

Love For a Lifetime

Listed Scriptures

Gen 1:27, 28, 2:18-24; Songs 8:6, 7; Eph 5:22-23

Lesson Aim

- 1) To discover the true meaning of marriage.
- 2) To allow students to reflect on the qualities that are important when selecting a spouse.

Memory Verse

"This is now the bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh." (Gen 2:23)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Proverbs 13-15

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Marriage is a gift of God to mankind. God instituted the first marriage. He saw that Adam was alone and felt that it would be good to give him a helper (Gen 2:18, 21-23). Adam was so happy with God's gift to him that when he saw Eve, he said "This is now the bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). The Bible continues with the rule of marriage: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:24, 25). Marriage is meant to be the most intimate relationship between human beings, where a man and a woman share their lives together, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

God acknowledged the importance of marriage with His people. For example, "When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with

any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken" (Deut 24:5). Marriage is a special relationship that has to be properly managed. Since marriage is a very precious gift from God, we have to be reverent in this matter, from the choice of our spouse to the life we lead after we are married. When two lives come together, it is not an easy thing to manage. Even in Old Testament times, there were occurrences of divorce. The Lord Jesus explains that Moses granted divorce only because the people were hard-hearted. What God has put together in marriage, no one should separate (Mt 19:6-8).

All the teachings of God are for the good of our lives. Marriage requires a lot of practice in virtues – love, patience, kindness, gentleness etc. The happiest marriage is always the one where both parties abide by God's commandments and live each day putting His teachings into practice.

W A R M U P



Do you know who spoke the words in today's memory verse? They are the words of Adam when he first met Eve, the wife that God had created for him out of his rib-bone. From these words, we can tell the joy and intimacy he felt for his wife. She was taken out of his very precious and vulnerable ribcage. She was someone whom he was to protect and care for with love. Eve was created because God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. God wanted to make him a helper. The beauty of marriage is God's gift to mankind.

Unfortunately, marriage is not seen in that light today. In the USA and Europe, the divorce rate is about one in every two couples. In Europe, many couples co-habitat instead simply because they no longer believe in the institution of marriage.

Where do we as children of God stand amid all this fear and lack of confidence in marriage today? Is marriage no longer what God had intended at the beginning of creation? Let us study this topic from the biblical perspective so that we may know what God intends for us today.



Part 1

"Why do we marry?"

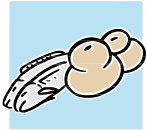
Read Genesis 2:18-24

- a. God first instituted marriage for the sake of mankind. How do we know that marriage was instituted for the good of man?
(We have seen that God created all things for the good of man, so the woman was created with the same purpose in mind.)
- b. What is marriage supposed to do for the man?
(God instituted marriage and created a woman for man so that man would not be alone and would have a helper.)
- c. Read also Genesis 1:27, 28. What is another purpose of marriage?
(For man to multiply and increase – i.e. to have children.)
- d. Why was it significant that Eve was created out of the rib-bone of Adam, and not from other parts of his body, such as the head or the arms or the legs?
(The rib-bones are right under the heart of the man and in a very vulnerable part of his body. Hence, the man has to protect his wife as he would cherish his own life. The woman is not created from a piece of bone from his skull lest she thinks she can be the head over him. Neither is she from the legs because she is not inferior or under him. She's on the same level as him, but yet to be cared for.)
- e. Does verse 24 mean that when we get married, we should simply cut ourselves off from our parents? If not, what does it mean?
(This means that we are able to start and maintain our own family. From the time of marriage, a new family unit is created, and that becomes our first priority.)
- f. When do you think a person is old enough to "leave his father and mother"?
(There is no correct age. But we have to be mentally, intellectually, financially and emotionally mature before we can start and care for a family. By today's standards in most countries, it is when we have finished a certain level of advanced education and have the capability to support oneself and the family. This is also the time when we have arrived at a certain level of emotional maturity to know what it means to commit oneself in a love relationship.)

Read Songs 8:6, 7; Ephesians 5:22-23

- a. How is marriage similar to the relationship between Christ and the church?

(In a marriage, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave His life for the church. The wife has to submit to the husband like the church submits to Christ.)



Part 2

“What should we look for in a spouse?”

A. Finding Your Other Half

You may have a picture of what a marriage or a relationship should be like. Perhaps you read a book about romance and you long to have something like that too. You may also admire other couples as role models. Or your picture might be based on Hollywood movies.

The fact is if we are going to have a good marriage, we need to forget about our fantasies of the ideal relationship. It is very important to understand that a perfect marriage is not like the Hollywood image we see paraded in front of us but rather based on the principles in the Bible. Movie characters don't face life's daily challenges in a realistic manner.

If you want to have a fulfilling relationship, you must give up your unrealistic expectations of your partner. A spouse is usually not as handsome or as beautiful as a movie star, or as wealthy. A realistic marriage involves two people with different opinions and different tastes, as well as different obligations outside of the relationship. Your differences will add to the richness of your partnership.

The following questions are based on the article “Finding Your Other Half” by Terry Chang (*Manna* 32, p. 41–44). Discuss the answers with the students if time allows.

- a. “Turning to God as the first step”: Explain why the writer realized that the criteria she used to judge/choose a potential marriage partner could not guarantee happiness for a lifetime.
- b. “Putting God’s teachings first”: What is the definition of the “right person” according to the writer? What other characteristics would you include in your definition of “the right person”?
- c. “The importance of prayer”: What factors must be present for a person who has prayed to understand God’s will?
- d. “Be the right person”: Marriage involves great skills in partnership. What are some important qualities a person must possess before he can consider himself ready for marriage?

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B. Five Important Qualities

Besides marrying in the Lord, having the same faith and serving God together in the church. There are five qualities that are absolutely necessary for a marriage to be great.

G for Good communication

R for Real partnership

E for Effort

A for Adaptability

T for Total Commitment

In addition both people need to read the Bible, pray together daily and attend church services!

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1 Why did God institute marriage?

2 What did Adam say when he first saw Eve? What is the significance of his words?

3 In what ways is the role of the husband to the wife like the role of Christ to the church?

4 What are some important qualities one should (a) look for in a spouse (b) possess before one considers marriage?

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Marriage Issues**Part A- Marriage is not a Fairy-Tale**

We have talked quite a bit today about the expectations we should NOT have about marriage. Indeed, marriage is not a fairy-tale.

When reality sets in, every married couple realizes that marriage is not the “happily ever after.”

Read the article in *Manna* Issue 37 (Oct-Dec 2001), pages 33–36. Here is a testimony of a sister about her first year of marriage. Read her testimony and discuss the following questions.

1. *What parts of reality did the husband and the wife not foresee before they actually got married? (Think along the lines of personality/interests, economic considerations, time management etc.)*
2. *What were some areas of conflicts that the sister did not handle well, according to her? What other ways could she have been attempted to avoid those conflicts?*
3. *What methods did the sister (and/or her husband) try to make the marriage work out?*

Additional reading material:

1. “Myths About Marriage” *Manna* Issue 38 (Oct – Dec 2002), pages 33–35.
2. “Walking Together” *Manna* Issue 25, 1995, page 3

Part B- Love Forever?

Read Exodus 20:14,17; Matthew 19:8, 9; Hebrews 13:4

1. *Committing adultery is a sin God abhors and it is a violation of the 10 commandments. From this, we can understand how important it is that a person stays faithful to his spouse. Marriage is something to be taken seriously. To most people today, it is better for a couple to break-up than for two people to stay together in an unhappy marriage. What do you think are the implications of such an attitude?*

Read Matthew 19:6.

1. *Why is the Lord’s teaching about marriage for life important for the family and society as a whole today?*
2. *Since marriage is for life, what are the implications for single Christians concerning the way they conduct themselves before marriage, especially with regard to interaction with members of the opposite sex?*

Read 1 Cor 13:1–8

1. *Marriage is the closest intimacy between two people, where they share almost all aspects of their lives. Marriage without love is therefore a very unfortunate thing. Yet, love is not exactly what is portrayed in romance novels or fairy-tales. When two people of the opposite sex meet, there may be attraction between them– physical looks, intellectual admiration, personality matches etc. But attraction itself is not enough for marriage. Based on what you have just read, what do you think is the difference between love and mere attraction?*
2. *God is love. For each “Love is ...” characterization, write down one practical application that can be carried out in the family.*
3. *Love is not just a feeling. Love is a culmination of actions. How would you characterize a person with love? What qualities does a person with love possess? How can you tell from his actions?*

Part C- Till Death Us Do Part

Many lovers vow to be together forever, in life and in death, but I don't believe I've heard of anyone whose loyalty and devotion matched that of Mrs. Isidor Straus. The year was 1912. Mrs. Straus and her husband were passengers on the Titanic during its fateful voyage. Not many women went down with the ship, but Mrs. Straus was one of the few women who did not survive for one simple reason: She could not bear to leave her husband. This is how Mabel Bird, Mrs. Straus' maid, who survived the disaster, told the story after she was rescued:

“When the Titanic began to sink, panicked women and children were the first ones loaded into lifeboats. Mr. and Mrs. Straus were calm and comforting to the passengers, and helped many of them into the boats

“If it had not been for them,” Mabel stated, “I would have drowned. I was in the fourth or fifth lifeboat. Mrs. Straus made me get into the boat, and put some

heavy wraps on me."

Then, Mr. Straus begged his wife to get into the lifeboat with her maid and the others. Mrs. Straus started to get in. She had one foot on the gunwale, but then suddenly, she changed her mind, turned away and stepped back onto the sinking ship.

"Please, dear, get into the boat!" her husband pleaded.

Mrs. Straus looked deep into the eyes of the man with whom she'd spent most of her life, the man who had been her best friend, her heart's true companion and always a comfort to her soul. She grabbed his arm and drew his trembling body close to hers.

"No," Mrs. Straus is said to have replied defiantly. "I will not get into the boat. We have been together through a great many years. We are old now. I will not leave you. Where you go, I will go."

And that is where they were last seen, standing arm in arm on the deck, this devoted wife clinging courageously to her husband, this loving husband clinging protectively to his wife, as the ship sank. Together forever...

Questions to think about:

1. *How many people today would do the same?*
2. *Do you think what Mrs. Straus did was in accordance with the spirit of Jesus Christ's words in Mark 10:9 "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate"?*
3. *What do you think is the secret of a long-lasting relationship?*

Part D- Debate: Marriage is Forever

Today, at least half the world's adult population no longer has faith in the eternity of the marital bond. Rising divorce rates are seen in almost every country. Most young people go into marriage without the confidence or determination that the marriage will work. Today, we will have a mini-debate about this topic. One side will argue for the sanctity and eternity of marriage, while the other side will represent what many people in the world today think about marriage. At the end of this debate, do a summary of what the secular views are, and then reiterate what the biblical views about marriage are.

Proposition: (You represent the biblical view about marriage)

1. What God has put together, let not man put asunder (Mt 19:6). The fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom and wisdom will bring us true happiness. We must therefore hold on to God's commandment that marriage is for life.
2. Marriage is something that requires a lot of skill and effort. We should not simply give up when troubles arise.
3. Relationships are difficult, and it's not only between husbands and wives. From a young age, we know that communication is hard. We have to learn to live harmoniously with our siblings and with our parents. We also put in great effort to maintain our relationships with friends. What more with marriage. We should work hard at making it work.
4. Other points...

Opposition: (You represent the views that exist today about marriage)

1. It is better for two people to separate than to stay together and be unhappy. It is also better for the children. It is psychologically detrimental for the children that their parents are not in love with each other. Parental fights have deep psychological impact on children. A couple should never stay in a marriage for the sake of the children. It can only do more harm than good.
2. Marriage is different from dating. If two people realize that they have made a mistake in marrying each other, they should spare each other further pain and be divorced. That way, they both can have a new chance in love.
3. In times past, people did not live very long and it was easier to stay married for life. Today, with medical advancement, we all live to a ripe old age. It is not possible to stay married for four or five decades. The novelty will have definitely run out.
4. Sometimes, you don't know what you really want or need in life until you've failed. A failed marriage is actually a stepping-stone to finding the right person who will come along later.
5. Other points...



Many church members who are happily married have said that marriage has enabled them to realize the love between God and the church much more than when they were single. It is just like what Ephesians 5:22–33 says. Indeed, marriage is a “many-splendored thing”—a special gift that God has given to mankind. May we all seek God’s guidance as we prepare ourselves for marriage.