

BIBLE STUDY – LESSON 13

SUBJECT: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT MARRIAGE

MAY 28, 2010

According to the Bible, the first marriage was conducted by God personally in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, both made in God's image, were joined together by God and commanded to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1).

God declared them to be "one flesh" (Genesis 2) and established the pattern of marriage to be a man leaving his father and mother and being joined to his wife (Genesis 2).

From this model, it can be inferred that:

- Marriage was instituted by God;
- Marriage involved one man and one woman;
- The marital union is intended to bring children into the world, and;
- Children are raised to enter into their own marriage unions -- and repeat the cycle.

While many Christians consider the Garden of Eden to be symbolic, virtually all Bible-believing Christians concede that it represents the biblical model for marriage in the same way that John Locke's "state of nature" represents the political ideal of civil government.

What About Divorce?

When asked about Moses permitting divorce, Jesus responded that it was only because of the "hardness of your heart," that divorce was permitted (Mark 10:5). Given that hardness of heart (in the case of one or both parties) is perhaps the leading reason for divorce today, it's easy to understand Jesus' explanation.

Jesus, however, makes God's standard (and desire) clear, when he reminds his audience that "from the beginning of creation, God 'made them male and female.'" With this as his premise, Jesus quotes the Father: "'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'" (Mark 10:6-8)

Jesus then adds the finishing touch, concluding: "So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mark 10:9).

What The Bible Says About Marriage

Keeping the above points in mind, the biblical standard on marriage appears to be the following:

- Marriage is to be a lifelong commitment between two people before God
- Marriage is to be between one man and one woman
- Marriage is the institution God established for sexual relations and the perpetuation of the human race

There are of course over 2 billion people in the world today who identify in some respect with Christianity. Views on marriage vary widely within this group, thus not all professing Christians (including all Bible-believing Christians) will fully agree with the above summary. Nevertheless, the preceding three-point summary is most consistent with a conservative, evangelical exegesis of the Scriptures.

There is one point, though, that virtually all Bible-believing Christians can agree on, and that is that marriage was intended as a loving, rewarding institution. God wants marriages to be characterized by love, trust, respect, and happiness. Biblical teachings on marriage, therefore, are not meant to deprive one of happiness, but rather to enhance and encourage it.

IV. RESPECT THE BIBLE PATTERN FOR AUTHORITY IN THE HOME.

Ephesians 5:22-24 - The wife must submit to her husband as to the Lord.

1 Peter 3:1 - She must obey her husband even if he is not serving God. A wife may think she can disobey her husband if he commits sin, but God says she must still obey. She may disobey only if the husband asks her to commit sin (Acts 5:29).

We will see that the husband also has God-given guidelines to follow when he makes decisions. Often conflict arises or remains unresolved, because the husband disobeys Bible teachings about how to make decisions or because the wife disobeys Bible teachings about submission.

Resolving conflict requires decisions to be made. God has provided a way to make those decisions. Husbands need the wisdom to make decisions according to God's guidelines, and they need the *courage* to make even the tough decisions. Then they need the strength to see that those decisions are carried out. And wives need the strength and the humility to accept those decisions.

[Tit. 2:5; Col. 3:18; etc.]

V. ACT IN LOVE.

Husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25,28,29). Wives should love their husbands (Titus 2:4).

A. Love Is Concern for the Wellbeing of Others.

Ephesians 5:25,28,29 - Jesus' love for the church illustrates the love husbands should have for their wives. He loved us so much He gave His life so we could be saved. So the husband should be concerned for the wellbeing of the wife. He should nourish and cherish her. He must not use his authority just to please himself but to do what is best for her and the family.

1 Corinthians 13:5 - Love is not selfish.

Romans 13:10 - Love works no harm to its neighbor.

As long as one or both companions selfishly insist on their own way, differences will not be resolved. Serious problems can be solved only when we are willing to seek the welfare of others besides ourselves.

B. Love Is a Choice of the Will.

Ephesians 5:25,28 - Love can be commanded because it is a matter of the *will*. We can choose whether or not to love, just like we can choose whether or not to obey any other command.

Some think love just happens and cannot be controlled - you "fall in love" or out of love. So, if a couple "just don't love one another anymore," nothing can be done except to get a divorce. But when we realize we can *choose* to love, then we realize we *can put love into* a marriage. And if we fail to put it in, we *sin*.

Furthermore, just as Christ initiated love toward the church when we were sinners not acting lovingly toward Him, so *it is the primary responsibility of the husband to initiate love*. The command is emphasized to the man. He is to love the wife first and put love into the relationship, as Christ first loved the church.

Romans 5:6-8 - Christ loved us while we were yet sinners, not because we were so loveable He couldn't help Himself. He *chose* to do what we needed done.

Luke 6:27,28 - We are commanded to love our enemies. Loving ones enemy is about what it would take to put love into some marriages! But we love enemies, not because we uncontrollably "fall" in love, but because we *choose* to do what is best for them.

The statement "I just don't love her/him any more" is a confession of sin! It must be repented of and corrected as an act of the will!

When serious disagreements build up in marriage and are not resolved, one or both companions are not choosing to show love.

C. Love Must Be Expressed in Action.

Love should be expressed by what we say.

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands should love as Christ loved the church. But Christ states His love for the church (Ephesians 5:2; John 3:16). So husbands and wives should express love for one another in words.

This does not require an overwhelming romantic "feeling" that wells up and can't help but be expressed. We are discussing love by choice of the will.

We can and should state, by the choice of our will: "I want you to know that I still love you, I am committed to this marriage and to your welfare."

Love should be expressed by what we do.

1 John 5:2,3 - Love for others requires us to love God and keep His commands. Keeping God's commands is loving God.

1 John 3:18 - We must not love just in words, but in deed and in truth. This is a vital principle in every home. We ought to say loving things, but that alone is not enough. We must act in love.

[Luke 10:25-37; 6:27,28]

D. Love Requires Giving & Self-sacrifice.

Giving of self is the essence of love.

John 3:16 - God so loved the world that He *gave* His only-begotten Son.

Ephesians 5:25 - Jesus loved the church and *gave* Himself for it.

1 John 3:14-18 - If you see your brother in need and don't *give* what is needed, you don't have love.

Romans 12:20 - Loving your enemy requires *giving* food and drink when needed.

A basic requirement in solving family disagreements is a willingness to give of ourselves for the good of others.

Typically each spouse refuses to change because he/she is upset at something the other person did. If we would view the situation honestly and objectively (as if it were someone else's problem), we would admit we should do differently. But we refuse to change because of some habit or characteristic we dislike in our spouse.

The fundamental lesson of Christ's love is that we should give up our own desires for the good of others even when they are not acting the way we think they should. Don't say, "I'll change if he/she will too." If an act is good for others, *do it* regardless of what they are doing. If we have been wrong, *admit it* regardless of whether or not they have admitted their errors.

Even if we are convinced we are not the root cause of a problem, we should ask ourselves honestly what we can do to help improve it. This does not mean ignoring sin. Jesus did not cause our sin problem and He did not compromise with sin, but He did sacrifice Himself to provide a solution to our sin problem. He did not just sit back and criticize us for our sin, but He became involved to provide a solution. He did not do everything for us, but He made sure we had a way whereby we could overcome the problem.

A spouse will often criticize: "It's his/her fault, so let him/her solve it." Even if that is true, is it helpful? Instead think, "What can I offer to do - how can I become involved - so as to help resolve this problem?" Instead of saying, "Why don't you do this?" say, "Why don't you and I work on this ***together?***"

As long as neither spouse will take the first step to give up what they want, strife will continue. When one is willing to give in for the good of the group, then a start has been made to resolving the problem. When both are willing to give in for the good of the group, then the solution definitely will be found.

The husband has the final say, but he must not just do what he wants. He must put aside his own desires and do what is best for the group. The wife must not insist on what she wants, but must give in and submit to the husband's decisions.

[1 John 4:9,19; Acts 20:35; Luke 10:25-37]

Assignment: Express Appreciation and Praise For What Is Good Toward Your Spouse