

Marriage

- I. This study is meant to be a refresher-course on what the Bible says about marriage and it is also somewhat of a book review.
- A. I recently read, “Loving Your Wife As Christ Loves the Church” by Larry E. McCall, pastor of Christ's Covenant Church in Winona Lake, Indiana.
 - B. The book focuses on the husband's role in marriage, that he should follow the model of Jesus Christ Who loves His bride, the church. **EPH 5:25-27.**
 - C. The book has a mixture of godly and practical advice for successful husbandhood but is handicapped by reliance upon corrupt modern bibles (NIV, ESV, NASB).
 - 1. Textual differences from the KJV can affect doctrine, and therefore affect practical conclusions.
 - 2. Be a noble reader (**ACT 17:11**) and check not only the words of an author but also the cited scripture references against what a KJV Bible actually states. Prove all things. **1TH 5:21.**
 - 3. Doctrine matters! There is a fundamental flaw in the premise of the book that reflects a lack of understanding of the doctrine of salvation according to the Scripture. Further comment on this is to follow.
 - 4. A general word of caution: Be cautious to not let men's books, movies (even Christian movies), etc., no matter how well-written, acted and presented, supplant what Scripture actually says. **PSA 119:128.**
 - D. This book has enough “chicken on the bone” that I can recommend it to discerning readers. Some of it is rightly very convicting.
- II. In the foreword of this book, Dr. Tedd Tripp makes an important statement: “In the biblical view, however, worship is the key to marriage. Godly husbanding does not begin with loving your wife; it begins with loving God.”
- A. This accords with the two great commandments, the first of which is *love of God*.
MAT 22:37-40.
 - B. Love of God is what makes one submit to His will concerning marriage rather than the will of self or of others.
 - 1. Love of God establishes duties and boundaries for marriage and prevents one from sacrificing principle to please one's spouse or oneself.
 - 2. The key to success in marriage is NOT pleasing spouse or self at all costs.
 - 3. Many marriages fail or are troubled because of principle that is sacrificed for pleasure's sake.
 - 4. Consider that the Perfect Husband “...pleased not himself...” (**ROM 15:3**).
 - 5. Sacrificing principle to please others counters service to God. **GAL 1:10.**
 - C. “Love thy neighbour as thyself” should not be a substitute for *love of God*.
 - 1. Such would be the case where one loved a spouse as self to the disregard of God's law.
 - a. Eg. “I don't pressure her about church duty because I don't like being pressured either.”
 - b. Eg. “I overlook her overeating/overdrinking since I do it too.”
 - 2. “Love thy neighbour as thyself” is, though, a blessed restraint on selfish attitudes that can wound or ruin a marriage and it is an incentive to kind consideration of a spouse's burdens, fears, needs and desires.
 - 3. One should treat his/her spouse as he/she wants to be treated by that spouse, not as

that spouse might actually be treating him/her. **MAT 7:12.**

4. We are not justified in *rendering evil for evil* in general (**1TH 5:15**) and certainly therefore not against a spouse.

III. Principal passages on marriage are:

- A. **GEN 2:24; MAT 19:4-6.** One man, one woman.
- B. **JOB 31:1; MAL 2:14; ROM 7:1-3.** Covenantal bond for life.
- C. **GEN 3:16; 1CO 11:3-12; 14:34-35; EPH 5:22-33; COL 3:18-19; 1TI 2:11-15; 1PE 3:1-7.** The headship of the man; the submission of the wife; roles and duties of both.
- D. **PRO 31:10-31.** The virtuous woman.
- E. **Song of Solomon; 1CO 7:1-9; HEB 13:4.** The sexual aspect of marriage.
- F. **EPH 5:22-33.** Marriage a picture of Christ's love for the church.
- G. **MAT 5:31-32; 19:9; 1CO 7:15.** The dissolution of marriage.
- H. **1CO 7:28; ECC 12:12.** Troubles in marriage. ;-)

IV. Paul compares the relationship of husband and wife to that of Christ and the church.

EPH 5:22-33.

- A. The redeemed “church of the firstborn” (**HEB 12:23**) is called the *bride* and *wife* of Jesus Christ. **REV 21:9.**
- B. Christ's love for His bride was effective by His giving of Himself on the cross. **ROM 5:8; GAL 2:20.**
 1. Christ's love was a sacrificing love. He sacrificed His pleasure and life for His bride.
 2. There is no greater love than giving up one's own life for others. **JOH 15:13.**
- C. The cross was the undoing of the devil. **HEB 2:14.**
- D. Biblical marriage (and ONLY Biblical marriage), therefore, is a witness to Satan's defeat.
- E. Is it any wonder that the Biblical order of marriage comes under such heavy attack by fornication, infidelity, divorce, unsubmitive wives, same-sex unions, polygamy, etc.? Satan seeks to corrupt and destroy anything that testifies of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. Christian couples who are at war with the kingdom of Satan need to remember this. **EPH 6:12.**
 2. Be wary of becoming so engaged in your personal marital wars that you forget the big picture.
 3. Mind that before sin had even entered the world, Satan sought to “divide and conquer” by wedging himself between Adam and Eve, corrupting Eve, and thus forcing Adam to choose between God and Eve. **GEN 3:1-6.**
- F. Couples who apply the principles laid down in **EPH 5:22-33** are a gospel witness.

V. Pastor McCall writes on p. 10, “First, the love Christ demonstrates toward the church is *unconditional*.”

- A. This is true. The sacrifice of His own life in demonstration of His love was in no way conditioned upon our present or future goodness or performance. **ROM 5:10; COL 1:21.**
 1. This unconditional love at Calvary is ongoing and guarantees the eternal life of His chosen bride in spite of her weakness and disobedience. The covenant relationship with Christ is eternally secure. **ROM 8:28-39.**
 2. This is a committed love, a covenantal love that does not give up on its object, and this is therefore an incentive for His bride to live unto Him rather than self. **2CO 5:14-15.**

3. Faithful, committed, sacrificing love (even unto death) known as such by a wife is a powerful incentive for her submissive, reciprocal love.
 4. Paul instructs husbands to thus love their wives. **EPH 5:25.**
- B. There is, though, a qualification needed.
1. In **EPH 5:25**, Paul is speaking about the one-time death of Jesus Christ out of love to a spotted, unholy, blemished object. This is unconditional. **EPH 5:26-27.**
 2. This was the covenant's legal establishment. As noted above, that aspect of Christ's love to the church will never be withdrawn.
 3. Christ will never put away His bride. He has committed to love her. The marriage bond is eternal.
 4. Husbands are to love their wives "...as Christ LOVED the church, and GAVE himself for it;" (**EPH 5:25**), i.e., givingly, with commitment, unconditionally.
 5. Contrast the above with "Loving your wife as Christ LOVES the church."
 6. How does Christ in daily practice love His church (i.e., the individual saints that are part of "the church of the firstborn")? Conditionally.
 - a. He cares for her, nourishes her and cherishes her. **EPH 5:29.**
 - b. He is merciful and compassionate to her in consideration of her nature. **HEB 4:15; 5:2 c/w 1PE 3:7.**
 - c. He intercedes for her. **HEB 7:25.**
 - d. He forgives her sins upon confession and repentance. **1JO 1:7-9.**
 - e. But He also instructs her and expects her to honor his instruction. **MAT 28:19-20.**
 - (1) He praises her for faithfulness. **1CO 4:5; 2CO 10:18; MAT 25:21.**
 - (2) He does not praise her for disobedience. **1CO 11:17, 22.**
 - f. He stands ready to withdraw fellowship from her, withdraw favor from her, judge her, rebuke her and chasten her and even turn her over to Satan for corrective punishment if she persists in sin. **REV 3:19; 1CO 5:5.**
 - g. He may even slay because of sin. **1CO 10:9-11; 11:29-30; REV 2:23.**
 - h. The marriage will remain intact but its sweetness will be soured.
 - (1) He still loves her *unconditionally* as touching the covenant of eternal life but His practical relating to her is very *conditional*.
 - (2) She has grieved His Spirit and He has established how He will deal with her until she repents and submits to Him.
 - i. Whereas Christ's ongoing love for His bride can provide some helpful ideas for a husband, there are obviously limitations as to how strictly His model is to be followed.
 - j. Remember that Paul's instruction in **EPH 5:25-27** is emphasizing the sacrificial love that Christ demonstrated at Calvary.
 - (1) The object of His love was a corrupt, cursed enemy of God.
 - (2) Husbands do well to remember that they are not the pure Husband, but are by nature corrupt, cursed and enemies of God as much as are their wives.

VI. Marriage is an honourable institution. **HEB 13:4.**

- A. honourable: Worthy of being honoured; entitled to honour, respect, esteem, or reverence.
- B. Marriage was instituted before sin entered. **GEN 2:18-24.**
- C. Unlike the creation, marriage survived the fall intact. To this day, marriage is still what it was before sin entered.

1. Whereas God altered the creation and the relationship He had with man after sin entered, God did not alter marriage. His rule remains as it was: one man and one woman bound together for life.
2. Men have sought to alter marriage but no alteration has come from God.
- D. Thus, marriage is not some old, worn-out, useless institution to be mocked and discarded. It will only be discarded at the resurrection. **MAT 22:30.**
- E. Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman. **MAL 2:14; JOB 31:1.**
 1. It is a covenant regulated by God. He establishes its rules and they are not alterable.
 - a. Other covenants may be voluntarily struck between individuals regardless of sex or number but not marriage.
 - b. Other covenants may be dissolved by mutual consent for many different reasons without incurring God's displeasure towards either party but not marriage. The marriage covenant is only dissolved for both parties by death. **1CO 7:39.**
 2. Marriage binds a man and a woman to each other. **ROM 7:1-3.**
 3. They are so bound as to be considered one. **MAT 19:4-6.**
 4. The marriage covenant is a social contract which society is bound to respect. **EXO 20:14, 17.**
- F. Marriage was ordained for companionship. **GEN 2:18-22; MAL 2:14.**
 1. companion: One who associates with or accompanies another; a mate; a fellow.
 2. Husband and wife are "...heirs together of the grace of life" (**1PE 3:7**). They should experience and enjoy life together.
 3. Marriage was originally provided to meet man's need for companionship.
 4. A man who neglects to associate with his wife frustrates her very purpose for being his wife.
 5. A woman who neglects to associate with her husband fails to fulfill her God-ordained purpose.
 6. The woman is an help meet (suitable) for the man to assist him in the pursuit of his calling. **GEN 1:26-28; PRO 31:10-12.**
 7. A good marriage is a friendship. **SON 5:1, 16.**
- G. Marriage is God's means for avoiding sinful sexual connection. **1CO 7:1-2, 8-9.**
- H. Marriage is the godly means of procreation. **GEN 1:28; 1TI 5:14.**
 1. A good marriage facilitates the healthy development of children.
 2. Children provide a strong reason to make a marriage work.
 3. Loving parents will consider their children's need for the marriage rather than only their own desires.

VII. It is important to correct some misconceptions about marriage.

- A. Love is not the *basis* of marriage; it is a *duty* of the marriage. **EPH 5:25; TIT 2:3-4.**
 1. Love is primarily behavioral rather than emotional. **2JO 1:6.**
 2. You *choose* to love. It is an act of will.
 - a. The question is not, "*Do* you love?" but, "*Will* you love?"
 - b. God loved us as an act of will. He did not love us because we were so lovable and attractive. **ROM 5:8; 1JO 4:10.**
 - c. Isaac loved Rebekah *after* their marriage covenant was made. **GEN 24:67.**
 3. This is not to say that emotional love plays no role in selecting a mate or maintaining a marital relationship. **GEN 29:18; SON 2:5.**

- a. However, the heart is the seat of desire (**PSA 37:4**) and the heart is deceptive. **JER 17:9.**
 - b. How many have married based solely upon the heart's desire for the attractiveness of someone only to find out later that they were incompatible?
 - c. Consider that a blind person could find happiness and satisfaction from someone who is unattractive to the eye.
- B. True love will not just happen.
- 1. You have to work at love. It will cost you something.
 - 2. True love considers more than itself and its own feelings; it looks out for the good of its object. **1CO 13:5.**
 - 3. True love is concerned with giving. **JOH 3:16; EPH 5:25.**
 - a. Ask not first, "What can I get?" but, "What can I give?"
 - b. The first concern of love is not to be loved but to love. **1JO 4:10.**
 - 4. The first mentioned characteristic of perilous times is "...men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (**2TI 3:1-2**).
 - a. Living for someone else is contrary to man's sinful nature.
 - b. Selfishness is a major cause of marital problems.
 - 5. If spouses invest in one another, their heart, which includes their thoughts, their will, and their emotions, will be in the relationship. **MAT 6:21.**
 - 6. If both husband and wife choose to love each other according to the Biblical definition of love, they will have a perfect bond and their marriage will work. **1CO 13:4-7; COL 3:14.**
- C. Marriage is *not* an experience of perpetual infatuation and romantic ecstasy. **1CO 7:28; ECC 3:5.**
- 1. Mere infatuation focuses on the satisfying emotions that one is feeling; it is primarily selfish.
 - 2. Since emotions change, emotions are not adequate to define love. Married people do *not* always feel in love. It is at such times that true love saves a marriage.
 - 3. Some marry on an emotional high thinking that this is love but are left with emptiness when they come off their high.
- D. Marriage will not be free of trouble.
- 1. Life in this world is characterized by trouble. **JOB 14:1.**
 - 2. Marital companionship provides help in bearing trouble. **ECC 4:9-12.**
 - 3. Marriage brings its own set of troubles. **1CO 7:28.**
 - 4. Those who expect a trouble-free marriage are setting themselves up for trouble!
 - a. A good marriage is not one where neither party errs or troubles.
 - b. A good marriage is rather one where couples strive to minimize troubles but expect troubles, work through troubles, learn from troubles and do not let troubles darken the heart and ruin the relationship.
 - 5. A marriage is two *imperfect* and *different* people living as one and this will cause conflict.
 - a. Marital conflict can be a useful tool in maintaining mutual respect and enforcing accountability.
 - b. Human nature is such that most people do not respect a pushover.
 - c. Conflict lets each partner know when his/her behavior is selfish and disrespectful towards the other. Selfishness and disrespect are toxic to a marriage.
 - d. Without such conflict, improper behavior or attitude can go unchecked, thus

breeding resentment in the other that can later result in an explosion in the relationship.

6. Being committed to making the marriage work will give you the mindset to work through your conflicts to a resolution.
- E. Marriage is not necessarily a relationship where all one's needs are met by the spouse.
1. No single individual can supply every need of another.
 2. It is not a sign of a bad marriage when each partner needs other friends and diversions.
 3. A man can understand another man in ways a woman cannot and vice versa.
 4. David found a love in Jonathan that he did not find in women. **2SAM 1:26.**
 5. Love for the Lord must take precedence over love for one's spouse since He meets needs *no* spouse can meet. **LUK 14:26; PSA 23:1; 62:5-6.**
 6. Couples should steer between the extremes of total dependence and complete independence.
 7. A spouse who is emotionally needy and expects the other to fill every void is setting the relationship up for failure.
 - a. You need to learn to resolve your emotional neediness yourself through your relationship with God.
 - b. It is Jesus Christ Who completes us, and no other. **JOH 1:16; COL 2:10.**

VIII. Mutual trust is essential to a healthy marriage, as it is to any relationship.

- A. This requires that couples be truthful with each other.
- B. Lying destroys trust, which is necessary to healthy relationships. **JER 9:1-8.**
- C. Marital love is jealous. **SON 8:6.**
 1. This heightens the need for trust.
 2. A man does not love his wife very deeply if he does not care if she has affairs with other men and vice versa.
 3. Adultery has a lasting reproach because of jealousy. **PRO 6:32-35.**
 4. God so respects jealousy in a marriage that in the case of adultery, He allows the innocent party to put away the guilty party and to remarry without sin. **MAT 19:9.**
- D. While jealousy figures into a marriage, it should not spill over into mistrust where there is no cause for mistrust.
 1. Suspicion makes good relationships impossible.
 2. You cannot prove innocence to one who is determined to believe guilt.
 3. When suspicion rules, even silence becomes a crime.

IX. In order for a marriage to work well, forbearance and forgiveness must be practiced. **EPH 4:31-32; COL 3:13.**

- A. forbear: To bear with, have patience with, put up with, tolerate.
- B. Do not expect your spouse to become everything you want him/her to be.
 1. You are both imperfect sinners and there are some things that you have to bear with.
 2. A couple should improve what they can, resolve what they can, negotiate what they can, and tolerate what they must with the best possible perspective. **1CO 13:7.**
 3. Emotional health requires accepting that which cannot be changed.
 4. Be wary that the expectation of forbearance from your spouse does not become your excuse to not make a selfless change. Charity bears long but it also "...seeketh not her own..." (**1CO 13:5**).
- C. When you sin against your spouse, take responsibility for your sin that has injured the

marriage.

1. Don't resort to blameshifting. **GEN 3:12-13.**
 2. Don't counter-accuse, a defence born of pride. **JOH 9:34.**
 3. You are responsible to do what is right regardless of your spouse's actions.
- D. When your spouse sins against you and doesn't repent, before you conclude indifference, malice or hard-heartedness is his/her problem, ask yourself some questions:
1. Was it really a sin, or was it a matter of your perception of the issue?
 - a. Sometimes, one's own insecurities darkly color an otherwise innocuous word or deed of the spouse. Was it really a camel or just a gnat you are straining at? **MAT 23:24.**
 - b. Being thin-skinned and taking umbrage at every little thing is contrary to charity which "...is not easily provoked..." (**1CO 13:5**).
 2. Have you had a history of holding your spouse to such high standards of flawlessness that he/she no longer knows how to please you or even cares that you have been offended?
 - a. Remember that Moses' Law demanded absolute perfection. **GAL 3:10.**
 - b. It was an unbearable burden outside of God's grace and mercy. **ACT 15:10.**
 3. Does he/she even know that you were offended? Oftentimes spouses have no idea that they have done something considered offensive and one cannot repent of what he/she is ignorant of.
 4. Have you addressed your spouse lovingly about the perceived offense? A high-handed accusation is contrary to charity which "...vaunteth not itself..." (**1CO 13:4**).
- E. When your spouse sins against you and repents, forgive. **LUK 17:3-4.**
1. Truly forgive from your heart. **MAT 18:35.**
 - a. Don't bring it up to your spouse again.
 - b. Don't bring it up to others.
 - c. Don't bring it up to yourself to brood over it in self-pity.
 2. Be willing to forgive a wrong more than once (**MAT 18:21-22**) but don't presume upon this rule to justify continued sinning against your spouse.
- X. There are three ways of dealing with conflict in marriage.
- A. Confront the person and force the issue.
 - B. Don't force the issue and bear a grudge. This resolves nothing.
 - C. Don't make an issue over it and put it behind you. **PRO 19:11.**
- XI. A good marriage takes time to build, and when cracked, to rebuild.
- A. Don't expect hasty solutions.
 - B. Granting and receiving forgiveness does not necessarily mean that the relationship will instantly be all that it should be.
 - C. Sometimes a relationship may be damaged so much that it will never be all that it could be but this doesn't mean that the relationship must be terminated or that efforts should not be made to make the best of what is left in the relationship.
 - D. Sometimes it takes a tragedy for a couple to get it together but Christians who know the truth and have access to God's grace should not require a tragedy to get their marriage together.