

Protecting Your Marriage

Matthew 19:6

Introduction

1. “Marriage resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated; often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing anyone who comes between them.” (Sydney Smith, Lady Holland’s Memoir)
2. Jesus said it this way – **“Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:6)**
3. Anyone entering marriage takes on a great deal of responsibility, and as God approves of the marriage, joining the two together, He is entrusting that marriage to them as stewards – they do not get to do what they wish with it, but must glorify God in it, and protect it at all costs!
- I. What does our marriage need protecting from?
 - A. Top Reasons for Failed Marriages
(<https://www.divorcenet.com/resources/common-reasons-marriages-end.html>)
 - a. Lack of Commitment
 - b. Incompatibility and Growing Apart
 - c. Communication Problems
 - d. Extramarital Affairs
 - e. Financial Problems
 - f. Substance Abuse
 - g. Domestic Abuse (Verbal, Emotional, Physical)
 - h. Conflicts Over Family Responsibilities (Roles)
 - B. Jesus Identifies the Problem (**Matthew 19**)
 - a. Being tested by the Pharisees – **(v. 3)** – concerning reasons for divorce.
 - b. Jesus’ answer – **(vv. 4-6)** – manifests an understanding of the root problem. (I.e. where their question was coming from.)
 - i. **“Have you not read”** – they certainly had, but Jesus has already established in His ministry that their motives and methods of going to the scriptures are severely perverted.
 - ii. Answer – marriage is a God ordained institution meant to be permanent **(v. 6)** – let not man separate!
 - c. Pharisees’ reply and Jesus’ answer – **(vv. 7-8) (cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-4)** – if they wanted to know about marriage, they would have gone to the passages cited by Jesus because what Moses said was a testimony to the hardness of their hearts.
 - i. Hardness to what? – To God’s will and intentions **(vv. 4-6)**
 - ii. Their condition – **Isaiah 29:9-13** – their heart is far from God.
 1. **(vv. 9-10)** – spiritual disorientation and blindness.
 2. **(vv. 11-12)** – comprehensive nature of the phenomenon – shows the true issue is something more fundamental than any outward hindrance.

3. **(v. 13)** – they have removed their heart from God to go their own way.
 4. **Isaiah 6:9-10** – they don't understand, they don't perceive, they are dull.
 - iii. Deceitfulness of sin – **Hebrews 3:12** – their hearts have been made callous and unfeeling through consistent pursuit of their own desires – they've been desensitized to blatant and fundamental evils.
- C. Let Not Man Separate **(v. 6)**
- a. What man? – **(v. 3)** – the one married **(cf. Mark 10:4, 12)** – not gender specific – woman included)
 - b. What was the problem according to Jesus? – **(v. 8)** – the hardness of hearts in relation to marriage.
 - i. I.e. those entering marriage!
 - ii. NOTE: Certainly, man is not to separate in any way – false teaching, ratification of civil law, etc.
 - c. **When two enter the sacred union of marriage before God it is incumbent upon them to protect their marriage.**
 - i. All divorces are a result of negligence, willful or otherwise, of one or both spouses.
 - ii. A marriage must be actively protected and preserved by those who are a part of it.
 - iii. **Healthy marriages are a product of proactive protection and nurturing of the relationship, not of naively taking things for granted as continuing positively.**
- II. Protecting Your Marriage With:
- A. Faith
- a. As marriage is a relationship to embody love, it finds its apex in two drawing nearer to each other as each draws near to God – **Matthew 22:37-40**
 - b. The foundation for a healthy, God glorifying marriage is mutual faith:
 - i. This is individual – **Philippians 2:12**
 - ii. This is collaborative – **Ephesians 5:28-29** – one flesh, nourishing and cherishing itself by nourishing and cherishing the other member.
 - iii. Like Zacharias and Elizabeth – **Luke 1:5-6** – both were righteous, but being married together they inevitably lived their faith together.
 - c. The responsibilities enjoined upon husbands and wives are in relation to their fellowship with God:
 - i. **Matthew 19:4, 6** – an institution of God, approved of God, including God.
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 7:5** – mutual understanding of spiritual devotion.
 - iii. **Ephesians 5:22, 24, 25, 29** – as to the Lord, etc.

- iv. **Colossians 3:17-19** – in the name of the Lord, etc.
 - v. **Titus 2:1, 4-5** – a part of sound doctrine.
 - vi. **1 Peter 3:1-2, 4, 7** – fear of God, precious in His sight, fellow heirs.
 - d. I become a better spouse, and protect my marriage from failure by putting to death the earthly members of the old man, and putting on the qualities of the new man in Christ – **Colossians 3:5-16**
- B. Commitment
- a. Commitment is the key to the success of any relationship – **Luke 14:28-30** – commitment of discipleship.
 - i. Perhaps this illustrates why so many marriages fail.
 - ii. **Many are not informed enough about the institution of marriage by God’s word to grasp its permanency – therefore, they enter it uncommitted.**
 - b. **Love is essentially a specific manifestation of commitment** – commitment to the well-being of its object with what power it possesses – **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** – these are characteristics which rest on the foundation of commitment.
 - i. Think of this in relation to Christ’s life.
 - ii. His activity for our good persisted through all the bad because of the commitment of love.
 - iii. **IF WE THINK OF LOVE IN THIS WAY, “FALLING OUT OF LOVE” IS REALLY JUST ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING “I GAVE UP.”**
 - 1. **This also shows that marriages don’t necessarily “fail.”**
 - 2. **They are sabotaged – even though it may not exactly be deliberate.**
 - c. The disciples’ response to Jesus’ words – **Matthew 19:4-6, 9-10** – one man one woman for life with one exception, comprehension of commitment.
 - i. **(vv. 10-11)** – intimidated by the commitment, if you can’t accept it then don’t enter it.
 - ii. **(v. 12)** – Committed to celibacy, or committed to faithful love to one person for life? – **1 Corinthians 7:2, 6-9**
 - d. **Faith and Commitment permeate all other factors of protecting a marriage.**
- C. Honor
- a. **“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” (Hebrews 13:4, NASB)**
 - i. Holding it in honor is directly connected with the purity of the bed (sexual relationship).
 - ii. Holding it in honor is directly contrasted with the defilement of the bed – premarital and extramarital sexual relationships.

- b. **Honor** – *timios* – “literally, of things valuable, costly, precious... figuratively, as honor and value attributed to something precious, of great worth, held in honor” (ALGNT)
 - i. **1 Peter 1:16-19 (“precious”)** – of the blood of Christ and its logical effect on the conduct of those who have been redeemed by it.
 - ii. When something is given exceeding evaluation, it is treated with great care and reverence.
 - iii. This is how marriage, and the sexual relationship as a fundamental component of it is to be treated.
 - c. **Proverbs 5:15-20** – the “streams” of sexual fulfillment are exclusively for one’s spouse (**cf. 1 Corinthians 7:2-4**).
 - d. Possess your vessel (body) in sanctification and honor – **1 Thessalonians 4:3-5**
 - e. The fixed valuation on marriage according to God is so high, all people, but especially those who are joined to another in marriage, are to proactively avoid any appearance of impropriety at all costs – **2 Corinthians 8:20-21**
 - i. **EX: interaction with the opposite sex.**
 - ii. **The more room I give for basic activities with those who are not my spouse that do not include my spouse the closer I get to the dangers of social and emotional connectivity that leads to potential unfaithfulness – the solution is not finding the right line (how close can I get), but fleeing from any semblance of the danger altogether – proactive avoidance.**
- D. Understanding
- a. **Ephesians 5:17; 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:7** – mutual understanding of spouses concerning God’s will for their role in marriage, and the corresponding responsibilities, needs, and potential hindrances to the fulfillment of those roles.
 - b. **Ephesians 5:17** – God’s will must be understood and accepted, or marriage won’t work well.
 - c. **Ephesians 5:22-33** – God is very clear concerning the fundamentals of the relationship between husband and wife.
 - i. Headship and submission – **(vv. 22-24)**
 - ii. Love (she needs) and respect (he needs) – **(v. 33)**
 - 1. This gives the context of the headship and submission, which is, especially today, viewed in a very negative sense.
 - 2. Spiritual leadership and provision.
 - 3. **Nourishes** (provide food) and **cherishes** (brood over, protect, warm) – on a very personal level (as own body).
 - 4. Appropriate reverence for the one God enjoined with such great responsibility for your (wife) benefit.
 - iii. **Abandoning this design for something else or neglecting to properly revere it and submit to it will lead to a failed marriage.**

- d. **1 Peter 3:7** – understanding the wife’s weaker makeup (physically, emotionally) – weaker not equating to lesser value, but more value – her vulnerable position of submission needs to be understood, as well as her dependence on you. Her spiritual equality must be always front and center.
- e. **Understanding will lead to compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, etc.**
- f. **Understanding comes by pursuit, inquiry, and offering of another’s thoughts:**
 - i. **Communication is key to any relationship, especially the marital relationship.**
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 2:11; 14:9; James 1:19-20** – they won’t know unless you tell, and you won’t know unless you ask; they won’t understand unless you communicate well, and you won’t know they don’t understand unless they tell you; nobody will understand if they’re only or primarily using their mouths.
 - iii. **The less we communicate and understand the more space we create between us, and the more potential there is for unfaithfulness and failure.**

E. Humility

- a. **Ephesians 5:22-33** – this relationship in parallel to the relationship between Christ and the church manifests a mutual need for humility.
 - i. Christ was humbled to serve the church.
 - 1. The husband must look beyond his interest to the interest of the wife – humility.
 - ii. The church must be humble to submit to Christ.
 - 1. The wife must think enough of her husband and the Lord’s will to submit to such service of leadership in loving respect – humility.
- b. **Philippians 2:1-8** – ending where we started (faith), we possess the same mind, the mind of Christ, which looks out to the interest of the other, and stoops in humility to perform the role God has given.
- c. **Pride is a disease which will eat away at marriage until it dies – the whole fabric of marriage is woven with the presupposition of humility. When a marriage is entered with selfish and prideful motives it is simply a ticking timebomb.**

Conclusion

- 1. While an autopsy of any failed marriage may reveal certain nuances that contributed to the death of the relationship, it ultimately occurred because at least one did not act in these fundamental ways to protect it.
- 2. With God’s help marriage will last and thrive, but we must do our part.