

The Challenge of Marriage

Introduction

- I. **Story of couple, bad breath, socks**
- II. In many ways, when it comes to the subject of marriage, we may be just like that couple, having lots of questions and concerns.
 - a. Marriage seems to always involves learning. Even those who have been married for many years agree that we're always learning, more about our mate, more about ourselves.
 - b. It seems that marriage these days is not held in respect as it used to. People use phrases such as - "ball and chain"; "tied down"; "the last legal form of slavery."
 - c. The Bible states it another way - **Prov. 18:22; Heb. 13:4;**
- III. Marriage is a wonderful thing in God's way. That is the subject of today's lesson. We're considering challenges facing the church – strong churches are built from strong homes. So we're going to consider the challenge of marriage - looking at the subject of marriage from God's perspective.
- IV. In Genesis 2 we find the creation of marriage. It is God's institution. God designed marriage to work and to be a blessing to those who keep to His pattern. Notice with me God's design for marriage - **Genesis 2:24-2**

a. Man and wife –

- i. marriage is between a man and a woman. In this passage, we read how man needed a helper, a companion, one which corresponds to man's needs. who did God make? Woman.
- ii. Adam and Eve is the first example of marriage, since in fact they are the 1st people to be married.
- iii. It is not man and man, or woman and woman, but man and woman. They are suitable for one another, they correspond with one another. God made it this way and it must be kept this way.

b. Leave –

- i. there must be a willingness to leave our other relationships to put our mates first.
- ii. This doesn't mean that we forsake our parents or families. We must still obey them (**Eph. 6:1**) and there may be a time when we must take care of our parents (1 Tim. 5:8).
- iii. However, what this phrase means is that we relinquish the highest position in our lives, which used to be our parents, with our mates. Aside from the Lord being most important in our lives, our mate must take second place, as most important - one deserving a life of love and devotion.

c. Cleave –

- i. the word cleave means to cling, to bind. The two spouses are bound in marriage.
- ii. One writer said that the Hebrew word for "cleave" means - "*to pursue with great energy and to cling to something zealously.*"

iii. What this shows us is the work or effort needed in the marriage relationship. It's not just simply getting married and living together. There must be a sense of loving pursuit made on behalf of one another.

iv. The bond of love which first united the couple must be developed and must grow. Notice these passages: **Mal. 2:15; Eph. 5:25; Tit. 2:3-4.** The couple must work towards deepening the bond and relationship they share in love.

d. One - the ultimate goal is to be unified.

i. In marriage, 1+1=1. A husband and wife is to be united in mind, in goal, and in heart.

ii. It's not my way or the high way. It's not all about me. Problems come about when we find couples unwilling to meet on common ground, unwilling to share or submit the same goals, priorities, property, mindsets.

iii. One means what's mine is yours, as I am yours.

V. Jesus repeated this teaching in **Matthew 19:3-6** - Jesus gives another example in God's design of marriage –

a. Let not man separate - marriage was intended to last a lifetime.

b. It was not designed to be something temporary or short lasting. Marriage is a life long commitment.

c. Many of the traditional vows recited in the wedding ceremony reflect this truth. I, (name), take you (name), to be my (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.

d. That is exactly true, when I say I do to this someone, it is a continual I do, until my final breath.

VI. What this ought to stress to us is the seriousness of marriage. It is no little thing. Recognizing that it is a covenant, a promise made before God, and lasts a lifetime, I really ought to put some time into this decision.

a. There are some reasons not to get married. One shouldn't get married just because they're bored, that they don't have anything to do.

b. Nor should someone get married to rebel against mom and dad, to get under their skin and do as they've asked you not to.

c. One shouldn't get married just for physical intimacy.

d. When considering marriage I need to seriously contemplate if whether or not I am ready to devote my life to this other person. Can I keep the promise of loving them, caring for them, providing for them until death do us part?

VII. This shows us the other side as well. Not only is it important to think about reasons to get married and if I believe I am ready, but also it is vitally necessary to consider who it is you choose to marry.

a. I've heard it said before, that the two most important decisions you'll ever make in your life are:

one - to obey the Lord Jesus and two - who you choose to marry. This is absolutely true.

- b. Who you marry will make all the difference. Who you marry will determine your future.
- c. You can marry someone who will love you and cherish you and be with you through all your difficulties. You can marry someone who will be a blessing to you and help you in more ways than you know.
- d. The person you marry can help you grow closer to the Lord, raise godly children, and truly become the best that you can be.
- e. But the opposite is quite true. You can marry someone who will hurt you in and out,, those who won't respect you nor the promises they made to you and will decide to leave you. You can marry someone who will do their best to take you away from the Lord.
- f. The Bible proves this to be true. There are two examples of men who chose the wrong women.
 - i. The strongest man in the Bible, Samson, chose women from the pagan nations. The women not only led him further away from God in immoral passions, but one of which ultimately brought about his death.
 - ii. The wisest man in the Bible, Solomon, married women of different faiths, and was led away from God.
 - iii. It truly does matter who you choose to marry.

VIII. Thus, the standards you use in selecting a mate must be made with careful consideration. I'd like to suggest for you 5 questions a Christian ought to ask when considering choosing a mate. While these are not inspired, they are based on Scripture and experience and I believe will help you in selecting a good godly mate:

Is this person a Scriptural candidate for marriage –?

- I. What is meant by this question is that by what God's law teaches and requires, can this person get married. There are three types of people who are qualified Scripturally to get married:
 - a. Those who have never been married before
 - b. Those whose mates have died (widows or widowers) (**Rom. 7:2-3**)
 - c. Those who have divorced their mate for sexual immorality (**Matt. 19:9**)
- II. This is it! All other cases or people, according to the Scripture, are not to get married. **This is an important place to notice Jesus teaching on divorce:**
 - a. You are not to divorce for ANY REASON AT ALL (Matt. 19:4, 6)
 - b. The only exception Jesus gave for divorce is sexual immorality/adultery (Matt. 19:9)
 - c. Those who have been divorced are not to remarry (Matt. 5:32)
 - d. Those who have divorced their mate for any reason aside from the exception of Matt. 19:9 adultery , are not to remarry (Matt. 19:9)
 - e. Those who have divorced their mate for sexual immorality/adultery may remarry (Matt. 19:9)
- III. **Matt. 5:31-32** - aside from the exception found in Matthew 19, the Bible teaches that those who are divorced are not to remarry.
 - a. Those who have divorced their mate or been divorced for any reason aside from the exception of Matthew 19; if they marry another they are sinning, they are committing adultery before the Lord.

- b. Jesus stated in Matthew 5 that if someone marries one who has been divorced (aside from the exception in Matthew 19) they too are guilty of adultery.
- c. Thus it is very important to discuss the past and to consider what the Bible teaches about divorce and remarriage.
- d. People involved in divorce, unless it is the innocent mate of sexual immorality (found in Matt. 19) are not to marry again. They would only commit further sin, and lead an innocent person to commit adultery, sinful before the Lord.
- e. So one of the first things to consider when looking for a mate, is that with a Bible in hand, discuss the past and determine whether or not this person is a candidate for marriage in God's eyes.

How is their relationship with God?

- I. You may not agree with me on this point, and I'll gladly discuss this with you, but I firmly believe that the most important thing you can look for in a future mate is their relationship with God.
 - a. There are some who say that they can marry their fiancé despite their faith. Some have done so and are blessed in that they helped their mate come to obey the Gospel. That is the reason many justify doing so.
 - b. However, while there are couples who were blessed in their mate converting, the statistics prove otherwise.
 - c. The overwhelming statistics would show that more people leave the Lord because of their unbelieving mate, than actually bring that unbeliever to the gospel.
 - i. The reason is that it is always easier to pull someone down than it is to lift someone up.
- II. Consider the difficulties with me.
 - a. We mentioned how the goal in marriage is union, to become one. Think of all the things you would not see the same if you did not share the same faith.
 - i. What are you going to do on Sundays? You know as a Christian you need to be at services, but your mate wants to go to the lake, or out on a trip.
 - ii. Thus each week they'll nag, and beg and plead for you to skip services, just this once. And if you give in, once will lead to twice, which can lead to abandoning all together.
 - iii. If you have children and your mate doesn't share your beliefs - what church will they attend yours or your mate's? What will they be taught?
 - iv. What about morals? Issues such as language, modesty, honesty, those are all a reflection of one's faith.
 - v. I've seen it before, those who do not marry someone who share in their beliefs and convictions run the great risk of being led astray and away from the truth, away from the Lord.
 - b. There is nothing in this life more important than our relationship with Jesus and getting to Heaven.

- c. Thus everything I do, every decision I make must be made with that goal in mind. So when I go to choose a mate I need to ask myself - is this someone who will help or hinder my relationship with God?
- d. Is this someone who will help me reach my goal of Heaven, or take me further from it?
- e. Your mate can help you grow closer to the Lord and develop great spiritual qualities. Those are the one's worth finding.

How is their relationship with their family?

- I. This may seem like a strange thing to have on the list, but quite honestly, you can tell a lot about a person by how they treat their family.
- II. **Eph. 6:1-2.** God takes this command very seriously, and so should we.
 - a. As you get to know this person and are around their home environment, take notice of how they interact with the family.
 - b. Do they show respect to their parents? Are they helpful around the house? Do they care for their younger siblings (if they have any)?
 - c. If this person won't respect their parents, what's to say that when you're married, they'll respect you? If they're unwilling to help around the house or care for their younger siblings, what will they do when they're married and have children?

Do you agree on major subjects?

- I. To be unified a couple must be likeminded or of one mind. This means that they must see eye to eye on similar subjects.
 - a. This is important to understand before saying I do.
 - i. Does your mate share the same goal you do in finances, how to manage your money?
 - ii. What about with children, how to raise them, how to discipline them.
 - iii. What about priorities, where your time will be spent?
 - b. You are to be one in your marriage, and this is so very important.
 - c. Now, we're not to be extreme about this. If you're a die hard Alabama fan and your significant other is all about Auburn, you may not think that's going to work, but such things are trivial.
 - d. Jesus said that a house divided cannot stand (**Matt. 12:25**). Talk through the major issues and determine whether or not you can see eye to eye.

How is their character today?

- I. Some people marry not for who the person is, but for who they hope they will be one day.
 - a. However, the truth is what you see is what you get. So take a good look.
 - b. What language do they use? How is their time spent? Are they lazy?
 - c. Ask yourself, by the habits you see in this person today, will they be a great parent?
 - d. Could this person be a future elder or deacon in the Lord's church?

- e. Marry for who they are, not who you wish they'd be.
- II. In looking over these questions, did you notice the lack of attention given to physical attraction?
- a. Is it important to be attracted to who you would like to marry? Yes! Just read through Song of Solomon and you'll see the joys of beauty.
 - b. But outward attraction alone cannot be the most important criteria used in looking for your lifelong mate.
- III. **My story - witch and first date with Holly.** Something I've learned through my own experience, is that someone who grows closer and closer with the Lord, is one who grows more and more attractive. It is the inward beauty enhancing the outer.
- IV. Perhaps that's why the King's mother would say - **Prov. 31:30.**
- a. Earlier she said, **Pv. 31:10** - who can find?
 - b. A wife of excellence, an honorable husband, they aren't ordinary. They're like a treasure.
 - c. You don't see jewels and diamonds on trees, they're mined. It takes time, effort, diligence and sacrifice. But all the hard work, and all the time spent is far worth the wonderful treasure you'll keep for a lifetime.