



A CONVERSATION ON BIBLICAL *marriage*

By Andy Cartee | Minister to Young Adults

As an avid lover of comedy, it's no surprise to me that many comedians use marriage as part of their routines. The marriage relationship is so distinct and familiar that it is a natural way to connect with an audience. One joke I heard goes like this: A son once asked his father, "What's the difference between love and marriage?" The father quickly replied, "Love is blind. Marriage is an eye-opener." The intent of this statement was to be humorous but there really is much comedy and humor when it comes to marriage. In the midst of this humor, I believe there is truth in the father's response to his son about it being an "eye-opener." Marriage is not the invention of humanity, but the creation of God. Many people are eager to find that special someone to share life, explore dreams and expectations, and imagine what marriage will be like. Marriage is an eye-opener because it is part of the purpose and plan God has for those who are married.

Throughout the Bible we read about couples and their marriages. Yes, there is great joy that comes through marriage. In fact, the very first miracle Jesus performed was at a wedding.

Weddings at that time, like today, were times of great celebration and rejoicing. The typical wedding lasted over a period of five to seven days. There were feasts, rituals, and processions rich with meaning that often included the entire community in which the couple lived. It was a time for everyone to come together.

In John chapter 2, we find Jesus and his mother, Mary, in attendance at a wedding. Wine was an important part of the culture, so to be without wine for a wedding would be a significant concern for the family. When Mary recognizes there's a shortage, she comes to Jesus and petitions Him to help. Jesus says, "my hour has not yet come," meaning that what He would do for humanity was to be "more delightful than wine." The miracle of turning water into wine helps us see the importance of the celebration of marriage and of God's provision for this couple.

We also see many references throughout Scripture of God's redemptive plan of salvation through the lens of marriage. The Bible describes the Son of God as the Groom, and the Church (the believers in Christ) is described as His bride. The Son expresses His love for His bride through absolute self-sacrifice, self-sacrifice to the uttermost, love that knows no end, love that goes to a cross and is resurrected. The Church expresses her love to the One who gives everything for her. The bride joyfully submits to her loving Husband, acknowledging Him as her leader and following gladly where He leads. This is not done just out of duty but because she knows that she will be loved and treated respectfully, even to the point of death. This is the kind of marriage that all other marriages are to imitate.

So, what is a biblical marriage? A biblical marriage is one that honors and acknowledges that marriage is a covenant, not a contract. It is where the husband and wife come before family and friends and join with our Lord and Savior to enter into a special and mysterious union where two are now becoming one (Genesis 2:24). It is a mystery that we read about in Scripture.

Marriage is a wonderful gift from God that brings with it many joys but also harsh realities. The truth is that marriage can be challenging, difficult, and sometimes disappointing. Just because a couple has entered into this covenant and both of them love the Lord does not mean that their marriage will be free of challenges. God does not grant Christian couples immunity from the difficulties of life but instead uses them to help demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit and model the ways we are called to treat one another found in Ephesians 5.

It is through marriage challenges that couples learn about one another and about themselves. The reality of marriage is that every couple will struggle at some point. It is these times of struggle that can serve as defining moments in our lives. What do you do when you are there? How do you treat one another in those moments? When the struggle becomes too much of a burden, where do you go, who do you turn to?

You may be reading this article and are currently experiencing difficulty in your marriage. If so, these are some good questions to ask. Both husband and wife must be willing to work on the "oneness" that they are called to have as a married couple. Some of the greatest roadblocks for couples is pride and the fear of people's perception. The reality is that no marriage

has a perfectly white "picket fence" without spots and dings on it. No matter how much you try to paint over it or hide the imperfections, they are still there.

There will be times when a couple needs help, but the willingness to reach out for help is neglected because of pride. Many couples suffer because they are fearful to ask for help or see a counselor. Our emotional wellbeing is equally as important as our physical wellbeing. Psalm 147:3 says "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." The

Psalmist is not talking about people with a physical heart condition but is referring to a person's emotional state. Time alone does not always bring healing, and change in our spouse can only be done through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our role is to be faithful to the One who created us and created marriage. God knows that we are sinful and that we bring our past, our hurts,

the way we communicate, and our struggles into our marriage. We must also bring humility, an understanding of our sinfulness, and a willingness to do the tangible and spiritual things that God wants for us so we can continue to be transformed into the husbands and wives we are called to be.

A biblical marriage is one that understands that the purpose of marriage is not to make us happy but to make us holy. The happiness comes from understanding God's purpose and delighting in our spouse. Through our marriages as husbands and wives, God will use this unique relationship to grow us and mold us. He will be with us in the turbulent times and the joyous times. No matter what marital stage you are currently in (engaged, newlywed, long-timer), remember this: Husbands, you are to love, honor, and cherish your wife as she becomes more like Jesus. Wives, you are to love, honor, and cherish your husband as he becomes more like Jesus. As we do this we will see that marriage truly is "eye-opening" to its purpose through our Lord and Savior.



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{For more information on pre-marital counseling, please visit dawsonchurch.org/TogetherForLife.}