

A Godly Marriage

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Marriage is established by God and needs to be honored by mankind.2. Marriage is a lifelong covenant.3. God wants our marriage to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God has demonstrated the love we should have for our spouse in His self-sacrificial love for us.2. God does not want us to separate what He has joined together.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prepare for a lifelong commitment by keeping God at our center, strengthening our prayer life, and becoming a godly Christian.2. Make a pledge to keep ourselves pure for our future marriage.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. The Origin of Marriage
- B. What God Has Joined Together
- C. Roles and Responsibilities in a Godly Marriage

Life Application: Preparing Ourselves for a Lifelong Commitment

- 1. Before You Say “I Do”
- 2. Becoming a Godly Christian
- 3. Activity: Keeping Our Purity

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Marriage may be far in the future for us, but we can and should start preparing ourselves today by strengthening our relationship with God and developing ourselves into godly Christians.

Events and Spiritual Teachings

(Teachers: This lesson will likely need extra preparation due to its length, density, and content. If you are limited on time or if students ask a lot of questions, you may need to skip or abbreviate some sections.)

Introduction

In today's day and age, the lines between dating and marriage have blurred to the point of invisibility, and most couples prefer to live together like a married couple without actually "tying the knot." With the world's casual and ever-changing standards, it is important that we as God's children fully understand His standards and intentions for marriage, and how He wants us to approach it.

A. The Origin of Marriage

In 1 Corinthians 11:9, Paul says, "Nor was man created for woman, but woman for the man." This tells us that Adam was incomplete without a helper, so God formed Eve from one of his ribs. Our ribs are in the central part of our body and protect important organs from injuries, such as our heart and lungs. Adam also called Eve, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). Being formed from a part of Adam made Eve a part of him. It was a partnership of equality, trust, and mutual care, and his words emphasized their spiritual oneness.

Genesis 2:24 adds that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." They are now one with each other, making their spouse's physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being their greatest priority after God. Moreover, to "leave" our parents' home is a sign of independence. We should marry only when we are ready to shoulder the financial, social, and spiritual responsibilities involved in the well-being of our family.

B. What God Has Joined Together

Discuss: What are a few common reasons couples tend to divorce these days? *(Examples may be: work-related conflicts, miscommunication or lack of communication, tragedy, sickness, finances, extra-marital affairs, lack of time spent together, etc.)*

Most regard marriage and divorce casually because for the world, you can be sexually intimate with many people. The Pharisees once asked about divorce, and why it was in the Mosaic laws (Mt 19:3). In response, Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mt 19:6), and added, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Mt 19:8–9; cf. Rom 7:2–3). This means that marriage is much more than a legal status. It is a spiritual, emotional, and physical oneness, where "the two shall become one flesh" (Mt 19:5).

1. Physical Oneness

Sexual intimacy with our partner is sanctioned and blessed by God, shown by the Bible's description of Adam and Eve, who were naked yet without shame (Gen 2:25). There were no physical barriers between them, and they loved each other's bodies as their own. God gave us natural desires so that we can develop and enjoy intimacy and pleasure within the confines of our marriage. Unfortunately, the world today encourages sexual openness, and many marriages are even based on the understanding that they can each have sex with others. This is sinful in God's eyes. We must avoid adopting such viewpoints and reserve ourselves for our marriage, so

that we can experience physical oneness with our spouse in accordance with God's will.

2. Spiritual Oneness

God intended for married couples to help, support, and encourage each other in their journeys of faith. Even if they support the believers' faith, a non-believer will not have the same spiritual understanding or experience. This may leave the believing spouse feeling alone, and the non-believer resentful if their partner prioritizes God over their marriage. A marriage of two Christians is not problem-free, but when they share the same spiritual purpose, goals, and values, the truth provides guidance amidst conflict. As Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"

3. Emotional Oneness

It is in our nature to develop relationships and to desire closeness with others. God created marriage to meet our need for intimacy and for love—both to be loved, and to show our love for another. To become "one flesh" is not only a physical oneness, but also an emotional unity, where both share their joy, sadness, happiness, or frustration. Through open and honest communication, married couples learn to accept, encourage, and build each other up.

Do Not Be Unequally Yoked

To "become one flesh," a couple cannot base their compatibility on the same standards that the world follows. Paul wrote, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (2 Cor 6:14). This is a teaching that many believers struggle to follow. But God warned the Israelites that if they married Gentiles, "they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods" (Deut 7:3–4). Nehemiah also rebuked the Israelites for transgressing against God's command and marrying pagan women, citing the example of King Solomon. There was no other king like him, and he was "beloved of his God." Yet "pagan women caused even him to sin" (Neh 13:26–27; cf. 1 Kgs 11:1–13).

The importance of Paul's teaching is even more apparent when we remember that we cannot simply "try out" marriage to several people. Our marriage is a singular, lifelong commitment. We must also consider how much our friends influence us. How much more so for the person we will be spending the rest of our life with! This makes it of vital importance that we focus on the primary factor when choosing our spouse: that we share the same faith and want to serve the Lord together.

A Lifelong Commitment

From the beginning, God planned for our marriage covenant to last a lifetime (Mt 19:6). Making a lifelong commitment is a deliberate and intentional choice. If our marriage is not founded on this choice, then cracks will soon appear. Whatever feelings we may have when entering the marriage, holding on to a promise of commitment nurtures our relationship into a lasting love that endures for a lifetime. To share the rest of your life with the one you love is the crowning glory of marriage. But the ultimate joy in your partnership is being able to experience salvation with your spouse!

C. Roles and Responsibilities in a Godly Marriage

A couple's roles are revealed when we study the true meaning of marriage: to live out the spiritual truth recorded in Ephesians 5:23–25. The church is the bride of Christ, purchased through the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28), and the members are also the body of Christ, with Jesus as its head. Each family within the church acts out the same responsibilities: husbands must love their wives as Christ loves the church, and wives must submit to their husband's authority, just as Jesus Christ humbly submitted to the will of His

Father (Phil 2:8). Both sides have the responsibility to submit to one another as to the Lord (Eph 5:21–22). The love and respect that they have towards God must also be shown towards each other.

The roles that God gave to men and women may be different, but one is not greater than the other! The different roles are simply an order and arrangement that God appointed for us when entering a partnership of equals. What are the roles according to the Bible?

1. Towards Each Other

Let's read Ephesians 5:22–33. The culture of the world has instilled in us the value of being self-centered, outspoken, and proud regardless of our gender. Submission is seen as a weakness. But the Greek term that Paul uses for “submission” stems from a military term. It refers to a soldier's voluntary obedience to their commander, who is not only an authority figure, but who also bears the responsibility of leading his troops into victory. Many forget that authority is a two-way road that comes with responsibilities.

a. Submission

“Submission” does not mean that women are inferior, or that a wife should behave like a servant without a voice. A wife's submission is active, not passive, and is of foundational importance in a family's unity. In group activities, things progress more smoothly when one person directs everyone. With two leaders, they may disagree, and the group may be divided on who to follow. Nations fall apart when its citizens ignore its authority. In the same way, a family cannot hold together if wives do not voluntarily place themselves under their husband's leadership. But when wives “submit to [their] own husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22), they can use their strengths, talents, wisdom, and creativity to build up, counsel, and support their family.

b. Authority

Paul goes on to say, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Eph 5:25). In other words, a husband's authority is a self-sacrificial leadership, not a self-serving one. In this passage, Paul emphasizes his comparison between the role of the husband and the role of Christ (v. 29). Jesus is our Creator, but He willingly washed His disciples' feet as a servant would, gave His life for our spiritual well-being, and sanctified us. This means that as the one with authority, the husband gives himself up, leads for the sake of his wife's well-being, and keeps his family sanctified by guiding them in obeying God. He acts out the same role that Christ has for the church: he leads the family into spiritual life.

c. Love and respect

The roles of both husband and wife are predicated on two concepts: love and respect. Ancient Greek illustrates this concept better by using several different words for love. For example, *eros* refers to a romantic or sexual love, such as Samson's relationships (Judg 14:1–3), while *agape* is the lasting, self-sacrificial love shown in Jesus' life and death. Paul uses the word *agape*, meaning a husband's love for his wife should not be an emotion that comes and goes, but is steadfast, constant, and self-sacrificing.

In the early stages of marriage, a couple's feelings are still very much centered on *eros*. Over time, however, these strong, romantic feelings wear off, and whether *eros* gives way to *agape* depends on their commitment and respect for each other and for Christ. *Agape* and

respect are a conscious act of will that we choose to follow whenever we forgive rather than quarrel, forget rather than be spiteful, and patiently listen even if we disagree.

2. Towards God

As Christians, we are not exempt from difficulties, because we were all born into sin (Eph 2:1) and have bodies that are more inclined to be selfish than selfless (Gal 5:19–21). We will face challenges and struggles which can pull marriages apart because of the resulting stress, sorrows, and anxieties. So, what is the best solution to ensure our marriage stays healthy and lasting? The answer is, of course, to place God into our marriage. Our status as His children must serve as the foundation for all of our relationships, including our marriage.

Picture a triangle. At the top of that triangle is God, and at the bottom left and right corners are a husband and a wife. By drawing closer to God at the apex, they also draw closer to each other. A spiritually healthy couple worships, prays, and serves God together by actively prioritizing Him in their lives. They value His words and uphold His teachings in unity. This is the kind of marriage God intends for us: where we walk together with Him, as Adam and Eve did in the garden. When we do, He will give us immeasurable blessings.

3. Towards Their Children

The Bible says that if you “[train] up a child in the way he should go,” then “when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6). God commanded the Israelites to “teach [the laws] diligently to [their] children” (Deut 6:6–7), stressing the importance of training our children in God’s word and love. God wants parents to “bring [their children] up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph 6:4), so that “the generation to come might know [His law], [...] that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Ps 78:6–7).

A family may receive help from ministers, R.E. teachers, and other church workers, but guiding children towards spiritual maturity and salvation in Christ is the parents’ responsibility, as children learn how to live through the example of their parents. God desires for His people to have children who will honor Him because our children are also God’s workmanship (Eph 2:10). Like their parents, God wants to use their unique talents in His kingdom so that they can be blessed. If a couple is successful in raising their children in God’s ways, they will receive incomparable joy!

Check for Understanding

- 1. What is a reason the world has a casual view on marriage and divorce? Explain why this is against the Bible’s teachings.** Because for the world, you can be sexually intimate with many people. For God, when a couple are married, it is a spiritual and physical oneness, where “the two shall become one flesh” (Mt 19:5). Therefore, “what God has joined together, let not man separate” (v. 6).
- 2. What does it mean for a couple to be spiritually one?** God intended for married couples to help, support, and encourage each other in their journeys of faith. When they share the same spiritual purpose, goals, and values, the truth provides guidance amidst conflict.
- 3. Paul wrote that wives should submit to their husbands. What does he mean by this?** Submission does not mean that women are inferior, or that wives should behave like servants without a voice. A wife’s submission is active, not passive, and is of foundational importance in a family’s unity.

4. **As head of the marriage, what are the husband's responsibilities?** To love as Christ loves the church, meaning he must give himself up, lead for the sake of his wife's well-being, and keep his family sanctified by guiding them in obeying God.
5. **How should a couple place God in their marriage?** He should be at the apex of their marriage. By drawing closer to God, they also draw closer to each other.

Life Application

Preparing Ourselves for a Lifelong Commitment

Any profession or skill requires the crucial steps of practice and preparation. Marriage is such an important and lasting stage of our lives, making it even more vital that we begin deliberately practicing skills necessary for our future. So how can we prepare ourselves for our future role as husband or wife?

1. Before You Say "I Do"

In an age where divorce is becoming the rule, not the exception, the wisest thing we can do is, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov 3:5–6). Prioritizing God's will in our search for a spouse may be the greatest challenge in our lives. But God has promised to draw near to us if we approach Him (Jas 4:7–8)!

a. Step One: Keeping God at our center

Many church youths feel that they can pick their spouse on their own. From a human perspective, it often doesn't make sense to rely on God when choosing our spouse. But from a godly perspective, it makes even less sense for us to choose our partner without Him! This is because as humans, we can only judge what we can see, hear, or understand. We often judge beauty from outward appearances, define love by feelings of surface attraction, and base our compatibility on what little we know in the present time. But God sees our hearts and knows our future. We cannot know what will happen, so we can only know if someone is truly right for us when we keep God at the center of our decision (Prov 3:5–6).

b. Step Two: Prayer

God's workers and apostles often learned what to do or not do through prayer, teaching us one fundamental truth: prayers lead us to know God's will. But why don't we see the same straightforward guidance? The answer lies in our prayer life. While we might say a hurried thanksgiving before meals or a short and tired good night, the apostles prayed frequently, fervently, and consistently. Jesus fasted forty days and nights to prepare Himself for His ministry, and often withdrew from the crowds to pray. Strengthening our prayer life should be our greatest priority, because without strong communication with Him, we cannot know God's will. When we approach Him faithfully and consistently, He will direct our steps (Prov 16:9).

2. Becoming a Godly Christian

We do not magically develop the qualities of a good husband or wife when we get married. These are characteristics that are only developed with time, dedication, and practice. Even if we don't plan to marry, God wants us to cultivate ourselves so that we can better serve each other and the church, and as a result, "lay up for [ourselves] treasures in heaven" (Mt 6:20). Let's read 1 Timothy 4:12–13, 15, and then examine how we can follow Paul's instructions ourselves.

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

a. In word and conduct

James 3:6 says, “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.” This seems a rather extreme description! But the conflicts we get into often stem from the words that are said out of impulse, anger, or self-defense. The way we speak and act affects those around us (Rom 12:18, 21), so it is important that we train ourselves to adopt godly words and conduct that will help our current and future relationships remain peaceful, lasting, and loving.

Discuss: Have you ever negatively affected a person or situation with your words or actions? Do you act or speak differently inside and outside of church, or stopped to consider what God would want you to do or say when making decisions?

b. In love and spirit

Developing the ability to love others is a learning process that requires not only time and practice, but also the Holy Spirit’s support. Although it may be impossible for us to reach the example Jesus set for us, He has given us His Spirit to strengthen and help us. Therefore, to set an example in love and in spirit requires that we first dedicate more time to God, so that we can dedicate ourselves to the well-being of those around us, including our future spouse.

Discuss: Let’s look up the Bible’s definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8a. Of these characteristics or qualities, which do you think you lack the most?

c. In faith and purity

One of the easiest ways to stray in our spiritual life is by failing to understand our own faith and failing to establish the spiritual values that we want to live by. James wrote, “Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (Jas 2:18). With true faith comes the desire to draw closer to God, and the understanding that we must be holy, because God is holy (2 Cor 6:16). Since a genuine faith in God will naturally produce good works and purity, becoming a godly Christian therefore requires a strong faith.

Discuss: What works have you recently done to show your faith? Is there anything in your current lifestyle that may pose a danger to your purity?

The actions that we take even now will affect our future. If we grow in our knowledge of God, meditate on these things, and give ourselves entirely to developing our character for Him, our progress will be “evident to all.” Our conduct, the choices that we make, and the priorities that we set for ourselves will work together to transform our character, skills, and lifestyle.

3. Activity: Keeping Our Purity

*(Teachers: Due to time constraints, you may want to assign this as homework and incorporate a follow-up discussion during the **review** class, as the following lesson on the topic of purity and sexual temptation is also lengthy.)*

Keeping our purity means fighting against the currents around us. The world’s tides can be inexorable, but with God’s help, we can stand firm by making changes to our lifestyle and learning how to spot and

prevent situations that can endanger our purity. To encourage ourselves to think of the future, let's write down a prayer, pledge, or resolution as a reminder to strive for purity. Here are a few examples:

- "To keep my integrity, I am resolving to 'flee' evil desires (2 Tim 2:22) and instead pursue righteousness in my life."
- "In order to stay holy and to keep my marriage bed pure (Heb 13:4), I resolve not to push boundaries or tempt myself to see how far is too far before I fall. God wants me to be obedient to His word by fleeing temptation, not testing myself!"
- "I resolve to 'put to death' my earthly desires (Col 3:5) by avoiding any movies, TV shows, or other forms of entertainment that will put my purity at risk."
- "I resolve to keep high standards in my life by never tolerating sin, because I know that sin, when fully grown, gives birth to death (Jas 1:14–15)."

Let's now think of our own personal resolution, pledge, prayer, or promise. You can use the above examples as a foundation if you'd like, but make sure you add your own personal words to God. Whatever you write, try to think of something that will serve as a reminder whenever you feel weak, or when you think you might forget why it is important for us to stay pure.

Memory Verse

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

Meaning

(See Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section A: The Origin of Marriage, *and* Section B: What God Has Joined Together.)

Conclusion

God's original intent for marriage has become widely forgotten in the world around us, but as His children, we must hold on to His teachings and regard marriage as a partnership of equality, trust, mutual care, and spiritual union. By remembering that God hates divorce and instead focusing on making our marriage a lifelong commitment, we can nurture our relationship into a lasting love that endures for a lifetime. This may be far in the future for us, but we can and should start preparing ourselves today by strengthening our relationship with God and developing ourselves into godly Christians. By doing so, we can learn to make God the foundation of all our relationships, including our marriage and, as a result, receive immeasurable blessings.

Lesson 11 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does the memory verse tell us about God's view regarding marriage compared to the world's view?
Marriage is much more than a legal status. It is a spiritual and physical oneness.
2. "For the _____ is head of the _____, as also _____ is head of the _____; and He is the _____ of the _____." (Ephesians 5:23)
husband, wife, Christ, church, Savior, body.
3. How does God want a couple to achieve spiritual oneness with each other?
By helping, supporting, and encouraging each other in their journeys of faith. When they share the same spiritual purpose, goals, and values, the truth provides guidance amidst conflict.
4. Explain the meaning of "submission" and "authority" according to Ephesians 5:22–33 in your own words.
Personal answers. See Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section C, #1.
5. Why should we keep God at the center of our decisions?
Because as humans, we can only judge what we hear, see, or understand. But God sees the deepest thoughts of our hearts and knows our future.
6. 1 Timothy 4:12–13 lists ways in which we should become godly Christians and set an example for others. Which do you need to improve on the most? Explain your answer.
Personal answers.