

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE?

Series Title: What is the Purpose of Marriage?

Topic: The nature and purpose of marriage

Table of Contents:

| | |
|--|-------|
| Message 1: Making One Person Out of Two | p. 1 |
| Message 2: Ruling Over the World for God | p. 5 |
| Message 3: What Is True Love? | p. 8 |
| Message 4: The Marriage Bed | p. 12 |

Introduction:

Marriage is a mysterious and wonderful thing. We all have many questions about it. Where did the idea of marriage come from? Why do people get married? What is the purpose of marriage? Is marriage based on love, or on something else? These are all very good questions. God's book, the Bible, doesn't contain a simple instruction manual about marriage to answer all our questions. But there is good news! The Bible contains stories and truths that help us understand marriage. If we take the different Bible verses about marriage and put them together, we can see what marriage is all about.

That is what we hope to do in this series of messages. We want to turn to the Bible to answer the question "What is marriage all about?"

To do this we need to begin by turning to some of the first and oldest chapters of the Bible. We need to read about how God created the very first man and woman, Adam and Eve.

Message 1: MAKING ONE PERSON OUT OF TWO Genesis 2:15-24, CEV:

The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it...

Explanatory Notes:

Producers: Below is a series of four messages on the meaning of marriage. Use this introduction to begin the first message of the series. The introductions to the other messages will need to remind your audience what the series is about.

Resources for producers:

Five Functions of Marriage:

1. To give us companionship. We were not made to be alone or independent. God made us in such a way that we need other people. A good marriage gives us the help, support and encouragement we need. A husband or wife is a friend who will love us and accompany us through life.
(Message one is about this function of marriage)

2. To have and raise children. A good marriage provides a stable, helpful setting for children. Their parents work together to care for them, instruct them about God and help them face life and its challenges. In this way families obey God's command to fill and rule over the earth (Gen. 1:28).
(Message two is about this function of marriage)

3. To help us grow. Living in intimate union with another person challenges us to be patient and forgiving. Marriage demands that we lovingly work out our conflicts together. Spouses encourage each other

The LORD God said, "It isn't good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him." So the LORD took some soil and made animals and birds. He brought them to the man to see what names he would give each of them. Then the man named the tame animals and the birds and the wild animals. That's how they got their names. None of these was the right kind of partner for the man. So the LORD God made him fall into a deep sleep, and he took out one of the man's ribs. Then after closing the man's side, the LORD made a woman out of the rib.

The LORD God brought her to the man, and the man exclaimed,

*"Here is someone like me!
She is part of my body,
my own flesh and bones.
She came from me, a man.
So I will name her Woman!"*

That's why a man will leave his own father and mother. He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person.

A. It Is Not Good To Be Alone

We see from these words that God created people to be together. We were not made to be alone. He created us so we would form friendships and communities. We need other people in our lives.**

In heaven the unity and intimacy between people will be complete. But until then marriage is the highest expression of commitment and intimacy (closeness) two people can have for each other. It should be stronger than the close relationship we have with our parents, brothers, sisters and closest friends.

It is sad that many people deprive themselves of the joy of companionship. Some prefer to be alone, disconnected from other people. Others move from one passing sexual relationship to another. They never know the greater joy of true intimacy that comes from a lasting commitment like

to acknowledge and overcome their personal shortcomings and sins. Marriage stretches us and requires us to grow in our character and commitment to each other. *(Message three is about this function of marriage)*

4. To give us pleasure.

Marriage is the proper setting for us to enjoy sex. God made us the way we are, including our sexuality. It is good to enjoy sex the way he intended. Sex is the physical expression of the intimate union we share with a husband or wife.

(Message four is about this function of marriage)

5. To give glory to God.

In everything we do we ought to love God more and give him praise and thanks for his wonderful and wise gifts to us. Marriage is one of those gifts. Our commitment to our marriage should be an act of worship that we give to God.

(There is not a separate message for this function of marriage. Since our whole lives are meant to be acts of worship of God, you should try to include this idea in all of your messages)

We should not interpret the words "It isn't good for the man to live alone**" as though God disapproves of singleness. In Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7, Jesus and Paul praise people who remain single to serve him. We will look at this in later messages. But even single people need the support and love of other people. They need the companionship of fellow

marriage.

believers to make them complete and happy.

What does marriage look like? Our verses from Genesis give us two important parts of marriage: it says a man will leave his own father and mother. And it says that when he marries a woman, the two of them become like one person.

B. Leaving Father and Mother

The first act of marriage is leaving our fathers and mothers. This does not mean we reject or hate our fathers and mothers. No, one of God's ten great commandments says we must always honor our fathers and mothers.

When the Bible says we leave our fathers and mothers, it means that our relationship to our spouse must be closer and stronger than our relationship to our parents. We should submit to and love our spouses more than anyone else in the world. And we should obey and love God most of all.

Many parents want to control their sons and daughters. They want to continue guiding their sons and daughters, as they did when they were young. But these parents forget that when their children marry, they start a new home. They are now responsible and adults. The parents should not treat them as children any longer.

Many married children allow their parents to control their marriages. Some of them always side with their parents instead of with their spouse when there is a disagreement. But the Bible says that the first principle step of marriage is to leave the safety and control of our parents and to form a new union together. Husbands and wives should always seek the advice and help of family and friends. But they also need to prevent anything from destroying the oneness they share as husband and wife.

C. Becoming "One Flesh": Two Persons Become One

What is that oneness (unity) like? The Bible describes it like this: the two people become "one flesh." God sees a married couple as though they were one person, not two.

The first woman was taken from the body (flesh) of the first man. And as they came together in marriage they became one again. We see this oneness in the nature of sexual relations. The bodies of a husband and wife come together as one body.

God wants husbands and wives to enjoy that same kind of oneness in every part of their lives. He wants husbands and wives to share their joys and sorrows and fears, their hopes and plans and dreams, their thoughts and feelings and decisions. He wants them to pray together, to plan together, to talk together, to work together and to play together.

If we let them, many outside influences have the ability to destroy our oneness as husbands and wives if we let them. Spouses sometimes become busy with favorite activities and so avoid spending time with their partners. These activities include: _____**

How can you make sure you are spending enough time with your spouse? Here are a few ideas for you:

- **PRAY TOGETHER: Find time each day when you and your spouse can pray together.** This helps you share your joys and concerns with each other and with the Lord.
- **PLAN TOGETHER: Establish a time each week when you get together to discuss plans and problems in your home.** Sometimes you will need to discuss your plans for the future and how you will work together to accomplish those plans. Sometimes you will need to talk together about problems you are having in your relationship.
- **TALK TOGETHER:** Take time to ask each other, "How was your day?" Then listen to each other. It is very easy to be poor listeners! Often we pretend to be listening, but we are busy thinking of how we will respond. It is better if we stop what we are doing, look at our mate, and listen carefully.
- **WORK TOGETHER:** There are many chores and activities around the house that would be finished in less time if two partners worked together on them. Look for ways to help each other with daily tasks, even if it

**Producers: Think of examples that will be meaningful to people in your audience. Here is a small list of possibilities: working too much, spending too much time with friends, reading the newspaper, watching too much TV, playing sports, volunteering at church too much, talking on the telephone, spending time with children. None of these examples are bad activities in themselves. But any or all of them can become a barrier that keeps spouses from spending important time together.

means trying to do something you have never done before.

- **‘PLAY’ TOGETHER:** Take time to have fun together as a husband and wife. Find activities you both enjoy doing together.

Conclusion:

God created us as very special people. He created us with a need to love other people and to be loved by other people. And he established marriage for us to give and receive the love we need. **Something very mysterious and wonderful takes place in marriage:** God expresses his own love to us through the love of our mates. And God uses us to express his love to our mates. And he takes the two of us and makes us one.

Message 2: RULING OVER THE WORLD FOR GOD Genesis 1:26-30, CEV:

God said, “Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them rule the fish, the birds, and all other living creatures.”

So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. God gave them his blessing and said: “Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth. I have provided all kinds of fruit and grain for you to eat. And I have given the green plants as food for everything else that breathes. These will be food for animals, both wild and tame, and for birds.”

In these words we find important truths about men and women.

- God blessed men and women and told them to have children.
- God told men and women to rule over the world (to take responsibility for it) for God and for their own good.

Men and women come together in marriage to help each other fulfill these tasks. One of the reasons men and women marry is to bear and raise children.* And they marry to help each other bring the earth under God's control through them.

A. Having Children (1:28a)

God gave the first man and woman his blessing and told them, "Have a lot of children!" God made marriage as the opportunity and responsibility for having and raising children.

God blessed the first people and told them to care for each other, have children together, and raise them together. He designed marriage as a way for children to grow up in a home filled with love. Having children is a beautiful reason for which God calls people together in marriage. Raising children is a challenging responsibility, but it is also a rewarding blessing from God.

When we depart from God's loving design, we bring more pain and suffering into the world. It is very sad to think about children who have been abandoned by their fathers and mothers. It is sad to think of all the children who do not know the joy of having both a mother and a father in the home to show them love and teach them wisdom. It is sad to think of women who are forced to raise children by themselves because the children's fathers have left them. God did not desire for anyone to suffer in these ways. He blessed us, told us to have children, and told parents to raise them well.

B. Extending God's Rule

There is another blessing we see in these verses: God created people to rule over (take responsibility for) the plants and animals of his world. Just as human rulers appoint other people to rule under them and for them, so God appointed men and women to take control of the world under him and for him. God put the first man and woman in a garden to cultivate it, and he allowed the man to name the animals. He gave them authority over all the earth.

*** Producers: Here are two thoughts** to consider as you prepare your message:

1. Many couples are physically unable to have children. This makes many of them sad. They wish they could have children. Some of them feel guilt, too. They think they are disobeying God's command to have children. **Your message should be sensitive to the feelings of these couples.**

The command God gave Adam and Eve was not a moral law, like the Ten Commandments. No one should feel that they have disobeyed God if they have not had many children. Even though it was given as a command, it was really a blessing. The verse reads, "God blessed them and said...."

God spoke to Adam and Eve like a man who gives an expensive gift to his children talks to them: "Go! Enjoy this gift I am giving you! Let it make you happy and use it well!" God gave Adam and Eve the ability to have children, and he wanted them to enjoy using that ability responsibly.

2. Humankind has already filled the world with people.

Many people are starving and can't feed their children. In addition, many people are spiritually lost because they do not know Jesus.

- It may be that some couples feel they cannot have children because they will not be able to feed them and care for them properly.
- It may be that some couples

But they were not faithful to God. They ruled poorly. They brought the whole world under the destructive power of sin. The Bible says that the world groans in pain as it waits for people to rule it properly again. When Jesus returns, he will rule the world in an orderly and perfect way, and believers will rule with him. At that time God will reveal to the whole world who his children are. He will give them great glory. God's children are all those who have God's Spirit in them and follow the Spirit's leading (Romans 8:14-22).

Until that time, we can do our part to 'take charge of the world' for God in our own small ways:

First, we can submit to God's rule over us. We can each obey his Holy Spirit and worship God as he deserves to be worshiped. The first part of helping God rule the world is to let him rule over our lives.

Second, we can encourage our families to submit to God's rule. We can be an influence and an example to our spouses and children. We can pray for our families. We can show God's love to them through our loving service to them. And we can teach them about God and his love. As our family members discover and believe the good news of Jesus Christ, they too will submit to him as their ruler.

Third, as families and as churches we can dedicate ourselves to telling others about the good news of Jesus and the rule of God. We can be faithful in prayer for others. We can show love and kindness to them. We can tell them what we have discovered about God in the Bible. We can work together to make the world a better place in which to live.

Conclusion:

Do you want to enjoy the blessings God gave to people? Do you want to fulfill the purpose for which God created you? Do you want to help make the world a better place? God invites us all to raise our children to become his followers and servants. God invites us all to begin transforming his world into a better place. This exciting change begins in our lives, extends to our families and churches, and spreads to all the world.

feel called by God to minister to other people's children instead of having children of their own.

- It may be that some couples will feel called by God to evangelism—helping people become children of God—rather than bringing children of their own into the world.

Some of these couples believe that birth control (not abortion) is a proper way of limiting children for these reasons. We should not tell these people they are sinful for choosing not to have children. We should encourage and affirm them in their faithful obedience to the decision God has called them to make.

Message 3: WHAT IS TRUE LOVE?**Ephesians 5:22-33, CEV**

Many people around the world are marrying because they say they are in love. They love a ‘special someone’ they have met, and they want to marry that person. Many, many songs have been written about love!

But not many people understand love in the same way the Bible does. They talk about love as if it were a sudden feeling of attraction and affection toward another person. Christian love is not just a feeling. The Bible tells us that we find out what love is like by seeing how God loved us. Listen to the Apostle Paul’s description of marriage:

*“A **wife** should put her husband first, as she does the Lord. A husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head and the Savior of the church, which is his own body. Wives should always put their husbands first, as the church puts Christ first.*

*A **husband** should love his wife as much as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. He made the church holy by the power of his word, and he made it pure by washing it with water. Christ did this, so that he would have a glorious and holy church, without faults or spots or wrinkles or any other flaws. In the same way, a husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself. A husband who loves his wife shows that he loves himself. None of us hate our own bodies. We provide for them and take good care of them, just as Christ does for the church, because we are each part of his body.*

As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother to get married, and he becomes like one person with his wife.” This is a great mystery, but I understand it to mean Christ and his church. So each husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself, and each wife should respect her husband.”

Ephesians 5:22-33, CEV

These verses tell us three things about the kind of love we need to make marriage work:

1. Marital love is more about giving than receiving.

If love were only a happy feeling we have for someone, then we would only love people who make us happy. If our spouses did not make us happy, we would love them less. But the Bible says love isn't like that. It describes love as commitment, service and sacrifice.

- Paul tells wives to show their love by putting their husbands first. This means that they help their husbands.
- Paul tells husbands to love their wives by treating them as they treat their own bodies. This means they give special attention and care to them. They make sure their wives have everything they need.

Loving our husbands and wives means living for them. It means doing everything for their good. It means sacrificing our desires in order to meet their needs. It means putting their needs before our own.

Do you want to be happy in your marriage? Do you want your spouse to be happy in your marriage? You will arrive at happiness much faster if you are more concerned with giving love than you are with receiving love.

Think about it. Many of us who are married have high expectations of our spouses. We complain when they do not meet our expectations. We think they ought to work harder at making us happy. If both husband and wife think in this selfish way, they will always be demanding more from each other. They will want to receive more and more, but they will not want to give. As they give less and less, they will both be increasingly unhappy.

Now imagine a completely different kind of marriage. Imagine that both husband and wife are not concerned about how much love they receive. Imagine they are more concerned about loving and serving their spouses and making them happy. They each will be happy because they

are giving love to their spouses. They each will be happy because their spouses are loving them back.

Doesn't that sound like a much better marriage? If you are married, ask yourself, "Am I more concerned that my spouse meet my needs and make me happy? Or am I more concerned about meeting my spouse's needs and making him or her happy?"

2. The foundation for love in marriage is Jesus Christ's love for his church.

Love needs to be built on a strong foundation. If our love for our spouses is based only on our feelings we will stop loving when our feelings change. If our love depends on how much love and joy we receive from our spouses, we will stop loving them if they fail to meet our expectations.

We want our love to endure. So we need to build on a strong foundation. The Bible gives us a strong foundation for love in marriage. We love each other because Christ loves us. He has given us an example of love by loving his church. He sacrificed his life on the cross to save believers from their sins. Paul says Jesus washed the church and made it pure, spotless and wrinkle-free. Let's listen to his words again:

Wives should always put their husbands first, as the church puts Christ first. A husband should love his wife as much as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. He made the church holy by the power of his word, and he made it pure by washing it with water. Christ did this, so that he would have a glorious and holy church, without faults or spots or wrinkles or any other flaws.

Ephesians 5:24-27, CEV

If we are not sure what kind of attitude we should have for our spouses, we only need to look to the example of Jesus. Jesus willingly left heaven and became a human person for our sake. He taught and healed and served others. He washed his followers' feet as a symbol of his humble, loving service for them. He suffered and died on the cross

to pay for our sins. He sent his Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us. He continues to serve us by praying for us to his Father in heaven. One Bible verse sums up Jesus' love for us: "*We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That's why we must give our lives for each other.*"

1 John 3:16, CEV

A Christian marriage is one in which both husband and wife love and serve each other as Christ loved believers.

3. Married love should be mutual — both partners need to serve each other. But we should choose to love our partners even if they do not choose to love us.

Marriage only works well if both partners have the same commitment to love each other. Paul did not tell only the women to love, or only the men to love. He told them both to love and serve each other. A marriage only works right if both partners work hard to *make* it work.

But that doesn't mean you should wait for your spouse to love you first. Begin with our own attitudes. Commit yourself to loving and serving your spouse now, whether he or she shows love to you or not. Let your love be like Jesus' love — unconditional. Love without looking for what you might get in return.

You will be surprised by the result and the effect this kind of love has on your spouse! Many Christian husbands and wives have been discovered the power of love in their marriages. They loved their unloving spouses unconditionally, day after day. And gradually their spouses saw how much they loved them. And they began to love them in return. They won the hearts of their spouses through the power of their love.

Conclusion:

If you are married, will you pray with me right now for your marriage? For your husband or wife? Will you pray to become a better husband or wife and to love your spouse with the kind of love that Jesus showed us?

(Producer: end by leading your audience in an appropriate

prayer)

Message 4: THE MARRIAGE BED

1 Corinthians 7:1-9, CEV:

Now I will answer the questions that you asked in your letter. You asked, "Is it best for people not to marry?" Well, having your own husband or wife should keep you from doing something immoral. Husbands and wives should be fair with each other about having sex. A wife belongs to her husband instead of to herself, and a husband belongs to his wife instead of to himself. So don't refuse sex to each other, unless you agree not to have sex for a little while, in order to spend time in prayer. Then Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. In my opinion that is what should be done, though I don't know of anything the Lord said about this matter. I wish that all of you were like me, but God has given different gifts to each of us.

Here is my advice for people who have never been married and for widows. You should stay single, just as I am. But if you don't have enough self-control, then go ahead and get married. After all, it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

A. Don't Refuse Sex to Each Other (Verse 5)

It is common to hear Christian ministers preach about the dangers of sexual sins. We frequently hear messages about the Bible's commandments and warnings about sexual sins. For this reason many people think the Bible treats sex as something bad or unclean. They are surprised to hear the Apostle Paul *command* married people to have sex! He tells husbands not to refuse sexual intercourse to their wives, nor wives to their husbands.

The truth is, God created the first man and woman with the ability and desire to have sex. He told them to have children. Then he declared them "very good." (Genesis

1:31). Sex is a wonderful part of the way God created us. There is nothing bad about it. Sex is a blessing from God that he expects us to enjoy. He expects us to praise and thank him for the pleasure of sex in the same way we praise and thank him for the food we eat and everything else we enjoy in life.

So when we ask what marriage is for, one of the answers is that marriage is for enjoying the blessing of sex. We should not withhold that blessing from our spouses. We should enjoy each other and express our love for each other in this wonderful way.

B. Don't Burn With Passion (Verse 9)

If sex is a blessing from God, why does the Bible talk so much about sexual sins? The answer is that people often take this great blessing from God and misuse it.

God created sex to be enjoyed within marriage. He meant it to be an expression of the love and closeness and commitment that two married people share together. But many people do not want love, closeness and commitment. They only want the physical excitement of sexual intercourse. So they seek sex outside the marriage commitment that God established. Adultery, fornication, homosexual relations, prostitution, and fantasizing about sex* are all common ways in which people seek the physical joy of sex outside the love commitment of marriage.

The pleasure of sex is very powerful, so the temptation to misuse sex is also very strong. For some people that temptation is overwhelming. That is why Paul said it is better to marry than to "burn with desire." The problem is not with our desires. Our desire to have sex is part of the way God made us. The problem comes when we seek to fulfill that desire in inappropriate ways.

We need to do everything that is right and flee from sin. If we are unmarried and we find that our desire to have sex is too strong for us to control, we should seek to marry. By marrying we can fulfill that natural, healthy desire for sex

***Adultery:** having sex with another person's spouse.

Fornication: having sex with an unmarried person.

Homosexual relations: having sex with someone of the same gender (men with men, women with women)

Prostitution: Paying someone or being paid by someone to have sex.

Fantasizing about sex: daydreaming about having sex, usually accompanied by masturbation.

as an expression of true love.

Conclusion:

Sex is like a fire. Fire has great power. The power of fire can be destructive. It can destroy fields and forests, and it can burn us if we touch it. But fire can be used for great good, if we control it. For example, people control fire in order to cook food, warm homes that are found in cold places, and light homes at night with candles. In the same way, sex is a powerful, destructive force when we don't control it. But when we control it and use it the way God intended, it will give us great joy and express the deep love which believing husbands and wives share.