

HOLINESS AND THE MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

Dr. Wayne Van Gelderen Jr.

INTRODUCTION

“Anyone can build an altar; it requires a God to provide the flame. Anyone can build a house; we need the Lord for the creation of a home” (John Henry Jowett, *Thirsting for the Springs*).

“In *The Fine Art of Living Together*, the [author] said he sent out a questionnaire to 750 couples whom he had married. In answer to the question: ‘What, in your judgment, is the greatest element making for your happiness in home-life?’ the largest number replied that it was ‘religion lived daily in the home.’

Our homes are not complete or whole without God. There cannot be inner harmony without Him. In fact, says the psalmist, unless the Lord builds our homes all we do is useless. Try as we may, we cannot ourselves realize our deepest desires or find satisfying rest. We need Him every moment in marriage. And it is in the moments of prayer and worship that the guiding stars shine clearest in the skies and the fabric of our faith is made strong and beautiful” (John M. Drescher, *Meditations for the Newly Married*, p. 135).

Unless biblical principles are followed in marriage, the flesh will prohibit a couple from realizing their fullest potential.

📖 Psalm 127:1 – Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

I. PERMANENCE (Eph. 5:31-32)

The comic strip said a lot about the world’s view of marriage:

One character said, “You know, it’s odd—but now that I’m actually engaged I’m starting to feel nervous about getting married!” The other character replied, “I know what you’re thinking. It’s only natural to be nervous! Marriage is a big commitment. Seven or eight years can be a long time!”

In 1995 The Council on Families in America had their report to the nation entitled *Marriage in America*. The council was a diverse group of experts reflecting a wide range of opinions about politics, philosophy, and public policy. The report began by stating: “America’s divorce revolution has failed. The evidence of failure is overwhelming. The divorce revolution—by which we mean the steady displacement of a marriage culture by a culture of divorce and unwed parenthood—has created terrible hardships for children. It has generated poverty within families. It has burdened us with unsupportable social costs. It has failed to deliver on its promise of greater adult happiness and better relationships between men and women.” It went

on to say: “We as a society are simply failing to teach the next generation about the meaning, purposes, and responsibilities of marriage. If this trend continues, it will constitute nothing less than an act of cultural suicide.”

The report gives the staggering statistics on the rise of divorce in America. “Only 14 percent of white women who married in the early 1940s eventually divorced, whereas almost half of white women who married in the late 1960s and early 1970s have already been divorced. For African-American women, the figures are 18 percent and nearly 60 percent. For the average American, the probability that a marriage taking place today will end in divorce or permanent separation is calculated to be a staggering 60 percent.”

A. God’s _____ of marriage

1. Perfect plan for human race

📖 Genesis 1:31— And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

2. Perfect and mystical union

📖 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.

“Cleave”: *dabaq* = cling to; tightly joined together; idea of husband and wife glued together permanently

ILLUSTRATION: 5 ply plywood—damage done when the sheets of wood are separated

3. Permanence was God’s original intention

📖 Mark 10:2-8— And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The commandment was given in Deuteronomy to protect the wife.

At that time in history, a man could divorce his wife by simply stating the fact.

B. God's _____ to divorce

1. God hates divorce

📖 Malachi 2:14-16— Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

- Breaks the companionship—“one who is knit together, closely woven together”
- Breaks a sacred covenant
- Causes great hurt and grief
- Destroys the oneness—the vital purpose of seeking a godly seed

“The most important causal factor of declining child well-being is the remarkable collapse of marriage, leading to growing family instability and decreasing parental investment in children” (Marriage in America, p. 5).

Gary Richmond in Reader’s Digest concludes that divorce is a major source of insecurity, loss of trust, excessive peer pressure, mental illness, perversion, immorality and crime in the lives of children.

D.L. Stewart in the Wall Street Journal states of his own situation: “All this marital coming and going makes holidays a nightmare. We are one big confused family. What was supposed to be a [family] tree turned out to be an out-of-control thicket that divides and multiplies like some crazed amoeba.”

2. God forbids divorce

II. PURITY (Eph. 5:1-3)

A. _____

1. Emotionally

📖 I Timothy 3:2— A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

📖 I Timothy 5:2— The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

- Beware of romance novels (even Christian) and programs
- Avoid all opposite gender relationships
- Prepare children to be single-minded by avoiding the modern dating game
- Cultivate one another as best friends

2. Physically

📖 Matthew 5:28— But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

📖 Ephesians 5:11-12— And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

- Our hearts and minds must be guarded—exercise control over the television, internet and reading material
- Our life situations must be guarded by strong guidelines and accountability

📖 Romans 13:14— But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

B. Spiritually-minded

ILLUSTRATION: The great missionary David Brainerd, who spent his brief life (he died before the age of thirty) ministering to American Indians, wrote in his journal these words: “I never got away from Jesus and him crucified. When my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and him crucified, I had no need to give them

instructions about morality. I found that one followed as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other.”

He also said this in another place: “I find my Indians begin to put on the garments of holiness and their common life begins to be sanctified even in small matters when they are possessed by the doctrine of Christ and him crucified.”

What Brainerd was saying was this: when a Christian realizes who Christ is and what Christ has done for him so graciously, as we have been seeing, it tends to have a dramatic effect on this life, not only in salvation but in holiness.

1. Dedicate unconditionally

📖 Ephesians 5:18— And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

- Continual God-consciousness and praise (v. 19)
- Comprehensive thankfulness (v. 20)
- Complete submission (v. 21)

2. Depend completely

📖 Colossians 2:6— As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

ILLUSTRATION: A little girl once said in response to a question about how to deal with temptation: “When Satan comes knocking at the door of my heart, I send Jesus to answer the door. When Satan sees Jesus, he says, “Oops, I am sorry, I must have the wrong house.”

III. PURPOSE (Eph. 5:33)

A. _____ with God

📖 Genesis 1:26— And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

📖 Genesis 3:8— And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the

LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. 9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?

“Men mistakenly expect women to think, communicate, and react the way men do; women mistakenly expect men to feel, communicate, and respond the way women do. We have forgotten that men and women are supposed to be different. As a result our relationships are filled with unnecessary friction and conflict” (John Gray, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, p. 10).

1. God made man to lead in understanding truth and the will of God.

ILLUSTRATION: My father’s concept of his responsibility to my mother

📖 Ephesians 5:25-27— Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

2. God made women to have a sensitivity to personal relationships and therefore an understanding of the heart of God.

B. _____ for God

📖 Genesis 1:27-28— So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

📖 Genesis 2:15— And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

C. _____ to one another’s needs (Eph. 5:21)

“First, notice the *necessity of mutual submission*. Verse 21 is the transition verse between the two major paragraphs of the chapter. It uses the same Greek word for submission which is applied to the wife in the remainder of the chapter. Observe that this verse is talking about a mutual submission to one another. Whenever I talk to young couples who desire to be married, I start here; for in marriage, both parties lose the independent exercise of their personal rights. That goes for the man as well as the woman. The man loses his independence in the marriage relationship just as the woman loses hers. Failure to recognize this has led to many a divorce.

The second thing to be observed is *the meaning of the word submission*. The Greek word used is a military word, *hupotasso*. Its basic meaning is to put oneself in lower rank. That does not mean that the person in the lower rank is of less worth or wisdom than the person in higher rank” (John E. Ashbrook, *Family Fundamentals*, p. 18).

1. Submission of the wife

- Acknowledge your husband’s God-given position

📖 I Corinthians 11:3— But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

- Remember that you were created for your husband

📖 I Corinthians 11:9— Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

- Understand your God-given role—completer

📖 Genesis 2:18— And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*

📖 Proverbs 31:23— Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

- Serve your husband as the church does Christ

📖 Titus 2:4-5— That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

- Keeper of his children

- Keeper of his home

- Keeper of his heart

📖 Proverbs 31:11—The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

- Keeper of his desire

2. Leadership of the husband

📖 I Peter 3:7— Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

- a. Make a biblical home for your wife—according to knowledge of her as the weaker vessel.

Follower

- Her whole life is wrapped up in you—completer
- She needs open communication
- She needs stable security—financially, protective leadership, enablement of her nesting need

ILLUSTRATION: Sign in wallpaper store, “Husbands choosing colors must have notes from wives”

- She needs to feel the most valuable person in your life
 - Not compared to anyone else
 - Loved unconditionally

ILLUSTRATION: Woman losing weight

- Praised—“Delight thyself”

ILLUSTRATION: Billy Sunday—“Try praising your wife, even if it frightens her at first”

Woman

- Physical limitations
- Privilege of bearing children—respect, protect, be grateful—BEAUTIFUL AND SACRED

- b. Give honor to your wife as a co-heir

D. To _____ a godly seed


“Couples who separate end up with deep hurts. When there are children (and there are millions), they suffer the most. In addition to the millions who actually separate, many couples share a house and children but do not actually have a real home and marriage. Children from such families suffer in many of the same ways that children do whose parents actually separate. All these tragedies do not have to happen. They can be prevented” (John A. Stormer, *Growing Up God’s Way*, p. 163).


- A godly marriage provides stability
- A godly marriage provides training and example

ILLUSTRATION: Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China, was once in the U.S.A. on furlough on his birthday. His five-year-old daughter, Maria, couldn’t afford to buy a gift, so she made one. Beaming, she brought him a small piece of wood with a peg stuck in the middle, topped with half a cockle shell. Since Taylor did not recognize the nature of the gift and did not want to grieve her, he took her on his knee and began probing for clues. Finally, Maria exclaimed, “Why Daddy! Don’t you know? It’s a ‘ship’! I thought you would like best for your birthday a ship to take you back to China.”

IV. PRACTICE (Eph. 4:30)

A. _____

 I Peter 5:5-6— Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

 Philippians 2:3-5— *Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

- Allows the Spirit of God to control
- Provides the attitude that will solve problems

B. _____

1. Be honest (4:25)
2. Be honest daily (4:26-27)
3. Be honest in way that builds up and never tears down (4:29)
4. Be honest with the right motive (4:30-32)

*Oh the comfort, the inexpressible comfort
Of feeling safe with a person;
Having neither to weigh thoughts
Nor measure words,
But to pour them all out just as they are
Chaff and grain together,
Knowing that faithful hand will take and sift them,
Keep what is worth keeping
And then – with a breath of kindness
Blow the rest away.*