

We come this week to our 5th question in our short series entitled, Pressing Questions—having recently seen Are you a loving husband, and Are you a submissive wife, I want to return to husbands and wives one last time, but this time with the question—Is your marriage God-honoring, in other words, this is a joint question for couples...

I. Five Descriptions of a God-honoring Marriage

A. It is a UNIFIED marriage

1. Before I come to these 5 descriptions, I want to say three things about marriage in general, by way of introduction...
2. [1] Marriage is God-ordained—that is, God created it, and only God, through His word, has right to define it...
3. There's a real sense in which God Himself conducted the first marriage, when He wed together Adam and Eve...
4. No man has the right to redefine or reinterpret what marriage is—God and God alone, is the Creator of marriage...
5. Thus—there is a very true sense in which marriage is Christian—marriage comes from the Holy Scriptures...
6. God created man and He created man for marriage—marriage is a blessing and a gift from God to mankind...
7. Now—it's true because of the fall, not every person will marry, singleness is a reality and its not sinful or shameful...
8. But—in a perfect and ideal world, every man would have had a wife, and a woman would have had a husband...
9. Brethren—God created marriage for a man and a woman, to leave their parents, and be joined together as one flesh...
10. Marriage between two men or two women, obviously is a vile distortion of God's loving and gracious purposes...
11. Doug Wilson—"Because God created Adam and Eve, homosexuality is excluded. Because Adam could find no helper for himself among the animals, bestiality is excluded. And because God created just one woman for Adam, polygamy is forbidden..."
12. [2] Marriage is essential to society—that is, it's the most foundational relationship to any prosperous society...
13. No sooner did God create Adam, then He created Eve for him, and joined them together as the first family...
14. Jay Adams—"The study of marriage, of the family, and of home life is the study of the most fundamental and basic institution in society. The church (in its formal sense) was not yet founded when God established the family as an institution. The state as a formal institution was not yet in existence when the family was brought into being. The family is foundational; it was first because it is basic..."
15. [3] Marriage is fundamentally religious—that is, it's intended to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church...
16. Thus, in the strict sense, only Christians can truly enter into the foremost purposes intended by God for marriage...
17. Now—this does not mean that marriage is only for Christians—marriage is a general blessing to man as a whole...
18. It's a part of what we call "common grace"—or God's generic love show to making lost, that brings temporal benefit...
19. But—and this is my main point—marriage was ordained of God, to mirror the relationship between Christ and His church...
20. Thus—these 5 descriptions of a God-honoring marriage, are also true of the relationship that exists between Christ and His church...

21. This brings us to the first description—a marriage that truly honors God, is in the first place a UNIFIED marriage...
22. This of course is also true of Christ and His Bride—who are unified through a spiritual and inseparable union...
23. Gen.2:23-24—"And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh..."
24. The first woman was taken "out of Man"—as a testimony of her purpose, to be a helper comparable to him...
25. Thus—v23 speaks of the diction between man and woman (husband and wife)—man was created first, woman from man, and for man...
26. But—v24 speaks of equality of union—both the man and woman, leave their parents and are joined together...
27. [a] Men and women leave their parents—they leave their parents physically, but also relationally, as they start a new family...
28. This of course doesn't mean they cease being sons and daughters, but there's a new family with new authority...
29. Wayne Mack—"To leave your parents means that your relationship to them must be radically changed. It means that you make the husband and wife relationship your priority human relationship..."
30. [b] Men and women cleave to one another—the Hebrew word rendered "joined" literally means—to cling to..."
31. The two shall be "glued together"—the concept is the two shall "stick together through thick and thin, bad and good times"...
32. They are joined together by way of a formal and sober vow—they covenant together before God to stay together...
33. [c] Men and women because one flesh—this is the result of leaving and cleaving—"and they shall become one flesh..."
34. The union that exists between a husband and wife, is so close and intimate, that it's as if—they become one person...
35. What does it mean to be "one flesh"—it means you share life together—you become a unit that's unbreakable...
36. Wayne Mack—"Marriage is a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death..."
37. Thus—here at this point, I want to take a few minutes and suggest, this marital unity is evident in three ways...
38. [1] Unified in goals—that is, in raising children, in vocational and financial issues, husbands and wives are united...
39. My wife and I have often commented, that together there isn't anything we can't do, that we make a powerful team...
40. Brethren, it is absolutely essential to ensure that husbands and wives are working together for the same goals...
41. This of course doesn't necessitate, that husbands and wives always agree on every point in every single point...
42. But—it does mean that husbands and wives, are fundamentally committed to the same things and same goals...
43. 2Cor.6:14—"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers"—this phrase is sometimes meant to mean, Christians can't enter into business relationships with unbelievers...
44. But actually—its meaning is much broader—Paul means by it, we must distance ourselves from this evil world...
45. It's likely that Paul is thinking of Deut.22:10—"You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together"—these would be "unequally yoked..."
46. An ox and donkey are simply too different—they are not compatible—they won't plow or till a single field...

47. This imagery also applies to marriage—Christians are commanded to marry "in the Lord"—that is—other Christians...
48. Why—because they are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers—people with opposing goals...
49. What a beautiful imagery for marriage—two people yoked together, laboring and working for the same goals...
50. [2] Unified in struggles—struggles, hardships, tribulations, and trials, are all realities every Christians will know...
51. In marriage we find someone who will go through the struggles with us, and who will encourage us in them...
52. Ecc.4:9-10—"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up..."
53. [3] Unified in successes—we not only share in the hard times and struggles, but also in the good times and successes...
54. Brethren, what a joy it is, to have someone not only to weep with, but laugh with, and share the joys of life...
55. Now—before I leave this first point, I want to suggest that all three of these aspects of unity are also found in Christ and the church...
56. Eph.5:30-31—"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh..."
57. Here—the apostle Paul quotes Genesis 2:23-24, which originally referred to Adam and Eve, and applies it to Christ and His church...
58. Christ came down from heaven (He left His Father), and sinners come out of this world (they leave their native parents)—"and the two shall become one flesh..."
59. [a] Unified in goals—what is the ultimate goal of Christ and the church—the advancement of His kingdom and His glory...
60. [b] Unified in struggles—Christ is so closely unified to His church, that when she suffers He suffers with her...
61. [c] Unified in successes—Christians not only share in Christ's sufferings, but also His success—"If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him..."

B. It is a LOVING marriage

1. Though love uniquely describes the responsibility of husbands, it's also the primary marital duty of both spouses...
2. [1] Love is the primary duty we owe our neighbor, Matt.22:39—"You shall love your neighbor as yourself..."
3. Your closest neighbor is not our physical neighbors, your fellow churchman, or even your children—but your spouses...
4. Because husbands and wives are one flesh, there is obviously no person closer to them—than their spouses...
5. [2] Love is the primary duty we own the brethren, Jn.14:34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another..."
6. Rom.13:8—"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law..."
7. 1Pet.1:22—"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart..."
8. 1Jn.3:11—"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (3:23; 4:7,11-12)..."
9. Brethren, surely we must keep this in mind, our Christian spouses are not only our neighbors, but our brethren...
10. And thus—all the general responsibilities and duties we have toward the brethren, we also have towards our spouses...

11. [3] Love is the mutual bond that unites us to Christ—we love Him and He loves us—it's a mutual affection...
12. Historically we make a distinction between the principle bond of union (Spirit), the instrumental bond (faith), and the mutual bond (love)...
13. A.W. Pink—"Where two persons really love each other, their mutual affection makes them to be one: they are wrapped up in each other. So there is a mutual, hearty, reciprocal love, between Christ and believers; he loves them, and they Him; and by virtue of that mutual love there is an intimate, experimental union between them. The husband and wife are one not merely by the marriage covenant – the legal tie and external relationship – but also and chiefly because of the love and affection there is between them. So it is betwixt Christ and His saints; love, stronger than death, knits them together.."
14. Now—since it's easy to say love is essential to a God-honoring marriage, I want to suggest love tangibly shows itself in three ways...
15. [a] Love shows itself in humility, 1Cor.13:4-5—"Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up...it does not seek its own..."
16. [b] Love shows itself in forbearance, 1Cor.13:4—"Love suffers long and is kind"—love is patient with others...
17. [c] Love shows itself in forgiveness, 1Cor.13:5—"Love keeps no record of wrongs"—love easily forgives...
18. Now—dear brethren, let me suggest, fewer things are more important to any healthy relationship than a proper theology of forgiveness...
19. Or, perhaps I can put it more broadly—central to any healthy relationship is the issue of addressing offenses...
20. Fundamentally, there are two proper ways to address an offense, and love enables us to do both—cover and confront...
21. [i] Love covers minor offenses—that is—love simply covers over petty and insignificant offenses without...
22. 1Pet.4:8—"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins..."
23. In this sense, forgiveness is similar to forbearance, patiently and graciously covering over the minor faults of others...
24. It thinks the best of others, it doesn't assume the worst—it doesn't interpret every word and glance as malicious...
25. Love easily covers over minor faults and offenses—it doesn't make a big issue about everything, it easily forgives...
26. [ii] Love confronts and covers all offenses—sometimes offenses are too serious to ignore and must be confronted...
27. In this case—love enables us to graciously and humbly, confront our spouses, and forgive when they repent...
28. Lk.17:3-4—"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, I repent, you shall forgive him..."
29. Eph.4:1-3—"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace..."
30. Eph.4:32—"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you..."
31. Now—before I go further, let me do as I did with the first description, apply this one to Christ and His church...
32. Let me ask you—how central is humility, forbearance, and forgiveness to Christ's relationship to the church...
33. Humility—though He dwelt eternally with His Father, He assumed human nature, and endured the suffering of the cross...
34. Forbearance—how patient dear brethren, was Christ to us before we became Christians, and even after we became Christians...

35. Forgiveness—this of course is at the very heart of Christ's love for us—He covered all of our sins from His view...
- C. It is an HONEST marriage
1. Surely brethren, no relationship (regardless of kind) can be healthy without honesty, sincerity, and truthfulness...
 2. Now—essential to an honest, sincere, and truthful relationship is communication—this is essential to marriage...
 3. Wayne Mack—"Wherever you find marital failure, you will find a breakdown in real communication. Wherever you find marital success, you will find a good communication system..."
 4. Jay Adams—"Communication is the basic skill needed to establish and maintain sound relationships. A sound husband and wife relationship is impossible apart from good communication..."
 5. Brethren, this is rather commonsense—no relationship can be healthy without honest and open communication...
 6. [1] Communication must be regular—that is—we must find time to have habitual and intentional conversation with our spouses...
 7. [2] Communication must be mutual—by this I mean—it's a two-way street—both must speak and both must listen...
 8. This I think is an important point—a person can tell when someone isn't truly listening to what they're saying...
 9. My wife, for example, knows when I'm not fully listening, because she sees me thinking about something else...
 10. [3] Communication must be revealing—by this I mean—communication must reveal the true and honest you...
 11. Brethren, it's tragic but possible, to spend a lifetime together, and never really and honestly know your spouse...
 12. Eph.4:25—"Therefore, putting away lying, Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another..."
 13. I read somewhere in Jay Adam's book *Christian Living in the Home*, that most relationships suffer from assumptions...
 14. That is—they are assuming certain things about each other, that in fact, are not true, they were only assumptions...
 15. Many husbands and wives are suspicious of the spouses, a suspicion often fuelled by a lack of open communication...
 16. Again—let me ask you a question—how important is honest communication in Christ's relation with His Bride...
 17. Regular—Christ is ever ready to speak to us through His word, and He exhorts His bride—"to pray at all times..."
 18. Mutual—Christ speaks to us through and by His word, and we speak to Him through prayer—it's a mutual communication...
 19. Revealing—Christ reveals Himself thoroughly throughout the word, and exhorts us to—"bear our souls to Him..."
- D. It is an INTIMATE marriage
1. No relationship on earth is intended to be as intimate as marriage—the two shall leave parents and become one flesh...
 2. No relationship comes close—husbands and wives should be closer than parents with children and children with siblings...
 3. [1] Physical intimacy, 1Cor.7:3-4—"Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does..."
 4. [2] Emotional intimacy—by this I mean, an intimacy that transcends the physical, and includes the emotional...

5. Perhaps the best way for me to describe what I here mean would be say—in marriage we find our closest friend...
6. Dear brethren, fewer things make me more happy and satisfied, then to spend time with by all-time best friend...
7. It grieves me to no end, to actually think, there are Christian marriages, where husband and wife are not best friends...
8. This is one obvious, and perhaps even primary purpose for marriage, companionship—"It is NOT GOOD for man to be alone..."
9. What a blessing it is, to have a wife or husband, that listens to all your problems, and is always willing to help...
10. Someone who knows you in a way no man or woman does, and yet, is committed to be with you through thick and thin...
11. [3] Spiritual intimacy—it's because of the physical and emotional ties, there exists a unique spiritual connection between husband and wife...
12. Again, I would appeal to the relationship we have with Christ, which is obviously a very intimate relationship...

E. It is a RELIGIOUS marriage

1. By "religious" I mean—any marriage that's going to honor God, necessarily must have true religion at it's heart...
2. I believe we are all convinced that religion, or spiritual things, is at the very heart of Christ's relationship to His church...
3. To put it another way—while Christ is concerned about His wife's physical needs, He's most concerned about her spiritual needs...
4. Thus—here's my point—a marriage that honors God, is concerned foremostly with each others' spiritual condition...
5. My friends, this is something I have become concerned about—the temptation to separate church and home...
6. While we necessarily distinguish the church from the home, we must never separate religion from the home...
7. [1] Pray for and with each other—husbands and wives should at least pray for each other every single day...
8. Edward Hartman—"Few activities hold greater potential in the Christian marriage and family than learning to enjoy praying together as a couple and as a family..."
9. 1Pet.3:7—"Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered..."
10. The "your" at the end of this verse is a plural pronoun—it refers to the prayers offered by husbands and wives...
11. The implication is this—husbands will be praying with their wives—yes, praying for, but also, praying with...
12. [2] Read the Bible and good books together—what a wonderful way to spend quality time together as a couple...
13. [3] Exhort each other daily in spiritual things, Heb.3:13—"exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin..."
14. Exhortation 1—here I would exhort all couples, to examine their own marriages by the 5 things suggested...
15. Exhortation 2—here I would exhort younger couples, to establish good habits now, that will last a long time...
16. Exhortation 3—here I would exhort older couples, it's never too late to make necessary changes in your marriage...