



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

God's Design for Biblical Marriage

Covenant, Companionship, Faithfulness, and a Love That Points to Christ

The Short Answer

Biblical marriage begins with God, not human culture. In Genesis, God creates humanity as male and female and establishes marriage as a covenantal union in which a man and woman leave their families of origin, are joined together, and become one flesh. Sin deeply damages marriage, but it does not erase God's design. The New Testament reveals something even greater: marriage ultimately points beyond itself to Christ and His Church. Marriage is precious, but it is not ultimate. Jesus is.

Genesis 1:26-28 · Genesis 2:18-25 · Matthew 19:3-9 · 1 Corinthians 7 · Ephesians 5:21-33 · Revelation 19:6-9

Opening Memory Anchor

Biblical marriage is a covenant meant to reflect God's faithful love - not a relationship in which one person is permitted to use, control, or diminish the other.



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WELCOME

This guide is meant to send you back to Scripture

This Companion is designed for guided self-study or small-group use. Part One builds the biblical foundation of marriage in accessible language: creation, covenant, one flesh, discernment before marriage, love, sex, conflict, money, children, singleness, and following Christ together. Part Two moves into more difficult interpretive and pastoral questions, including Hebrew and Greek observations, marital roles, church traditions, family planning, divorce and remarriage, abuse, contemporary debates about marriage, and the way marriage points to Christ and His Church.

Foundational truth

Marriage belongs to God. Human cultures and laws may define or regulate marriage in different ways, but Scripture provides the Christian theological foundation. The study should therefore continually distinguish what the Bible explicitly teaches from conclusions Christians draw when applying it.

How to use this study

- Open and read the cited passages rather than relying only on the summaries.
- Notice when the study distinguishes explicit biblical teaching from theological inference or denominational interpretation.
- Use the Memory Anchors and worked examples to retain the central ideas.
- Where Christians disagree, examine the strongest biblical reasoning without pretending Scripture says more than it does.
- If a marriage involves abuse, coercion, sexual violence, credible threats, stalking, or danger to children, prioritize safety rather than applying ordinary conflict advice.



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PART ONE

BEGINNER GUIDE

God's design, wise discernment, and faithful life together

Memory Anchor

Marriage is sustained by more than feelings because marriage promises more than feelings.

Part One focuses on the biblical foundations of marriage. The more difficult interpretive questions - including original-language observations, Christian disagreements about marital roles, divorce and remarriage, family planning, and contemporary debates about marriage - are explored in Part Two.

1. WHO INVENTED MARRIAGE?

According to Scripture, marriage begins with God. Marriage appears in Genesis before governments, nations, Israel, the Mosaic Law, or the Church. Read Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:18-25.

God creates humanity in His image as male and female. Genesis 2 then focuses closely on the creation of the woman and the first human relationship. God declares that it is not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). God creates the woman as the corresponding partner he lacks.

Genesis gives the foundational pattern: **LEAVE -> JOIN -> ONE FLESH**. A man leaves father and mother, is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh. Jesus later returns directly to this passage when teaching about marriage (Matthew 19:4-6).

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT MEN AND WOMEN ARE CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE?

Read Genesis 1:26-28. Both male and female are created in the image of God. Neither sex possesses greater human dignity, spiritual value, or image-bearing status.

Both are created by God, accountable to God, affected by sin, in need of salvation, and invited into life with Christ. Galatians 3:26-29 reinforces equal standing in Christ. Christians disagree about some role questions, but every discussion of biblical marriage must begin with equal human dignity before God.

3. WHY DID GOD CREATE THE WOMAN?

Genesis 2:18 says God would make a helper suitable for the man. Modern English can make helper sound like an assistant or someone less important. That is not the idea Genesis communicates.

The woman is the corresponding partner the man lacks - someone who shares his humanity while being distinct from him. Adam responds, 'bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' (Genesis 2:23). A deeper look at the Hebrew wording appears in Part Two.

4. WHAT IS A COVENANT?

A covenant is a **serious, pledged relationship of faithfulness**. The word can sound complicated, but the idea is important. Marriage is more than 'I love you today.' It includes, 'I am pledging myself faithfully to you.'

Malachi 2:14 describes a wife as a man's wife by covenant. Marriage therefore includes promises and responsibilities. This helps explain why adultery and betrayal are treated so seriously: they violate pledged faithfulness.

5. WHAT IS THE BASIC BIBLICAL PICTURE OF MARRIAGE?

Taken together, Genesis 1-2 and Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19 present marriage as **a covenantal, sexually exclusive, one-flesh union between one man and one woman, intended for faithful permanence**.

Covenant means pledged faithfulness. Male and female are rooted in creation. One flesh describes a unique bodily and relational union. Fidelity protects that union. Jesus' words, 'What God has joined together, let no one separate' (Matthew 19:6), reveal faithful permanence as the creation ideal, even though sin can fracture marriages.

6. IS MARRIAGE JUST A CONTRACT?

Marriage has legal and practical dimensions, but Scripture presents it as more than a contract. A contract often emphasizes obligations. Covenant emphasizes pledged faithfulness.

This does not excuse sin or require tolerating abuse. It means marriage is intended to involve something deeper than, 'I will stay as long as this relationship keeps making me happy.' Feelings, compatibility, and affection matter, but emotions fluctuate. Covenant faithfulness reaches deeper.

Memory Anchor



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Marriage is sustained by more than feelings because marriage promises more than feelings.

7. WHAT DOES ONE FLESH MEAN?

Read Genesis 2:24. One flesh includes sexual union, but the biblical idea is larger than one sexual act. Marriage joins two lives in a unique covenant relationship.

Husband and wife remain distinct people, yet their decisions, bodies, homes, finances, families, joys, wounds, responsibilities, and futures become deeply interconnected. Jesus treats this union seriously in Matthew 19:4-6, and Paul appeals to the one-flesh principle when warning against sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.

8. WHAT HAPPENED TO MARRIAGE AFTER SIN ENTERED THE WORLD?

Read Genesis 3. Before sin, Genesis describes nakedness without shame. After sin, relationships become marked by shame, blame, fear, hiding, distorted desire, and struggles involving power.

Marriage did not create these problems. **Sin invaded marriage.** Selfishness, manipulation, domination, sexual betrayal, cruelty, resentment, dishonesty, and abandonment reveal what sin does to God's design.

9. DOES EVERYTHING THE BIBLE RECORDS ABOUT MARRIAGE SHOW GOD'S IDEAL?

No. The Bible records what people actually did, including terrible decisions. Abraham and Sarah experience infertility, fear, and deception. Isaac and Rebekah become divided through favoritism. Jacob's marriages are filled with rivalry. David's family reveals the consequences of sexual sin and misuse of power.

Something appearing in the Bible does not automatically mean God approves it. Scripture records polygamy while repeatedly showing jealousy, rivalry, injustice, and family fragmentation around it. God's creation pattern remains the starting point.

10. WHY DID GOD CREATE MARRIAGE?

Scripture reveals several overlapping purposes: companionship, covenant partnership, sexual union, family and generational life, mutual care, spiritual growth, witness, and a sign pointing beyond itself.

Children are repeatedly described as gifts from God, but infertility does not make a marriage incomplete. Ephesians 5 eventually reveals the deepest New Testament connection: marriage points toward Christ and His Church.

BEFORE MARRIAGE

11. DOES THE BIBLE TEACH CHRISTIANS HOW TO DATE?

Not in the modern sense. The Bible does not prescribe dating apps, courtship systems, number of dates, engagement length, or a universal Christian dating formula.

Scripture instead provides principles about wisdom, holiness, character, sexual integrity, faith, marriage, community, and counsel. Christians should therefore avoid turning one particular dating or courtship method into a biblical command.

12. WHAT SHOULD SOMEONE LOOK FOR BEFORE MARRIAGE?

Attraction and compatibility matter, but character matters more. Ask: Does this person genuinely follow Christ? How does this person treat people who cannot benefit them? Can this person admit being wrong? How is anger handled? Is this person truthful? How are money and sexual boundaries handled? Does this person accept responsibility?

Read Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 7:16-20; Galatians 5:22-23; James 3:13-18. **Chemistry can begin a relationship. Character helps reveal whether covenant faithfulness is likely.**

13. ARE THERE RED FLAGS THAT SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED BEFORE MARRIAGE?

No person is perfect, but some patterns should not be minimized simply because two people love each other. Serious warning signs include explosive anger, physical intimidation, controlling behavior, extreme jealousy, sexual pressure, repeated dishonesty, hidden debt, gambling, destructive addiction, pornography accompanied by deception, isolation from family or friends, contempt, threats, spiritual manipulation, or repeated violation of boundaries.

Marriage does not usually cure destructive character patterns. Often it gives those patterns greater access to another person's life.

Worked example - "But he's different with me"

A dating partner regularly screams at restaurant workers, insults family members, and becomes aggressive when frustrated, but says, 'I'd never treat you that way.' Biblical wisdom asks what his treatment of other people reveals about his character. Jesus teaches that fruit reveals the tree (Matthew 7:16-20). Do not evaluate a future spouse only by how that person behaves while trying to win affection. Watch what happens when the person is disappointed, corrected, tired, angry, inconvenienced, or denied something desired.



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14. HOW IMPORTANT IS SHARED FAITH BEFORE MARRIAGE?

Very important. Read 1 Corinthians 7:39 and consider 2 Corinthians 6:14 in its broader context. Christians differ somewhat over how directly the unequal-yoke passage applies specifically to marriage, but the broader wisdom is clear.

Faith shapes values, worship, ethics, money, sexuality, children, priorities, suffering, forgiveness, community, and life's ultimate purpose. The question is not merely, 'Does this person believe God exists?' but, 'Can these two people faithfully build a life while moving toward the same Lord?'

15. IS PREMARITAL COUNSELING WISE?

Often, yes. Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; and 19:20 value wise counsel. Good premarital counseling can help couples discuss faith, expectations, finances, debt, children, infertility, family planning, sex, pornography, previous relationships, conflict, careers, household responsibilities, in-laws, church involvement, health, addiction history, and theological differences.

Premarital counseling cannot guarantee a healthy marriage, but wisdom asks important questions before covenant promises make the consequences much greater.

16. DOES GOOD DISCERNMENT GUARANTEE A GOOD MARRIAGE?

No. Wisdom reduces avoidable foolishness; it does not control the future. Two mature Christians may still encounter illness, infertility, financial hardship, grief, sexual difficulties, family crises, mental-health struggles, or unexpected conflict.

People can also change. Good discernment is wisdom, not a guarantee. Marriage always requires grace, growth, repentance, and dependence upon God.

LIFE WITHIN MARRIAGE

17. DOES EVERY MARRIAGE NEED CHILDREN TO FULFILL GOD'S DESIGN?

No. Scripture celebrates children as blessings but never teaches that infertility makes a marriage spiritually defective. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Elkanah and Hannah, and Zechariah and Elizabeth all experienced infertility.

Their stories should not be turned into a universal promise that every infertile couple will eventually conceive. A marriage can glorify God through hospitality, discipleship, generosity, mentoring, service, adoption or fostering where appropriate, and faithful love. Children are a gift, not the measure of whether a marriage matters to God.

18. IS MARRIAGE NECESSARY FOR A COMPLETE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

No. Jesus never married. Paul spoke positively about singleness in 1 Corinthians 7. Marriage is good, and singleness can also be good.

The Church sometimes communicates single -> married -> children -> spiritually mature. Scripture does not establish that hierarchy. A married Christian is not spiritually superior to a single Christian, and a parent is not spiritually superior to someone without children. Identity and completeness are found in Christ.

19. WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIAN LOVE LOOK LIKE INSIDE MARRIAGE?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 in context. Although the passage was not written specifically as a wedding text, its description of Christian love certainly applies within marriage: patient, kind, truthful, humble, enduring, not self-seeking, and not delighted by wrongdoing.

Colossians 3:12-14 adds compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. These qualities apply to both spouses.

20. DOES LOVE MEAN NEVER CONFRONTING A SPOUSE?

No. Biblical love and truth belong together. Read Ephesians 4:15, 25-32. Love may require saying, 'This behavior is hurting the marriage,' 'That was dishonest,' 'This pattern cannot continue,' or 'Help is needed.'

Forgiveness does not require pretending sin did not occur. Grace does not erase every consequence. Peace does not require avoiding difficult conversations. A marriage in which serious problems can never be discussed may not be peaceful; it may simply be silent.

21. WHAT DOES FORGIVENESS LOOK LIKE IN MARRIAGE?

Read Ephesians 4:31-32 and Colossians 3:12-13. Forgiveness is not calling evil good, denying what happened, pretending trust was never damaged, removing every consequence, refusing appropriate boundaries, guaranteeing immediate reconciliation, or allowing repeated abuse.

Trust may need rebuilding. Reconciliation may require repentance and changed behavior. Safety may require separation. Forgiveness releases personal vengeance to God; it does not require participating in another person's ongoing sin.

22. HOW IMPORTANT IS COMMUNICATION?

Very important, but Scripture focuses on more than techniques. It focuses on the heart behind words. Read Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 18:21; Ephesians 4:29; James 1:19-20.



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Biblical communication listens quickly, speaks truthfully, refuses contempt, controls anger, avoids using words as weapons, and seeks understanding. The goal is not merely winning but loving another image-bearer while dealing honestly with disagreement.

23. IS CONFLICT A SIGN OF A BAD MARRIAGE?

Not necessarily. Two people will sometimes disagree. The more important question is what happens when they disagree. Conflict becomes destructive when it involves contempt, humiliation, threats, intimidation, manipulation, dishonesty, punishment through silence, explosive anger, name-calling, coercion, or violence.

Read James 1:19-20 and Ephesians 4:26-32. A healthy goal is not 'We never disagree' but 'Even when we disagree, truth, dignity, self-control, repentance, and love remain.'

Worked example - Same problem, different response

Destructive: 'You never listen. You only care about yourself. Why do I even bother talking to you?' Healthier: 'When that decision was made without talking with me, I felt like my opinion did not matter. Can we talk about how we make decisions like this together?' The second response still addresses the problem without turning disagreement into contempt.

24. WHAT ABOUT MONEY?

Money is one of the practical places where shared life becomes visible. Scripture does not prescribe one modern banking arrangement, but it teaches honesty, stewardship, generosity, contentment, planning, provision, and avoidance of greed (Proverbs 21:5; Matthew 6:19-34; 1 Timothy 5:8; 6:6-10).

Secret debt, hidden purchases, gambling, concealed accounts, or using money to control a spouse can seriously damage trust. Healthy stewardship asks: What has God entrusted to this household, and how can it be handled faithfully?

25. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT SEX WITHIN MARRIAGE?

Scripture treats marital sexuality as good. Read Genesis 2:24-25; Proverbs 5:15-19; Song of Songs; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4. Christianity does not teach that sex itself is dirty.

Within marriage, sexual intimacy can express affection, delight, vulnerability, comfort, exclusivity, and one-flesh union. But desire never gives permission to treat another person's body selfishly. First Corinthians 7 emphasizes mutuality; neither spouse is given unilateral sexual privilege over the other.

26. DOES MARRIAGE MEAN CONSENT NO LONGER MATTERS?

No. Marriage creates a covenantal context for sexual intimacy; it does not authorize sexual violence or coercion. Sex obtained through physical force, threats, intimidation, fear, humiliation, manipulation, or punishment does not reflect biblical marital love.

A husband's call to sacrificial love cannot be reconciled with forcing himself upon his wife. A wife's call to love her husband cannot be reconciled with sexual coercion or manipulation either. Biblical marriage never turns another human being into property. Sexual abuse within marriage is still abuse.

Pastoral safeguard

No biblical teaching about submission, forgiveness, reconciliation, covenant, sexual responsibility, or preserving marriage should ever be used to pressure someone to submit to violence, sexual coercion, criminal behavior, threats, or serious abuse. Immediate safety matters. Seeking help is not spiritual failure. Civil authorities have a legitimate role in restraining wrongdoing (Romans 13:1-4). Church leaders should never protect an abuser's reputation at the expense of a victim's safety.

27. WHAT ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY?

Read Matthew 5:27-30. Jesus teaches that sexual sin involves more than physical adultery. Pornography directs sexual desire toward people outside the marriage covenant and can train people to consume another person's body for personal gratification.

It can damage trust, intimacy, expectations, honesty, and the way people view one another. Pornography should not be dismissed as 'everyone does it,' and a person struggling should not be told there is no hope. Confession, accountability, practical safeguards, pastoral care, and professional treatment where necessary may all be appropriate.

28. WHAT IF SEXUAL DESIRE IS DIFFERENT BETWEEN SPOUSES?

Differences in desire are common. First Corinthians 7 should not be weaponized. Lower desire may be connected with exhaustion, grief, hormonal changes, illness, medication, disability, pain, pregnancy, childbirth recovery, trauma, relational wounds, or unresolved conflict.

The biblical response is not coercion but loving attention to the whole person. Deliberately withholding intimacy merely to punish or manipulate can also become destructive. Healthy marital intimacy requires communication, tenderness, patience, honesty, and mutual care.



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29. SHOULD SPOUSES PRAY AND STUDY SCRIPTURE TOGETHER?

Shared spiritual life can strengthen a marriage. Couples may pray, read Scripture, worship, attend church, serve, practice hospitality, and discuss what God is teaching them.

Scripture does not prescribe one required daily couple-devotional format. A marriage is not spiritually defective because spouses have different devotional habits. Each spouse remains personally responsible for following Christ.

30. WHAT IF ONE SPOUSE IS A CHRISTIAN AND THE OTHER IS NOT?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 and 1 Peter 3:1-2. If an unbelieving spouse is willing to remain married, Paul tells the Christian spouse not to divorce merely because of the difference in faith.

The believer may faithfully demonstrate Christ through character, love, and integrity, but one spouse cannot convert another. If the unbelieving spouse leaves, Paul says the believer is not bound in such circumstances (1 Corinthians 7:15).

31. WHAT IF BOTH SPOUSES ARE CHRISTIANS BUT ARE SPIRITUALLY MISMATCHED?

Two Christians may have very different levels of biblical knowledge, maturity, church involvement, prayer habits, or theological interest. One spouse cannot force another into maturity. Nagging rarely produces discipleship; neither does spiritual superiority.

A faithful response may include prayer, encouragement, modeling spiritual hunger, gracious conversation, healthy church involvement, and trusting the Holy Spirit to work. Knowledge should produce humility and love.

32. WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FOUNDATION FOR A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

Not romance. Not compatibility. Not financial security. Not children. Not even marriage itself. **Christ.**

A husband cannot be his wife's savior. A wife cannot be her husband's savior. No spouse can carry the weight of being another person's ultimate source of identity, security, meaning, or worth. Read Colossians 1:15-20. Only Jesus belongs at the center.



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PART TWO

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

INTERMEDIATE

Interpretive questions, Christian traditions, difficult marriages, and Christ's greater purpose

Some questions in this section involve language, historical context, competing Christian interpretations, and difficult pastoral situations. **You do not need to master every interpretive question to understand the central biblical point: marriage belongs to God and should increasingly reflect His faithful, holy, self-giving love.**

Interpretive posture

Where Scripture speaks clearly, believe it. Where Christians draw inferences, identify them as inferences. Where Scripture leaves mystery, trust God's character and obey what He has made clear.

33. WHAT DOES THE HEBREW WORD FOR HELPER IN GENESIS 2 MEAN?

The Hebrew word translated helper in Genesis 2:18 is **ezer**. The Old Testament frequently uses this word for God as the helper of His people (Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7; Psalm 33:20; Psalm 121:1-2).

Describing God as helper obviously does not imply inferiority. In Genesis, the woman is the corresponding partner the man lacks. This does not settle every later debate about marital roles, but helper cannot simply mean inferior servant.

34. WHAT DOES EPHESIANS 5 ACTUALLY TEACH ABOUT MARRIAGE?

Read Ephesians 5:18-33, not merely verses 22-24. The marriage instructions occur within Paul's larger discussion of Spirit-filled Christian living. Immediately before addressing wives and husbands, Paul describes believers as submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21).

Paul then addresses wives and husbands separately. Wives are instructed concerning submission and respect. Husbands receive an extensive command: love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. The passage ends by returning to Genesis 2:24 and revealing marriage as a sign pointing to Christ and the Church.

35. WHAT DOES SUBMIT MEAN?

The Greek verb commonly translated submit carries the idea of ordering oneself under or yielding appropriately within a relationship or structure. Biblical submission never gives human authority permission to override God.

No husband possesses greater authority than God. A wife is never biblically required to participate in sin, conceal abuse, lie for her husband, tolerate criminal behavior, submit to sexual violence, place children in danger, or obey commands contrary to God.

36. WHAT DOES HEAD MEAN IN EPHESIANS 5?

Paul says the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23). The Greek word is **kephale**, literally head. Faithful Christians disagree about some implications of Paul's metaphor.

Complementarians generally understand the husband as bearing a distinctive leadership or headship responsibility while husband and wife remain equal in dignity. Egalitarians emphasize mutual submission and equal marital authority and may understand head primarily through Christlike self-giving or relational responsibility.

Whatever conclusion is reached, several things are explicit: husband and wife possess equal human dignity; wives are instructed to respect their husbands; husbands are commanded to love sacrificially; Christ is ultimate Lord; and abusive domination cannot be reconciled with Christlike love.

37. DOES EPHESIANS 5 SAY THE HUSBAND GETS THE FINAL SAY?

Scripture does not explicitly say, 'Whenever a married couple disagrees, the husband automatically gets the final vote.' Some complementarian Christians infer a form of final responsibility from headship; other Christians reject that inference.

The distinction matters. **Headship language is explicit. A universal husband-casts-the-deciding-vote rule is an interpretation drawn from that language, not an explicit sentence of Scripture.** Wise marriage should seek God's wisdom, Scripture, prayer, mutual understanding, humility, and the good of the family rather than revolving around who gets to win.

Memory Anchor

Biblical headship can never mean becoming less like Jesus in the name of being more biblical.



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38. WHAT ABOUT 1 PETER 3?

Read 1 Peter 2:11-3:9. Peter addresses Christians living faithfully within difficult social structures. First Peter 3:1-6 discusses wives, including women married to unbelieving husbands.

Verse 7 commands husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way and show them honor, with a sobering warning that failure can hinder their prayers. Peter also identifies Christian wives as fellow heirs of God's gracious gift of life.

39. HOW HAVE CHRISTIANS HISTORICALLY UNDERSTOOD MARRIAGE?

Across Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and historic Protestant traditions, Christians have overwhelmingly understood marriage as a male-female union grounded in creation, while differing over important applications.

Roman Catholic theology understands marriage between baptized Christians as a sacrament and emphasizes unity, permanence, and openness to life. Eastern Orthodox Christianity also treats marriage sacramentally and emphasizes it as a path of holiness, while Orthodox practice concerning divorce and remarriage differs from Roman Catholic practice. Protestant Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic classification of marriage as a sacrament in the same sense, while continuing to treat marriage as a divinely established covenant or ordinance.

This history matters because it prevents a common mistake: assuming every familiar Christian marriage practice is explicitly stated in Scripture. Scripture remains authoritative; traditions help readers see how Christians have interpreted and applied it and must themselves be tested against Scripture.

40. WHAT IF TWO CHRISTIANS COME FROM VERY DIFFERENT CHURCH TRADITIONS?

A Catholic and Protestant may both confess faith in Jesus while holding important differences. The same can be true between Orthodox and Protestant Christians, Baptists and Presbyterians, Pentecostals and cessationists, complementarians and egalitarians, or Christians from other traditions.

Before marriage, discuss where the family will worship; how children will be baptized or dedicated; what children will be taught about Communion; how each person understands church authority and marital roles; and which beliefs are convictions rather than preferences.

These questions should not be postponed with the assumption that one spouse will eventually change convictions. Love does not automatically resolve theological disagreement.

41. WHAT IF SPOUSES CHANGE THEIR THEOLOGICAL BELIEFS AFTER MARRIAGE?

People grow and sometimes change convictions about denominations, baptism, worship style, spiritual gifts, marital roles, or other theological positions. Marriage does not give one spouse ownership of the other's conscience.

Neither should theological change be used casually to destabilize the family. Healthy responses include careful Scripture study, patient conversation, humility, wise pastoral counsel, and distinguishing central Gospel truths from secondary disagreements. Christian unity does not require agreement about every theological question.

FAMILY PLANNING

42. WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH ABOUT HAVING CHILDREN?

Scripture consistently presents children as blessings (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 127:3-5; Psalm 128). The command to be fruitful and multiply appears within humanity's creation commission. Christians differ regarding exactly how that command applies to every individual married couple today.

Scripture does not say every married couple must have the largest number of children biologically possible, nor that couples without children have failed spiritually. Children should be received as gifts, but biblical fruitfulness should not be reduced to a numerical competition.

43. DOES THE BIBLE FORBID CONTRACEPTION?

Scripture does not explicitly address most modern contraceptive methods. Christians therefore reason from broader biblical principles and reach different conclusions.

Roman Catholic teaching rejects artificial contraception while permitting natural family planning under appropriate circumstances. Orthodox pastoral practice varies, with some authorities permitting certain non-abortifacient methods under pastoral guidance. Many Protestant Christians understand non-abortifacient contraception as potentially permissible when used responsibly within marriage.

What can be said clearly is that Scripture presents children as blessings but does not prescribe the exact number or spacing of children every couple must have. Methods that may act after fertilization raise additional moral questions for Christians who understand human life to deserve protection from fertilization onward. Couples should understand how a method works rather than deciding on assumptions.



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44. CAN FAMILY PLANNING BECOME SELFISH?

Yes, but having many children can also be pursued for unhealthy motives. The heart matters. Ask whether fear or comfort controls the decision; whether children are viewed as inconveniences; whether health concerns are significant; whether existing children can be responsibly cared for; whether one spouse is pressuring the other; and whether financial realities are being considered wisely.

Scripture does not provide a universal family-size formula. Wisdom requires prayer, humility, mutuality, and stewardship.

BROKENNESS, SAFETY, DIVORCE, AND RESTORATION

45. DOES THE BIBLE SUPPORT PATRIARCHAL ABUSE?

No. The Bible was written within societies very different from modern Western culture, and men often possessed substantial social, economic, and legal power. Yet Scripture repeatedly restrains power and demands responsibility toward vulnerable people.

Biblical authority must never become religious cover for domination, humiliation, isolation, financial captivity, violence, sexual coercion, or spiritual intimidation. When Scripture is used to protect abusive power rather than confront sin, Scripture is being misused.

46. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL ABUSE WITHIN MARRIAGE?

Spiritual abuse occurs when spiritual authority, biblical language, religious fear, or claims about God are used to control or silence another person. Examples include: 'God told me you have to do this,' 'If you were a godly wife, you would not question me,' 'Submission means you cannot tell anyone what happens here,' or 'Forgiveness means you must trust me immediately.'

No spouse speaks with God's authority merely because that spouse claims to. God's Word remains authoritative - not a spouse's personal declaration.

47. DOES GOD HATE DIVORCE?

Malachi 2 is often summarized with the phrase 'God hates divorce.' Translation details vary, but the passage unmistakably condemns marital treachery and covenant unfaithfulness.

The emphasis matters. God does not hate divorced people. He opposes betrayal, injustice, and covenant-breaking. Jesus likewise treats divorce seriously because marriage matters. Both truths must remain: God's design is covenant faithfulness, and God's grace reaches people whose marriages have broken.

48. WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT DIVORCE?

Read Matthew 19:3-9. The Pharisees ask Jesus about divorce. Jesus first returns to creation - Genesis 1, Genesis 2, male and female, one flesh, God joining them together.

Jesus explains that Moses permitted divorce because of hardness of heart, but divorce was not the original creation ideal. Matthew includes an exception involving sexual immorality. Also read Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18. Jesus strongly protects marriage from casual disposal.

49. WHAT BIBLICAL GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE DO CHRISTIANS GENERALLY RECOGNIZE?

Two circumstances receive the clearest explicit New Testament attention: sexual immorality in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, and abandonment by an unbelieving spouse in 1 Corinthians 7:15.

Christians disagree about how other severe covenant violations should be understood. That disagreement becomes especially important in cases of abuse.

50. WHAT ABOUT ABUSE AND DIVORCE?

Scripture never contains the exact modern sentence, 'Domestic abuse is an explicit third exception permitting divorce.' That should be acknowledged. Christians therefore reach different conclusions.

Some understand the explicit exceptions narrowly and support separation for safety without necessarily concluding that divorce is biblically authorized. Others reason that severe, persistent abuse constitutes covenant abandonment in substance even when the abusive spouse remains physically present. That second conclusion is a **theological inference**, not an explicit biblical statement.

What should not be disputed is this: **A person does not need to remain physically accessible to an abuser to prove faithfulness to God.** Immediate separation may be necessary. Children may need protection. Civil authorities, church discipline, and professional assistance may be appropriate.

Worked example - Conflict or abuse?



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A husband and wife have a heated argument about money. Both raise their voices. Later, both acknowledge their behavior, apologize, and work toward a healthier way of discussing finances. That is unhealthy conflict requiring repentance and change. Now consider a spouse who controls all access to money, threatens the other spouse for questioning purchases, blocks the doorway when the spouse tries to leave, monitors communications, threatens consequences for speaking with family or church leaders, and later says, 'You made me act this way because you will not submit.' That is not simply a couple needing better communication. It reflects intimidation, coercive control, and spiritual manipulation. Safety comes first. One isolated ugly argument does not automatically establish an abusive pattern, but a person also does not need to wait for repeated physical violence before taking credible threats or coercive behavior seriously.

Pastoral safeguard - Abuse

If a spouse is experiencing physical violence, sexual assault, credible threats, stalking, coercive control, serious intimidation, or danger to children, the first question should not be, 'How can this person submit better?' The immediate concern is safety. Forgiveness does not require immediate reconciliation. Reconciliation does not require immediate restoration of trust. Where serious abuse has occurred, claimed repentance should be evaluated through sustained change, accountability, truthfulness, and appropriate consequences.

51. CAN A DIVORCED CHRISTIAN REMARRY?

Christians disagree about some circumstances involving remarriage. Some understand Scripture to permit remarriage when divorce occurred on biblically recognized grounds; others take a more restrictive position.

Relevant passages include Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, 39. These passages deserve careful study. One truth should remain unmistakable: divorce is not an unforgivable sin. Neither is sexual sin beyond Christ's grace (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

52. SHOULD SOMEONE DIVORCE A CURRENT SPOUSE BECAUSE THE MARRIAGE BEGAN SINFULLY?

Generally, Scripture gives no reason to create another broken covenant merely to attempt to undo the past. Someone may recognize years later that a previous divorce or remarriage involved sin.

The appropriate response is repentance - not necessarily destroying the present marriage. God's grace meets people in the lives they actually have today. The question becomes: How can Christ be faithfully followed from here?

53. WHAT IF A SPOUSE COMMITS ADULTERY?

Adultery is a serious covenant betrayal. It can devastate trust, emotional security, sexual intimacy, and family stability. Divorce is not necessarily required after adultery; some marriages experience genuine repentance, extensive rebuilding, and eventual reconciliation, while others do not.

Forgiveness may begin before trust is restored. Trust should not be demanded. The unfaithful spouse should expect transparency and accountability. Healing usually takes time, and the betrayed spouse should not be rushed merely because another person is uncomfortable with the consequences of betrayal.

54. WHAT DOES GENUINE MARITAL REPENTANCE LOOK LIKE?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. Repentance involves more than regret. A spouse may be sorry because they were caught, consequences arrived, reputation suffered, or the other spouse may leave. That is not necessarily repentance.

Genuine repentance increasingly produces truthful confession, ownership without blame-shifting, willingness to accept consequences, changed behavior, accountability, patience, restitution where possible, and fruit consistent with repentance.

Worked example - Apology or repentance?

Not yet taking responsibility: 'I'm sorry I lied, but you were constantly questioning me and I felt trapped.' Taking responsibility: 'I lied to you. That was wrong. You did not cause me to lie. I understand why you do not trust me right now, and I am willing to be transparent while trust is rebuilt.' Repentance does not demand that the injured spouse make consequences disappear.

55. WHAT IF ONLY ONE SPOUSE WANTS TO SAVE THE MARRIAGE?

One person can become healthier, obey Christ, repent, forgive, seek counseling, and establish appropriate boundaries. One person cannot single-handedly create mutual reconciliation.

Romans 12:18 says, 'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.' A spouse cannot force another person to tell the truth, end an affair, stop drinking, stop gambling, stop abusing, seek treatment, follow Christ, or rebuild honestly.

56. WHAT ABOUT ADDICTION?

Addiction can severely affect marriage: alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, compulsive spending, or other destructive behaviors. Compassion and accountability must remain together.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

A spouse can support recovery but cannot perform recovery for another person. Depending on severity, responses may include pastoral support, professional counseling, medical treatment, recovery programs, financial safeguards, accountability, separation, or emergency intervention. Prayer and appropriate treatment are not enemies.

57. WHAT ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS OR DISABILITY?

Illness and disability can place enormous strain on marriage and may involve seasons of extraordinary caregiving. Simplistic spiritual explanations should be avoided.

Mental illness should not automatically be described as weak faith, demonic activity, failure to pray enough, or deliberate selfishness. Likewise, a diagnosis does not automatically excuse harmful behavior. Compassion, truth, medical care, counseling, pastoral care, practical support, and appropriate boundaries can work together.

58. HOW SHOULD MARRIED COUPLES HANDLE INFERTILITY?

Infertility can create grief outsiders underestimate. It may affect identity, intimacy, finances, hope, friendships, holidays, church experiences, and the way spouses grieve. A husband and wife may grieve differently; neither person's grief should be ranked.

Christian community should avoid careless promises such as, 'If you trust God, He will give you a baby.' Scripture never guarantees that outcome. Couples may prayerfully consider medical treatment, adoption, fostering, or life without children. Infertility never means God has rejected a marriage.

59. WHAT ABOUT PREGNANCY LOSS?

Pregnancy loss can bring profound grief to both spouses. Fathers are sometimes expected to remain strong while privately grieving, and mothers may feel others expect them to move on.

Avoid minimizing phrases such as 'Everything happens for a reason,' 'At least you can try again,' or 'You were not very far along.' Christian hope does not require minimizing sorrow. Romans 12:15 says to mourn with those who mourn.

60. WHAT ABOUT BLENDED FAMILIES?

Modern blended families may involve former spouses, stepchildren, biological children, custody schedules, financial obligations, grandparents, loyalty conflicts, and unresolved grief.

A new marriage does not erase previous responsibilities. Children should not be forced to pretend complicated emotions do not exist. Stepparents may need patience while trust develops, and former spouses should not be unnecessarily dishonored in front of children.

61. WHAT DOES LEAVE AND JOIN MEAN FOR EXTENDED FAMILY?

Genesis 2:24 teaches that marriage creates a new primary human family relationship. Husband and wife do not stop honoring parents, but their marriage becomes a new covenant unit.

Problems arise when relatives control finances, parenting, holidays, major decisions, housing, conflict, or private marital information. Honoring parents does not mean allowing parents to govern an adult child's marriage.

62. WHAT ABOUT HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES?

Scripture does not provide a universal chart assigning modern household tasks by sex. It does not say husbands must handle finances, wives must cook, husbands must mow lawns, or wives must do laundry.

Proverbs 31 depicts a capable wife engaged in household, economic, and commercial activity, and Jesus dignifies humble service. Couples may divide responsibilities according to abilities, schedules, health, season of life, preference, efficiency, and mutual agreement. The better question is often: How can love serve here?

63. DOES BIBLICAL MARRIAGE REQUIRE TRADITIONAL PERSONALITIES?

No. Scripture does not require every husband or wife to have the same personality. A wife may be decisive, analytical, entrepreneurial, outspoken, or gifted in leadership. A husband may be gentle, quiet, artistic, emotionally expressive, or nurturing.

Biblical masculinity and femininity should not be reduced to cultural stereotypes. The fruit of the Spirit belongs to every Christian (Galatians 5:22-23).

64. WHAT ABOUT CAREERS AND CALLINGS?

Marriage often requires decisions involving careers, education, relocation, caregiving, children, finances, ministry, and retirement. Scripture does not establish a universal rule that only one spouse's vocation matters.

Christian marriage should seek stewardship of both people's gifts and responsibilities. Sometimes one spouse sacrifices for the other's opportunity; in another season, the sacrifice may reverse. The goal is not maintaining a scorecard but asking what faithfulness requires from this household in this season.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

65. SHOULD A SPOUSE BE THE OTHER PERSON'S BEST FRIEND?

Deep friendship within marriage is a wonderful gift, but Scripture does not command that a spouse satisfy every relational need. Healthy marriages can include meaningful friendships, church relationships, family relationships, mentors, and community.

Expecting one human being to provide every form of companionship can place impossible pressure on marriage. Marriage creates unique intimacy; it does not eliminate the Christian need for community.

66. WHAT SHOULD PRIVACY LOOK LIKE IN MARRIAGE?

Healthy privacy and destructive secrecy are not identical. A spouse may appropriately have private prayer, personal thoughts, confidential information entrusted by others, friendships, and reasonable personal space.

Destructive secrecy hides information that materially affects the covenant relationship: affairs, pornography, major debt, hidden spending, gambling, substance abuse, or deceptive relationships. A useful question is: Would this need to be hidden if it were honorable?

67. WHAT ABOUT FRIENDSHIPS WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE MARRIAGE?

Scripture does not prohibit ordinary friendships between men and women. The Church itself is a spiritual family. But wisdom recognizes vulnerability.

Warning signs may include hiding conversations, deleting messages, sharing intimate marital complaints primarily with a potential romantic alternative, emotional dependence, flirtation, or secrecy. Physical adultery is not the only way marital intimacy can be displaced. Emotional fidelity matters too.

68. WHAT ABOUT JEALOUSY?

Some jealousy reflects appropriate concern for covenant exclusivity, but jealousy can become sinful suspicion, possessiveness, surveillance, accusation, or control.

Healthy trust grows through honesty, consistent behavior, transparency, faithfulness, and respect. Where betrayal has occurred, rebuilding trust may legitimately require greater transparency, but surveillance cannot substitute for repentance.

69. HOW IMPORTANT ARE BOUNDARIES?

Healthy boundaries clarify responsibility. A spouse may say, 'I will not remain in the room while you scream at me,' 'I will not lie to protect this addiction,' 'I will not give unrestricted access to money while gambling continues,' or 'I will not allow our children to be endangered.'

A boundary primarily defines what the person setting it will do. It is different from attempting to control another adult. Boundaries can protect the possibility of genuine relationship by refusing to cooperate with destructive behavior.

70. SHOULD CHRISTIANS SEEK MARRIAGE COUNSELING?

They may. Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; and 24:6 value wise counsel. Seeking help does not mean a marriage has failed.

Depending on the issue, help may include a mature pastor, Christian mentors, a licensed marriage therapist, addiction treatment, trauma-informed counseling, financial counseling, or medical professionals. Not every counselor is qualified for every problem. In abuse situations, ordinary couples counseling may be inappropriate or unsafe until abusive behavior has been separately addressed.

71. WHAT IF A SPOUSE REFUSES COUNSELING?

The willing spouse can still seek help individually. Counseling can help someone understand patterns, respond faithfully, establish boundaries, evaluate safety, process grief, and determine what responsibilities actually belong to them.

A spouse should not conclude, 'Nothing can change unless my spouse agrees to come.' One person can still grow in wisdom and faithfulness.

72. HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS HANDLE ANGER?

Read Ephesians 4:26-27. Anger can alert someone that something matters, but anger easily becomes sinful. Scripture warns against uncontrolled rage, harsh speech, bitterness, and revenge (Proverbs 14:29; 15:1; 29:11; James 1:19-20).

A spouse should never normalize punching walls, destroying property, blocking doorways, threatening violence, throwing objects, or intimidating behavior as merely 'having a temper.' Fear-based control is not ordinary marital conflict.

73. WHAT IF THE SAME ARGUMENT KEEPS HAPPENING?

Recurring conflict often means the visible issue is not the entire issue. The argument may appear to concern dishes, money, sex, children, in-laws, schedules, or phones, while deeper questions may be: Do I matter? Can I trust you? Do you hear me? Am I carrying this alone? Do you respect me?

Wise couples learn to identify the issue beneath the issue. James 4:1-3 also invites Christians to examine their own desires and motives.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

74. WHAT DOES A HEALTHY APOLOGY LOOK LIKE?

A meaningful apology takes responsibility. Instead of 'I'm sorry you were offended,' try, 'What I said was cruel. It was wrong. Will you forgive me?' Instead of 'I'm sorry, but you made me angry,' try, 'I was angry, but my response was still my responsibility.'

Biblical confession names sin truthfully. Read 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16.

75. SHOULD CHRISTIANS STAY MARRIED FOR THE CHILDREN?

Children generally benefit from stable, loving family relationships, and parents should not treat divorce casually. But the phrase can become dangerous when used without qualification.

Children are also harmed by living amid violence, terror, severe abuse, addiction, coercive control, or relentless destructive conflict. The question should not be reduced to whether the parents live in the same house; the spiritual, physical, and emotional environment matters.

76. WHAT ABOUT SEXUAL SIN BEFORE MARRIAGE?

The Gospel speaks to the past. Some Christians enter marriage carrying regret involving premarital sex, pornography, adultery, or other sexual sin. Others enter marriage carrying wounds from sins committed against them. Those categories must never be confused.

Victims are not morally guilty for being abused. For personal sin, Christ offers genuine forgiveness (Psalm 51; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1:9). A person's sexual history does not place that person beyond redemption.

77. WHAT IF SOMEONE WAS SEXUALLY ABUSED BEFORE MARRIAGE?

Trauma can affect marital intimacy long after abuse ends. A survivor may experience fear, flashbacks, difficulty trusting, dissociation, shame, physical reactions, or difficulty with sexual intimacy.

These responses should not automatically be interpreted as rejection of the spouse. A loving spouse should never use biblical teaching about marital intimacy to pressure a survivor through trauma. Professional trauma-informed care may be helpful. The abuse was the abuser's sin.

A DIFFICULT CONTEMPORARY QUESTION

78. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

This question requires both clarity and careful listening. The historic Christian understanding of marriage has been a male-female union grounded in God's creation of humanity as male and female and the one-flesh union of Genesis 2. Jesus appeals to this creation pattern in Matthew 19:4-6.

Relevant passages in the broader biblical sexual ethic include Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; and 1 Timothy 1:8-11. For most of Christian history, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians have understood these texts to exclude same-sex sexual relationships from biblical marriage.

In recent decades, some Christians have proposed affirming interpretations. Those arguments should be represented fairly before evaluating them.

79. HOW DO AFFIRMING CHRISTIANS INTERPRET THESE PASSAGES DIFFERENTLY?

There is no single affirming argument, but several common arguments appear.

ARGUMENT 1 - Biblical authors were addressing different kinds of same-sex relationships. Some affirming Christians argue that biblical prohibitions primarily address exploitation, prostitution, pederasty, domination, idolatrous sexual practices, or excessive lust rather than a modern loving, exclusive, lifelong covenant.

ARGUMENT 2 - Romans 1 is primarily about idolatry. Romans 1 connects sexual disorder with humanity exchanging worship of the Creator for created things. Some affirming interpreters therefore argue that Paul's concern is idolatrous excess rather than every same-sex relationship.

ARGUMENT 3 - The terms in 1 Corinthians 6 are disputed. The Greek terms *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* have generated scholarly discussion. Affirming interpreters argue that translating them as a comprehensive modern category may import concepts of sexual orientation that did not exist in precisely the same form in the ancient world.

ARGUMENT 4 - Covenant fidelity should matter. Some affirming Christians argue that the moral problem Scripture condemns is fundamentally lust, exploitation, promiscuity, or unfaithfulness, not the sex of the partners, and therefore propose that faithful same-sex marriages can embody covenant virtues such as loyalty, sacrifice, and permanence.

These arguments deserve serious engagement rather than caricature.

80. WHY DOES THIS STUDY STILL CONCLUDE THAT BIBLICAL MARRIAGE IS MALE AND FEMALE?

The conclusion does not rest on one disputed Greek word or one isolated prohibition. It arises from the cumulative biblical pattern.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

WHAT THE TEXT EXPLICITLY SHOWS: Genesis 1:27 identifies humanity as male and female. Genesis 2:24 presents the foundational one-flesh marriage as a man leaving his parents and being joined to his wife. Jesus explicitly joins those creation texts when answering a question about marriage in Matthew 19:4-6. Romans 1:26-27 explicitly describes same-sex sexual relations negatively within Paul's argument concerning humanity's rejection of God. No biblical passage positively presents a same-sex sexual union as marriage or as morally approved sexual intimacy.

WHAT THIS STUDY CONCLUDES FROM THOSE TEXTS: Scripture does not contain a standalone sentence using every modern category, such as 'every marriage must consist of one biological male and one biological female.' Rather, the historic Christian conclusion is drawn from the cumulative pattern of creation, Jesus' teaching, and the Bible's sexual ethic. This study concludes that this cumulative reading better accounts for the biblical evidence than interpretations limiting the relevant texts exclusively to exploitation, idolatry, pederasty, or abusive relationships.

The fact that the ancient world did not possess the modern psychological category of sexual orientation does not by itself establish that the biblical writers were unaware of consensual or enduring same-sex relationships. More importantly, the biblical argument does not depend on Paul possessing a modern theory of orientation; the relevant question is what Scripture says about sexual behavior and marriage.

That conclusion should still be expressed with humility and compassion. Christians should never respond to people who disagree with cruelty, mockery, hatred, humiliation, or self-righteousness. Every person bears God's image, every person needs grace, and every Christian is called to submit sexual desires to Christ. Biblical sexual ethics place limits on everyone.

81. IS CHRISTIAN SEXUAL ETHICS UNFAIR TO SINGLE PEOPLE?

Christian sexual ethics can be costly. Scripture reserves sexual union for marriage while simultaneously teaching that marriage is not promised to every believer. Christian discipleship may therefore involve lifelong celibacy for some people.

Married Christians should never treat this cost casually. Christian community should become genuine family rather than telling unmarried believers simply to endure loneliness alone. The Church must resist implying, 'Once you get married, your real life will begin.' Life with Christ has already begun.

MARRIAGE AND THE BIBLICAL STORY

82. WHY DOES SCRIPTURE SOMETIMES USE MARRIAGE TO DESCRIBE GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE?

The Old Testament sometimes portrays God's covenant relationship with Israel using marital imagery (Isaiah 54:5-8; Jeremiah 2-3; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 1-3). These passages emphasize God's covenant faithfulness and Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness.

Some prophetic passages contain disturbing imagery and require careful contextual interpretation. Their purpose is not to provide husbands with a model for controlling wives. The metaphor concerns God's covenant relationship with His people.

83. HOW DOES JESUS CHANGE THE WAY CHRISTIANS UNDERSTAND MARRIAGE?

Jesus reaffirms the Genesis creation pattern, strengthens the seriousness of marital faithfulness, confronts lust and adultery at the heart level, and protects marriage from casual disposal.

But Jesus also places marriage beneath the Kingdom of God. Read Matthew 22:23-33. Marriage does not continue in the resurrection in the same earthly form. Even the best Christian marriage is temporary. Earthly marriage is a sign; Christ is the destination.

84. HOW DOES MARRIAGE POINT TO JESUS?

Read Ephesians 5:25-33. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 and then says this mystery refers to Christ and the Church. Jesus is the faithful Bridegroom; the Church is His Bride. Christ loves His people sacrificially, gives Himself for them, cleanses and sanctifies them, and remains faithful.

Human marriage can only imperfectly reflect this reality. The Gospel is not 'Build a perfect marriage so God will accept you.' The Gospel is: **Christ loved His people and gave Himself for them.**

Memory Anchor

Marriage does not save people. Marriage points to the Savior.

85. WHAT IS THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB?

Read Revelation 19:6-9. Near the end of Scripture, marriage imagery appears again. The biblical story begins with marriage in a garden and moves through covenant, failure, redemption, and Christ toward the wedding celebration of the Lamb.

The Church's ultimate hope is not eternal earthly marriage but eternal union with Christ in God's renewed creation. Marriage is temporary precisely because it points toward something eternal.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

86. WILL SPOUSES STILL KNOW EACH OTHER IN THE RESURRECTION?

Scripture does not teach that human identity or recognition disappears, but Jesus explicitly teaches that people will not marry in the resurrection as they do in the present age (Matthew 22:30).

Christians therefore should not promise that earthly marriages continue eternally in precisely their current covenant form. Something greater awaits: redeemed relationships in a world without sin, jealousy, death, betrayal, loneliness, or loss.

87. WHAT IF A CHRISTIAN'S MARRIAGE DOES NOT LOOK LIKE THE IDEAL?

No marriage does perfectly. Every husband sins. Every wife sins. Every marriage requires grace. Some marriages contain ordinary imperfections; others contain profound wounds. Some are restored; some end; some believers become widowed; some carry regret; some were sinned against terribly.

The Gospel does not begin by asking whether someone constructed a flawless marital history. It begins with Jesus. Read Romans 8:1. Grace does not erase consequences or redefine sin, but failure does not have to become identity. Christ remains able to redeem people even when every earthly relationship has not been repaired.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE AT A GLANCE

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE	WHAT IT MEANS
Creation	Marriage originates in God's creation design
Image of God	Husband and wife possess equal human dignity
Covenant	Marriage involves pledged faithfulness
One flesh	Marriage creates unique covenantal and bodily union
Fidelity	Sexual exclusivity belongs within marriage
Companionship	Spouses share life as covenant partners
Service	Christian love seeks the other's good
Truth	Love does not require concealing sin
Forgiveness	Christians release vengeance without calling evil good
Repentance	Genuine change involves more than apology
Safety	Biblical teaching never requires submitting to abuse
Permanence	Lifelong faithfulness is God's creation intention
Grace	Divorce and sexual failure are not beyond Christ's redemption
Children	Children are blessings, not measures of marital worth
Singleness	Marriage is good but not spiritually superior
Christ	Marriage ultimately points beyond itself to Jesus and His Church

WHAT BIBLICAL MARRIAGE IS NOT

Biblical marriage is **not** a license for one spouse to dominate the other; a guarantee of happiness; proof of spiritual maturity; salvation; permission for sexual coercion or concealed abuse; immunity from conflict; an excuse for controlling behavior; a requirement that spouses fit cultural personality stereotypes; a promise of children; or the ultimate relationship that continues unchanged forever.

Biblical marriage **is** God's good creation gift; a covenant calling for faithfulness; a one-flesh union; a place for companionship and intimacy; a relationship requiring sacrifice and grace; a setting where holiness can grow; and a temporary sign pointing toward Christ's eternal covenant love.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING SPECIFIC

God's original design for marriage

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25

Choosing a spouse wisely

Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 7:16-20; Galatians 5:22-23

Jesus' teaching about marriage

Matthew 19:3-9

Husbands and wives

Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7

Sexual intimacy

Proverbs 5:15-19; Song of Songs; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

Conflict and communication

Proverbs 15:1; Ephesians 4:25-32; James 1:19-20

Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:31-32

An unbelieving spouse

1 Corinthians 7:12-16; 1 Peter 3:1-2

Divorce

Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16

Singleness

Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:7-8, 25-35

Christ and the Church

Ephesians 5:25-33

Marriage and eternity

Matthew 22:23-33; Revelation 19:6-9



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Is Christ carrying the weight in this marriage that only Christ can carry?
2. Does the way conflict is handled reflect the character of Jesus?
3. Are truth and grace both present?
4. Is either spouse using Scripture to control the other?
5. Are there secrets that materially affect trust?
6. Is forgiveness being confused with avoidance or enabling?
7. Is repentance demonstrated through changed behavior?
8. Does each spouse treat the other as an image-bearer with genuine dignity?
9. Is sexual intimacy characterized by mutual care rather than entitlement?
10. Are financial decisions handled honestly?
11. Are extended-family relationships appropriately ordered around the marriage covenant?
12. Does the marriage make room for both spouses to grow as disciples of Jesus?
13. Is help needed for a problem that cannot wisely be handled alone?
14. If the marriage is healthy, how might it become a place of hospitality, discipleship, generosity, and service?
15. Does the marriage point beyond itself toward Christ?

FOR COUPLES TO DISCUSS

Choose one or two questions at a time rather than attempting them all in one conversation.

- What helps you feel loved by me?
- What makes you feel unheard?
- Where are we strongest as a couple?
- Where have we become careless?
- Is there anything you are afraid to discuss with me? Why?
- Where do you need more help from me?
- Is there something for which I need to ask forgiveness?
- What pressure are you carrying that I may not fully understand?
- How can we better steward our finances?
- How can we protect our marriage from inappropriate emotional or sexual relationships?
- How can we encourage one another spiritually without controlling one another?
- What would serving Christ together look like in this season?

A SIMPLE BIBLICAL PATTERN FOR MARITAL CONFLICT

1. SLOW DOWN

Read James 1:19-20. Do not allow anger to dictate the next sentence.

2. TELL THE TRUTH

Read Ephesians 4:25. Do not hide, exaggerate, manipulate, or distort.

3. LISTEN

Seek to understand before preparing a defense.

4. IDENTIFY PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Read Matthew 7:3-5. Do not make repentance dependent upon the other person's repentance.

5. REFUSE CONTEMPT

The other person remains an image-bearer during disagreement.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

6. CONFESS SPECIFICALLY

Name what was wrong without excuses.

7. FORGIVE BIBLICALLY

Release vengeance while recognizing that damaged trust may require rebuilding.

8. SEEK WISDOM WHEN STUCK

Read Proverbs 15:22. Some conflicts need outside help.

9. PRIORITIZE SAFETY WHEN NECESSARY

Ordinary disagreement and abuse are not the same thing. Danger requires a different response.

10. RETURN TO CHRIST

Neither spouse will do marriage perfectly. Grace remains necessary every day.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

REVIEW - CAN YOU REMEMBER THE BIG IDEAS?

1. Where does marriage begin in Scripture?

Genesis 1-2, within God's creation design.

2. What three movements appear in Genesis 2:24?

Leave -> Join -> One flesh.

3. Are men and women equally created in God's image?

Yes.

4. What is a covenant?

A serious, pledged relationship of faithfulness.

5. Is marriage merely a contract?

No. Scripture also describes marriage covenantally.

6. Does the Bible prescribe one modern Christian dating system?

No. It provides principles for wisdom, character, holiness, and marriage.

7. Is marriage required for Christian completeness?

No. Scripture honors both marriage and singleness.

8. Does biblical submission require participating in sin or remaining in danger?

No.

9. Does Scripture explicitly say a husband always gets the final vote?

No. That is an inference within some interpretations of headship.

10. What model does Paul give husbands?

Christ's sacrificial love for the Church.

11. Does forgiveness automatically restore trust?

No.

12. Can a spouse seek safety from abuse?

Yes.

13. What circumstances receive the clearest New Testament attention regarding divorce?

Sexual immorality and abandonment by an unbelieving spouse.

14. Is divorce unforgivable?

No.

15. Is marital sex biblically good?

Yes.

16. Does marriage eliminate consent and mutual care?

No.

17. Does infertility make a marriage incomplete?

No.

18. Does Scripture prescribe the exact number or spacing of children every couple must have?

No.

19. Is marriage spiritually superior to singleness?

No.

20. What does Christian marriage ultimately point toward?

Christ and His Church.

KEY TERMS

COVENANT

A serious relationship involving pledged faithfulness and obligation.

ONE FLESH

The unique covenantal and bodily union established in marriage.

HEADSHIP

Biblical language used in passages such as Ephesians 5:23. Christians differ regarding some implications, but Paul's model for husbands is Christ's sacrificial love.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

SUBMISSION

A biblical concept involving appropriate yielding within relationships. It never requires obedience to sin or acceptance of abuse.

REPENTANCE

Turning from sin toward God, involving more than regret and producing changed direction.

FORGIVENESS

Releasing personal vengeance and responding to sin through God's grace. Forgiveness does not require calling evil good or immediately restoring trust.

RECONCILIATION

Restoration of relationship. Unlike forgiveness, full reconciliation generally requires participation from both parties.

SEXUAL FIDELITY

Restricting sexual intimacy to the marriage covenant.

SINGleness

An unmarried state Scripture recognizes as a legitimate and potentially fruitful Christian calling rather than spiritual deficiency.

MEMORY ANCHORS

Memory Anchor

Marriage is sustained by more than feelings because marriage promises more than feelings.

Memory Anchor

Character helps reveal whether covenant faithfulness is likely.

Memory Anchor

Biblical headship can never mean becoming less like Jesus in the name of being more biblical.

Memory Anchor

Forgiveness does not require pretending trust was never broken.

Memory Anchor

A covenant should never be used as a cage for abuse.

Memory Anchor

Marriage does not save people. Marriage points to the Savior.

Memory Anchor

Marriage is good. Christ is greater.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

A GENESIS-TO-REVELATION VIEW OF MARRIAGE

CREATION - GENESIS 1-2

God creates male and female. God establishes the one-flesh marriage pattern. Marriage begins in goodness.



FALL - GENESIS 3

Sin introduces shame, blame, distorted desire, and relational conflict.



OLD TESTAMENT

Marriage continues amid human brokenness. Scripture records faithfulness and betrayal, love and family dysfunction, fertility and infertility. God also uses marital imagery for His covenant relationship with His people.



JESUS

Jesus returns marriage to the Genesis creation pattern, confronts adultery and lust, rejects casual divorce, and teaches that earthly marriage is not ultimate.



THE CHURCH

The apostles teach husbands and wives to live under Christ. Marriage becomes explicitly connected with Christ and His Church.



NEW CREATION

Earthly marriage gives way to the greater reality toward which it pointed. The redeemed celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb.



Storyline Memory Anchor

The Bible begins with a marriage in a garden and moves toward the wedding celebration of the Lamb.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Begin with Scripture itself.

CREATION AND MARRIAGE

Genesis 1-3

WISDOM AND MARITAL LOVE

Proverbs 5; Song of Songs

JESUS AND MARRIAGE

Matthew 5:27-32; Matthew 19:1-12; Matthew 22:23-33

PAUL AND MARRIAGE

1 Corinthians 6-7; Ephesians 5:18-33; Colossians 3:12-19

PETER AND MARRIAGE

1 Peter 3:1-9

CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE

Ephesians 5:25-33; Revelation 19:6-9; Revelation 21:1-4

For historical Christian perspectives, readers may also compare official or representative teachings from Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant traditions while remembering that Christian traditions themselves must remain subordinate to Scripture.

Important resource safeguard

Listing or consulting a resource does not mean 3Nails endorses every theological position, methodology, strategy, publication, or conclusion it produces. Compare sources and continually return to Scripture.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

FINAL SUMMARY

God designed marriage as a good covenant relationship. Genesis presents a man and woman joined together in one flesh. Sin damages that relationship through selfishness, shame, domination, betrayal, conflict, and brokenness. Yet Scripture never abandons God's call to covenant faithfulness.

Husbands and wives are both image-bearers. Both belong first to God. Both are accountable for how they treat one another. Both are called to Christian character. Both need grace. Marriage therefore cannot biblically become an excuse for domination, coercion, violence, sexual entitlement, manipulation, or spiritual abuse.

Where Scripture speaks clearly, Christians should speak clearly. Where Christians reach conclusions through theological inference, those conclusions should be identified as inference. Where faithful Christians disagree, their arguments should be represented honestly. Where Scripture leaves mystery, certainty should not be manufactured.

Marriage matters deeply, but Scripture refuses to make marriage ultimate. Jesus was unmarried. Paul honored singleness. Children are blessings, but childlessness does not make a marriage spiritually defective. The resurrection does not simply perpetuate earthly marriage forever.

Instead, earthly marriage points toward something greater. Christ is the faithful Bridegroom. His people are His Bride. Jesus loves His Church and gave Himself for her. The Bible's marriage story therefore reaches beyond husbands and wives. It reaches the Gospel.

Human marriages will always be imperfect. Christ's covenant faithfulness will not be. And when earthly marriage has fulfilled its temporary purpose, God's people will discover that the greatest love story was never ultimately about finding the perfect husband or wife. It was about the Savior who came for His people, gave Himself for them, redeemed them, and will never leave them.

FINAL MEMORY ANCHOR

God's design for marriage points beyond two imperfect people trying to love each other well to the perfectly faithful Bridegroom who loved His people and gave Himself for them. Marriage is good. Christ is greater.

FINAL SCRIPTURE READING

Before finishing this study, read Genesis 2:18-25. Then read Ephesians 5:25-33. Finally, read Revelation 19:6-9.

A BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM IN CREATION



CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH IN REDEMPTION



THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

The story of biblical marriage ultimately points beyond itself. It points to Jesus.