

Dating, Love, and Marriage Bible Study
The Marriage Covenant – What a Marriage Should Be.
2023.02.03 – Week 6

Group Ice breakers:

- What does marriage mean to you? (Consider: why would you or others get married?)

Modern Definition of Marriage:

*A legally and socially sanctioned union, usually between a man and a woman, that is **regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs, and attitudes** that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners and accords status to their offspring (if any).*

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/marriage>

*Marriage, also called matrimony or wedlock, is a culturally and often **legally** recognized union between people called spouses. It establishes rights and obligations between them, as well as between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws. Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage>*

*The **legally or formally** recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions specifically a union between a man and a woman). -Oxford Languages / Google*

Biblical definition of marriage:

- Man should not be alone. Modeling community and deep relationships (Genesis 2:18-24)
- God united the two and made them one. (Matthew 19:6)
- Example of Christ and the Church, to be exemplified through marriage (Ephesians 5:25, 31-32)

Marriage is a covenant between the man, the woman, and God.

Note: Covenant means a “promise.” The word “testament” means the same. That is why we have the Old and the New Testaments!

Marriage is a promise (covenant) between a man and a woman to love and submit to one another throughout their lives, 1) living as one in community and 2) emulating the passionate love God has for us (the Church).

Consider a typical wedding vow (the covenant, promise):

I, (name), take you (name), to be my lawfully wedded (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part.

Christians give the vow in the presence of others (including believers), before God.

- Today, people remove the sacredness of marriage and **seek marriage apart from God**. The vows are made to each other, which **they also believe can be broken**. (Divorce is considered acceptable, and some removes the words “until death does us apart”).
- There aren’t many rules other than to **love one another** (Ephesians 5), just as there are no other rules in the New Covenant.

Divorce was never intended

- Marriage is something God ordained. He made the two into one, and we should not split what God has joined (Matthew 19:6). Our vows matter to God (Malachi 2:14-16).
- We need to protect our *one love* to prevent it from happening. This includes our pre-marriage and post-marriage phases.
- Divorce is only allowed due to hardness of our hearts, that is, our sinful nature (see Mark 10:2-12 and Malachi 2:14-16 below).

Marriage is not eternal. Our relationship with God is.

- See 1Corinthians 7:32-35 below. Marriage is important, especially because of how God created attraction between men and women. However, our heart for God must be kept a high priority. This means both the husband and the wife must work together to enable each other to serve God foremost.
- Marriage ends at the end of our lives on earth. Our relationship with God is eternal.

Demonstrating the character of God through marriage:

4Love is **patient** and **kind**. Love is **not jealous** or **boastful** or **proud** 5or **rude**. It does not demand its own way. It is **not irritable**, and it **keeps no record of being wronged**. 6It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.
1Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT)

Married Couple to devote themselves to God together

32I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An **unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him**. 33But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. 34**His interests are divided**. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. 35I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to **do whatever will help you serve the Lord best**, with as few distractions as possible. 36But if a man thinks that he's treating his fiancée improperly and **will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes**. It is not a sin.
1Corinthians 7:32-36 (NLT)

Seriousness of Vows (Covenants)

14You cry out, "Why doesn't the Lord accept my worship?" I'll tell you why! Because **the Lord witnessed the vows** you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows. 15**Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife?** In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. **So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth**. 16**"For I hate divorce!"** says the Lord, the God of Israel. **"To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,"** says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. **"So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife."** Malachi 2:14-16 (NLT)

God's View on Divorce

2Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: **"Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?"** 3Jesus answered them with a question: "What did Moses say in the law about divorce?" 4"Well, he permitted it," they replied. "He said a man can give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away." 5But Jesus responded, **"He wrote this commandment only as a concession to your hard hearts**. 6But 'God made them male and female' from the beginning of creation. 7'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, 8and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, 9**let no one split apart what God has joined together**." 10Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again. 11He told them, **"Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her**. 12**And if a woman divorces her husband and marries someone else, she commits adultery."** Mark 10:2-12 (NLT)

Consider:

- Which characteristic of love would you like to improve for yourself?
 - o Which characteristic of love comes easily for you?
 - o Which characteristic of love is hard for you?
- How can you better love God because you are married?
 - o Do you think you may love God better as a single or married person?
- Do you believe in the words of the typical wedding vow? What would you change, if any?
- In what ways can we guard our hearts to remain loyal to the *one person* God has given you?
 - o For the not-yet married: what can you do before you marry?
 - o For the married: what can you do today?

Actions to Take:

- Understand the worldly view of marriage. It is to be separate from God, and it is not dependent on a promise. Instead, recognize that God desired unity between one man and woman to represent His faithfulness to us.
- Develop a heart of faithfulness that God shows us.
- Consider the marriage covenant as holy before God. It is a commitment between you, your spouse, and God.
- Marriage should help us to love God more. Lean on your spouse to protect you from unfaithfulness, and love God more.