

FBC POWELL, 7-15-18 AM  
"Marriage God's Way"  
Mark 10:1-12

I. The Confused Culture

Culture – "The beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people."

**Hebrews 13:4 (NASB)** "Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage bed is to be undefiled*; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

**1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)** <sup>15</sup> "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

II. The Clear Commands

From the beginning, God's plan was heterosexual monogamy.

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, take thee, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my lawful wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part."

**Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)** "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

The Gospel relationship between Christ and the church is not an illustration of marriage; marriage is an illustration of Christ and the church!

III. The Conquering Commitment

**Mark 10:7 (KJV)** "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife."

"In one high bound, [agape love] has overleaped the massive wall of our selfhood; it has made appetite itself altruistic [selfless], tossed personal happiness aside as a triviality and planted the interests of another in the center of our being."  
- C. S. Lewis

**Sermon Topic: Marriage God's Way**

**Mark 10:1-12**

This morning, with all the changes going on in our culture, I sensed that the Lord would have us go back to the Scriptures on the topic of marriage. For many of us, this will simply serve as a reminder of what we already know, but for some who have only been exposed to the world's view, this may seem radical. In reality, most of what God says compared to the world seems radical.

The further our culture drifts from God's never-changing truth, the more we need to keep going back to that unchanging truth. Aren't you thankful that the Word of God never changes? Perhaps, the fastest changing area in which our culture is changing has to do with marriage. For some of you, this message may initially seem to be irrelevant because you are not married and perhaps you don't ever plan to be. One elderly gentleman in his 80's was asked by a pastor why he was never married. The old man said, "It is because the desirable was never attainable and attainable was not desirable." He went on to say, "I'd rather go through life wanting what I do not have than having what I do not want." Even if you fall in line with this man, you still need to hear what the Scripture says about this issue that is so important, not only to the stability of marriage, but to the stability of culture. Singleness is the way God has directed some people, but for everyone the stability of marriage is foundational to the stability of every culture. Whether you are single or married, you need to understand what the Scriptures (Old and New Testament) have to say about marriage.

## **I. The Confused Culture**

When I speak of "culture", I am talking about, "the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people." I was listening recently to a podcast of one of my favorite preachers (Alistair Begg), and he was taking his listeners on a tour of the cultural history of marriage in the western world through the songs that were popular at different times. I don't remember all the songs he referenced, but here are a couple of them. Let's pick up on culture just after the turbulent "60's". In about 1970 Joni Mitchell was on the cutting edge of where our culture that left God out was headed. Listen to the words from her song *My Old Man*:

*My old man he's a singer in the park  
He's a walker in the rain  
He's a dancer in the dark  
We don't need no piece of paper from the city hall  
Keeping us tied and true no, my old man  
Keeping away my blues*

This was the age of disdaining marriage. The "piece of paper from city hall" was of course referring to a marriage license. Just live together without any commitment or marriage. It was all about freedom to do whatever makes you feel happy. As a sidelight, isn't it interesting that today the homosexual activists consider that "piece of paper from city hall" very important and worth fighting for. The culture keeps changing. There is no stability in our culture.

Let's fast forward to 1984 and Tina Turner singing, *What's Love Got to Do with It?*

*You must understand how the touch of your hand  
Makes my pulse react  
That it's only the thrill of boy meetin' girl  
Opposites attract  
It's physical  
Only logical  
You must try to ignore that it means more than that  
Oh oh  
What's love got to do, got to do with it?  
What's love but a second hand emotion?  
What's love got to do, got to do with it?  
Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?*

When we bring it up to today, we have moved from minimizing marriage to minimizing love, to what is called the “Hook up culture”. Here is the definition (Wikipedia) “A hookup culture is one that accepts and encourages casual sexual encounters, including one-night stands and other related activity, without necessarily including emotional bonding or long-term commitment.” As I looked up top songs today that reflect the hook up culture, the words were so graphic that it wouldn't be appropriate to repeat them. In the hook-up culture we have temporary pleasure that supposedly is carried out without emotional bonding or commitment. That is how far we have come! We have become a culture of selfish, loveless (by biblical standards) “hook ups” that shun commitment and genuine love as it is defined in Scripture.

Into this culture, I want to insert something written over 1,900 years ago. Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the *marriage* bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” As is always the case in every age, those God has called to Himself are to be counter cultural. To put it another way, when it comes to the stream of culture, we are most always swimming upstream. Biblical marriage is the opposite of the self-centered treatment of marriage in the culture around us.

A word in Scripture that describes the unbiblical culture that leaves God out is the “world”. 1 John 2:15-17:

Do not love the *world* nor the things in the *world*. If anyone loves the *world*, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the *world*, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the *world*. The *world* is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

As Christians, when it comes to marriage, we are called to separate ourselves from the world's values and ways. In fact, if a person buys in to the world's ways and values, the Scripture says this about them in 1 John 2:15b: “...If anyone loves [literally ‘is loving’] the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Oh, what a confused world, a confused culture we live in.

## **II. The Clear Commands**

In Mark 10, some Pharisees were trying to trip Jesus up by getting Him to jump in to an argument between two different Rabbis about how a marriage could be ended. Jesus refuses to

fall into their trap. He takes them (and us) back before there was “culture”. He takes us back to the beginning when God first instituted marriage. The initial plan was one man and one woman “till death do us part”. In Mark 10:6 Jesus takes us back to Genesis 1 and tells us that God created two distinct genders – male and female. Their maleness and femaleness were based on biology, not feelings. There is no provision for transgendered. God made for Adam one person. This person was not another Adam, but a female named Eve. *From the beginning, God’s plan was heterosexual monogamy.* We don’t have the right to redefine gender or marriage. We don’t have the option of altering what He has done.

Because the Bible is so clear on marriage and because the culture is so unclear and messed up on marriage, I believe that it is proper and pleasing to God that Christians have public marriage ceremonies. I do not mean that you must invite everybody and feed them; what I mean is that it not a secret private thing. A ceremony is a testimony to the community, to the culture that something God ordained is taking place and what is happening contributes to the stability of society. Let me get a little personal. I believe that marriage ceremonies are really important. I have been privileged to officiate in several hundred marriages and in forty-two-and-one-half years see the children of some that I married be married. The most important part of that ceremony is the vows. I believe that the vows matter. That’s why I will allow a couple to write their own marriage vows, but I have to approve them. No “mushy, meaningless” words. These vows are important! “I, \_\_\_\_\_, take thee, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my lawful wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.” These vows are important, and they ought to be a little scary; they ought to make us sweat. This is for life. When that commitment is weakened, not only are many lives messed up, the culture is weakened. When marriage is re-defined or abandoned society is weakened and will ultimately collapse.

Another reason that the wedding ceremony should be public is that God has a special use for the ceremony in culture concerning the Gospel. In Ephesians 5:22-31, Paul gives us specifics about marriage – the roles and responsibilities of the wife and the husband. Then He says in Ephesians 5:32 (ESV): “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Listen very carefully, the Gospel relationship between Christ and the church is not an illustration of marriage; marriage is an illustration of Christ and the church! This is why divorce is such a serious matter. I realize that sometimes there is an innocent person in a marriage where their spouse divorced them or through unrepentant adultery or abandonment, but I am speaking of why divorce is not an option for a couple who is just “not happy”.

A summary of the commands concerning marriage is that marriage is one man and one woman until death do they part.

### **III. The Conquering Commitment**

Let’s revisit those vows a moment. Do you realize how serious that phrase “till death do us part” really is? Sadly, most marriages are built only on uncommon affection. A couple “falls in love” and they want often want to get married so they will never have to be apart. But all too often, after a marriage built on uncommon affection goes through some tough times, that affection begins to wane, and the fire of affection grows dim and may even go completely out.

What holds the marriage together through those tough times? A popular song in the 1960’s was *You’ve Lost That Loving Feeling* by the Righteous Brothers. The chorus of the song says,

“You’ve lost that loving feeling, that loving feeling. You’ve lost that loving feeling and it’s gone, gone, gone.” Things have only gotten worse since the 1960’s and the overwhelming majority of marriages today are based primarily on emotion. Am I saying that emotions have no part in a marriage? No, I’m not saying that at all! It is usually emotion that plays a prominent role in bringing a couple to the marriage altar. There is a progression that must take place for a marriage to survive and thrive.

First, there is an uncommon affection. This is not really biblical love, but it is natural and very important. I’m not talking about infatuation; I’m talking about a deep and uncommon affection for another person. Even those of us with gray hair and a good bit of wrinkles can remember that uncommon affection for the one we married. However, when it comes time for marriage, there must be another ingredient added – uncommon commitment. Now we’re seeing biblical love. The foundation of a marriage is not the uncommon affection; it is the uncommon commitment. It is voiced in the traditional marriage vows we looked at earlier that contain the words, “I take you to be my lawful wedded husband / wife to have and to hold from this day forth, for richer, for poorer, for better for worse, in sickness and health, to love and to cherish till death do us part”. Here is why this uncommon commitment must be the foundation of the marriage. That uncommon affection can go away, come again, go again for any number of times. There is no security in a marriage built on feelings – even uncommon feelings.

I am not nor never was a fan of Barry Manilow. Here is one of his songs that illustrate how the world operates purely on feelings (*Trying to Get the Feeling Again*).

*Doctor my woman is comin' back home late today  
Could ya' maybe give me something?  
'Cause the feelin' is gone  
And I must get it back right away  
Before she sees that I've been  
Up, down, tryin' to get the feelin' again  
All around tryin' to get the feelin' again  
The one that made me shiver  
Made my knees start to quiver  
Every time she walked in  
And I've looked high, low,  
Everywhere I possibly can  
But there's no tryin' to get the feelin' again  
It seemed to disappear as fast as it came  
Where did it run to?*

It is the vows, the commitment that marriage is a covenant and not a contract that gives you an “out” if expectations aren’t met. It is interesting that when we go back to Mark 10:7 in the KJV, it says Mark 10:7 (KJV): “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.” That word translated “cleave” means to be glued to or “stuck”. Kathy is “stuck” with me! I know that isn’t very romantic, but it is true. Really that “stuck” concept is included in biblical love (*agape*). C. S. Lewis speaking of this biblical love said, “In one high bound, [agape love] has overleaped the massive wall of our selfhood; it has made appetite itself altruistic [selfless], tossed personal happiness aside as a triviality and planted the interests of another in the center of our being”. [C. S. Lewis, Source Unknown]. It is in this uncommon love and commitment that we find security and safety. Feelings come, and feelings go, but in this uncommon commitment of agape love that we find joy.

I was listening to a preacher a few days ago who had an unconventional way of doing marriage counseling. A man (I think) came to the pastor and started laying out all that was wrong in the relationship. The pastor said, “Then you are telling me that the marriage is getting worse”. The man agreed. The pastor said, “You signed up for ‘worse’! You said that you took her

for better or worse and now it's worse, but you already made a vow for a time like this!" It you are experiencing that "worse" don't be surprised. You signed up for it. It requires an uncommon patience, uncommon forgiving, uncommon daily dying to be faithful and loving when there is disagreement and different views. Remember, you vowed "for worse".

## Conclusion

I've quoted more secular songs in this marriage than I typically do in a hundred messages. Let me do one more that is a positive example. I love the song *Forever and Ever, Amen* by Randy Travis.

*They say time takes its toll on a body  
Makes a young girl's brown hair turn gray  
Well, honey, I don't care, I ain't in love with your hair  
And if it all fell out, well, I'd love you anyway  
They say time can play tricks on a mem'ry  
Make people forget things they knew  
Well, it's easy to see it's happenin' to me  
I've already forgotten ev'ry woman but you  
Oh, darlin', I'm gonna love you forever  
Forever and ever, amen  
As long as old men sit and talk about the weather  
As long as old women sit and talk about old men  
If you wonder how long I'll be faithful  
Well, just listen to how this song ends  
I'm gonna love you forever and ever  
Forever and ever, amen*  
[Story of Allan and Hilda Gill and young couple in South Point]

Marriage God's way is without a doubt the best way, the God glorifying way, the impact culture way, and in the end, the most joyful way.

## NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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