

Marriage - continued

1. Marriage is normal and for most people it is needful

1. As I was saying, (in part 11), **marriage is normal and for most people it is needful**. When the woman is brought to the man, he gives a cry of joy. *'This – now – at last' – he has been waiting for this! – 'is bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh'*. After looking at the animals he says *'At last there is something that corresponds to what I really want'*.

We note that it is not another man that is made^{□1}! The man needed a woman. Unfallen Adam was not homosexual.

□1 2:23

1 Corinthians chapter 7 is sometimes thought to point in a different direction. 'Surely Paul is downgrading marriage', it is sometimes said. No. 1 Corinthians 7 must be interpreted in the light of verse 26. There was some 'present distress' in Corinth. Paul is saying, 'In the light of what is happening, this is not the time to be getting married – although you can if you want...'. Notice the difference between 1 Corinthians 7:39–40 and 1 Timothy 5:14. The former is Paul's advice for a stressful situation; the latter is Paul's normal advice in harmony with Genesis and the original gift of marriage to the human race. Marriage is normal and for most people it is needful.

• Paul's advice for normal and stressful situations

2. Marriage was ordained by God.

2. **Marriage was ordained by God**. Genesis 2:24 looks to something laid down by God. Marriage is not a matter of human arrangement or contract. It is not a matter of random evolution.

3. Marriage is a gift of God's grace

3. **Marriage is a gift of God's grace**. God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep while he prepared Eve. As elsewhere in the Bible^{□1} this is a way of stressing God's grace. Adam had nothing at all to do with getting this gift from God. He was asleep at the time. He was totally passive, supernaturally asleep. We are married by grace as well as saved by grace! Eve was a new creation^{□2}, brought to the man wholly and exclusively by God^{□3}.

□1 see 15:12

□2 2:21

□3 2:22

4. We notice the tenderness of the relationship

4. **We notice the tenderness of the relationship**. It was a cause of great joy to Adam^{□1}. It was an intimate relationship, and a pure relationship^{□2}. Matthew Henry made a famous comment on this passage: Eve was 'not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.' Eve was made from Adam's rib. Since then man is a bit missing without woman; woman is away from her right place without man.

□1 2:23

□2 2:25

1 Corinthians 11:7–9 argues for male leadership from Genesis 2:21–22. The woman was brought in to help in a task given to man^{□1}. In this, woman is the glory of man. 1 Timothy 2:13–14 makes a similar point.

□1 2:20

5. Marriage is for mankind generally, not for redeemed man exclusively

5. **Marriage is for mankind generally, not for redeemed man exclusively**. It is not a 'sacrament' but a 'creation ordinance'. It is not part of salvation but attached to creation. It is part of God's general **kindness** not part of His **saving** grace. It is not like (for example) water-baptism. Water-baptism is for the church; it is for the saved. You should be saved before you are baptised, but people who are unsaved may nevertheless be truly married. A pagan who gets converted should be baptised, but a pagan who is married does not have to be 'married in church' to be truly married. People who are not Christians at all may be truly married.

6. The marriage God envisages is monogamous

6. The marriage God envisages is monogamous. ‘They two’ are mentioned in Genesis 2:25. Polygamy came in only after man sinned. It was part of the decay of the human race^{□1}. Lamech, the first polygamist, was an ungodly man^{□2}.

□1 4:19

□2 4:23

7. Marriage is designed to create independent families

7. Marriage is designed to create independent families^{□1}. An adult child starts a new family. A man leaves father and mother. The ‘family’ in Genesis 2 is more a small family than an extended family. And the new family has priority over the old family. One’s spouse has priority over one’s in-laws. The ceremony of ‘giving away’ the bride is quite meaningful.

□1 2:24

8. Marriage is a public event

8. Marriage is a public event. It is not just a secret sexual relationship. It is an open and public and socially recognised commitment of a man and a woman to each other.

9. Marriage is meant to be permanent

9. Marriage is meant to be permanent. The man cleaves to his wife. This implies faithfulness, permanence, loyalty, responsibility on the part of the man (for he is responsible for the cleaving). It involves ‘nourishing and cherishing’^{□1}.

□1 Ephesians 5:29

10. Marriage sets up a ‘one flesh’ relationship

10. Marriage sets up a ‘one flesh’ relationship. This is a very mysterious matter. Paul called it a great mystery^{□1}. When a man and a woman are joined together in marriage it sets up a mysterious union of the personality. They are two and yet one at the same time. This is why a sexual relationship is such a powerful thing (see 1 Corinthians 6:16 for the way Paul uses this fact). There comes into being a bond of common interests, pursuits, motivations. This is why it is good for one’s partner to be a person of compatible outlook and interests. It calls for wisdom in getting married.

□1 Ephesians 5:31

11. It is notable that marriage is complete without children

11. It is notable that marriage is complete without children. There is no mention of children in Genesis 2. The marriage is a complete marriage whether there are children or not! This is why it is a mistake to end a marriage because there are no children (as happens in many parts of the world). This means that contraception and birth control are perfectly acceptable for the Christian. A sexual relation is not simply for the purpose of having children. The marriage is complete even without children, and the ‘one flesh’ relationship has significance other than its purpose to secure the birth of children.

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