or sexual activity, I am speaking of the idea of bonding together. I'm speaking of the true mating of personhood, personality, self and they truly become one and are partners in a very, very special way. They are the most intimate of friends. They bare their souls and their hearts one to another. They trust each other, totally and completely. One of worst things in all of the world is to be alone. And to be lonesome and to be unloved.

There's an old cowboy song that says, "You're nobody until somebody loves you." (Not a western song, lanier.) I don't know that it is totally true, but that's what is within the breast and heart of every person. If you are one of the people in this world that feel they are completely unloved, you have a problem. You have a psychotic, emotionally disturbed person, you have real trouble in nearly every facet of their life because there is something that God placed within us that's like himself, that wants to give love and must to receive it.

Why did God create man in the first place? I'm not sure I know. He's independent without us,

isn't he? It may be that when we see a child born into our home, we see that child grow up and love us and hug our neck and give us the glory of being a father or mother, that whatever we feel within our breast is what God desired when he created man. He wanted you and me to be with him forever and ever in heaven. That we might be companions and have fellowship with him, glorifying him, reacting with him. That's all I can figure out. There is something in the heart of yours and mine that we need to be loved. And the idea of marriage sometimes the real male and female doesn't come out.

God made us different and its not just a physical difference. I am told that when a little boy baby is the most helpless thing in the world. Last week I was in Louisiana and I watched baby ducklings when they were hatched and from the very first day those ducklings cracked those eggs they could run, swim and they could eat. But God designed it so that human babies are the most helpless thing in the world. Who's going to care for them? I am told that when boy babies are born they cry more and sleep less than little girl babies. Boys get angry and want to strike back when something upsets them. Girls are more gentle minded and become frightened and timid when something upsets them. As they begin to grow, that the little boys becoming young men are more interested in geometric designs and things and little girls become interested in people.

There are basic difference between a man and a woman. Do you know what happens when men and women try to find out what their differences are and don't understand each other?

Some very pitiful things sometimes happen. Its called the war of nerves of the garbage can. I'll just use that as an illustration because husbands and wives sometimes has a war of nerves, and other than having this great companionship that they have some have this war of nerves. The man comes home from work and he hears the unhappy statement that is all he has to do in this world, come from work and he can just flop and read the paper. There sits a garbage can in the kitchen that is full and overflowing. He just looks at it and says oh no, she hasn't emptied the garbage. And she gets exasperated at him and begins to tell him that he should empty the garbage but she nearly always waits until it is in front of the children at the supper table. She begins to nag him, berate him and complain to him that he never empties the garbage. What is she saying? She is saying, You don't really love me. But she's not saying that in words but is what it means to her. When he empties the garbage because she has fussed and nagged him he feels he has been manipulated by a woman which is his worst fear. Oh yes, the worst fear a man has is to be subjugated by a woman, not to be respected, not to be followed.

But she's no help here either because she had to extract this out of him. She's not happy because there's nothing there about it that says he cares anything about her. Now we're talking about a garbage can. But to her this is saying, He doesn't appreciate me. He takes me for granted. I'm just a servant of his around the house. And sometimes they never really begin to understand what each other is feeling at that point. And they don't talk with each other and they just get farther and farther apart. How smart that man would be if he would come in from work and would see his wife was tired too, whether she's been at work or at home taking care

of the house. He comes in and gives her a sweet kiss on the cheek and tells her how pretty she is and how much she means to him and he sees that garbage can and reached down and takes it out. See he's not being humiliated in front of his children. He's operating from a position of strength. This is his idea, and so takes the garbage out and washes the can and brings it back in. you know what this means to her? He loves me. Its a garbage can but he loves me. That's really what its all about.

Sometimes men and women do not understand each others nature. The greatest fear that a man has is that he will be subjected, manipulated by a woman, controlled by a woman, would not be respected and would not be followed. And ladies you would be smart to understand this. But men, you need to understand that the greatest fear a woman has is to be taken for granted, to be ignored or to be looked upon as just a servant or a slave. Sometimes men think that what a women does she should have been doing anyway and they let her know. That don't set well with women. We get on different wave lengths and soon we are at real different odds with one another. I don't know what there is about the nature of a woman but I realize she is a caretaker naturally. Man isn't! He can do some of it but it just comes naturally with her. He is a taker and she is a giver. Men if we are going to be the kind of person Christ was and wants us to be in our home, we are going to have to do more than take, you have to do a lot of given.

There is this companionship that is an expression of intimacy. There is this companionship

that is an expression of our truest and best friends. You know what a woman really wants? She wants to share in your life. You and I as men are interested in things, and jobs, games and all things, and she is interested in persons, people. My wife sometimes about people that I didn't even notice. Women notice details and are involved in persons while a man doesn't even notice what anyone wears. There is a basic difference between being female and being male and we must understand this. What women are wanting is to share in your life and in your personhood. Men don't like to talk about their fears, therefore they have difficulty expressing themselves, especially in difficult situations. How many of you men talk about your fears to your wives? Hard to do, even with our wives. We don't talk about our anxieties our fears and our worries but that's the thing she needs and wants. She needs to be involved with a person. She is a people person herself.

Ladies, men have the most fragile ego in the world. They may act like a big, tough, macho kind of guy that can do this and win this battle, and can take of this business, but you can just cut them to pieces if you do not respect their them, and if you do not handle their ego with the cleverness that God gave to you. Women are far more clever than men. I think their brains work overtime because if a woman uses the cleverness and the brains and the wisdom that God gave her, she can have a man just almost worshiping her, if she just knows how to handle that poor little old fragile ego of his. If she can respect him and follow him lovingly, what a wonderful thing that will be.

Marriage is instituted of God. Marriage is, above all, a companionship between two people, blending themselves together into the happiest, sweetest intimacy of all, really knowing each other and really striving to make it their goal to make the other person more happy than themselves. Unselfish companionship is part of God's great design in marriage.

Now if you want to maul a marriage, just do everything against it. If you want to make a marriage and you want to be happy, God has given you and me some of the greatest blessings that he has ever designed for humanity anytime, anywhere. There is only one thing greater. That is the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ.