



UNCONDITIONAL LOVE:  
MARRIAGE IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Marriage In the World Is...

- Where we find our \_\_\_\_\_.
- The end of \_\_\_\_\_.

Marriage In the Word Is...

- **Designed to REFLECT:**
  - A temporary institution made to reflect an \_\_\_\_\_ reality. (Mk. 12:25; Mt. 22:30)
  - A reflection of Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ covenant with his church. (Eph. 5:22-33)

Modern Romantic Love	Biblical Covenant Love
Ultimately feelings-based	Ultimately promise-based
Lasts as long as you make me happy/meet my needs	Lasts until death (besides exception clauses)

- **Designed to TRANSFORM:**
  - Marriage is designed to make you \_\_\_\_\_. (Eph. 5:22-33)
    - Romantic love is *not* the solution to your brokenness!
  - Only \_\_\_\_\_ can satisfy your deepest longings for joy and satisfaction. (Ps. 16:11; Jn 10:10)
    - Aim to have a *now* marriage with a *then* marriage focus.

*It is not your love that sustains the marriage,  
but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.*  
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer



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Marriage In the World Is...

- Where we find our \_\_\_\_\_ **fulfillment** \_\_\_\_\_.
- The end of \_\_\_\_\_ **fun** \_\_\_\_\_.

Marriage In the Word Is...

- **Designed to REFLECT:**
  - A temporary institution made to reflect an \_\_\_\_\_ **eternal** reality. (Mk. 12:25; Mt. 22:30)
  - A reflection of Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ **unconditional** \_\_\_\_\_ covenant with his church. (Eph. 5:22-33)

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- **Designed to TRANSFORM:**
  - Marriage is designed to make you \_\_\_\_\_ **holy** \_\_\_\_\_. (Eph. 5:22-33)
    - Romantic love is *not* the solution to your brokenness!
  - Only \_\_\_\_\_ **Christ** \_\_\_\_\_ can satisfy your deepest longings for joy and satisfaction. (Ps. 16:11; Jn 10:10)
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**Marriage In the World Is...**

- Where we find our \_\_\_\_\_ **fulfillment** \_\_\_\_\_.

His needs her needs. We need our love tanks filled up. You complete me. It's a strategy for fulfilling our emotional and sexual desires. "You're everything I hoped for you're everything I need." And if it fails, it's because someone didn't hold up their end of the deal.

- The end of \_\_\_\_\_ **fun** \_\_\_\_\_.

Person who told me not to do it. Chris rock, "You can be sad and lonely or bored and married." The ball and chain. "Marriage is an institution, but who wants to live in an institution?" Only one sexual partner? Commitment? Lose freedom? For may be in here, you see marriage as dangerous. **Pray!**

**Marriage In the Word Is...**

- **Designed to REFLECT:**

- A temporary institution made to reflect an \_\_\_\_\_ **eternal** \_\_\_\_\_ reality. (Mk. 12:25; Mt. 22:30)

**My first wedding story!** Mt. 22:30 "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." I started with this text because talks about an element of marriage that is crucial but that no one ever talks about it and that is that marriage is meant to be temporary. That in the New Creation, while you may very well have a unique relationship with your now-spouse, you will not relate to one another as husband and wife. One day my marriage to Rebecca will give way to what it represented all along. Rev. 19:6-9. "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; 8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said[a] to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." and in **Rev. 21:2-4**, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." It's the dress rehearsal, not the play. And this is a critical piece of information, because knowing the fulfillment of marriage then helps shapes how we do marriage now. We want to have a *now* marriage with a *then* marriage focus...

- A reflection of Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ **unconditional** \_\_\_\_\_ covenant with his church. (Eph. 5:22-33)

Already talked about roles. Touch on covenant shape of Eph 5. "31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." Going to try and explain that. Specifically, the marriage covenant between a man and his wife serves as a reflection of the covenant relationship between Christ and his church.

And in this way marriage is really like a living visible parable of the gospel that the world watches. And if our marriages are designed to reflect the Gospel, then we'd better have a really good understanding of what the Gospel is.

Notice I used the word “unconditional” when I described the kind of covenant Christ has with his church—with believers. And it's really important that we understand it. I can't tell you how many people I come across who believe that God's love for them is fundamentally conditional. That means they relate to God as if his love for them depends on their performance for him. Conditional means “If you \_\_\_\_\_, then I will \_\_\_\_\_.” That God and I are in this relationship, and if I continue to try really hard to please him and live for his glory, he'll let me into heaven. I've even heard something like this: God has forgiven you of all the sins of your past and he's given you a second chance to get it right. No! That's probation.

The Gospel is not that if we try harder and do better God will love us. The Gospel is that no matter how hard we try and no matter how much we improve we could never do enough to deserve God's love. And yet there was someone who did. Someone who did everything we were supposed to do. Someone who never sinned. Never had a prideful or lustful thought or a sinful word. Someone who lived perfectly. Sometimes we think that God saw that his standard of perfection was too high for anyone to achieve so he lowered it so that we could go to heaven. Not true he saw that his standard was too high for us to meet so he sent his son to meet it. And he offers credit for his perfect record to anyone who repents and believes. Which means that when God looks at you—if you're a believer—he sees his sons' perfect righteousness. And if God's love for you is based on Christ's performance and not yours, then there's nothing you can do to lose God's love. It's by pure grace!!!

**Fast!** You look at Ephesians tells us that God set his affection on you before the foundation of the world. That with full knowledge of your sin and rebellion, he chose you are his treasured possession. Heb 12:2 says he is the originator of your faith. Phil. 1:6 says that the work God started in you he will complete. Paul says in Rom 8:39 that nothing will ever separate you from the love of God not because he so confident that you'll keep the faith but because he's confident that God will keep your faith, so that Jesus can say no one is able to snatch you out of the Father hand. It's why we sing Great is Thy faithfulness. The best news you can hear this morning God's commitment to you is greater than your ability to screw it up. The Jesus story book Bible calls this God's “Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love. That is what marriage is designed to reflect.

**Which means this: The marriage relationship isn't based on performance, compatibility, or feelings of love or happiness.**

And this is where the biblical view of marriage and our cultures view of marriage clash radically. See chart.

Modern Romantic Love	Biblical Covenant Love
Ultimately feelings-based	Ultimately promise-based
Lasts as long as you make me happy/meet my needs	Lasts until death (besides exception clauses)

Our culture sees marriage as a means of emotional and sexual fulfillment. Each person comes with a different set of needs. I'm marrying you because you make me happy and meet my needs, but when you don't I'll find someone who does, because life is too short to not be happy. In our culture, the stability of a marriage is only as good as each person's happiness in it. In marriage counseling I'll ask what will you do when the feelings go away and you're not happy in your marriage—if you'll split, then don't get married. It's not feelings based.

“It's based on compatibility.” That's why cohabitation is in style. It's helpful, but compatibility can never serve as the foundation of your marriage. You know why? Because they're going to change! They are not going to be the same person in 5 years!!!! “That's not the man I married!” If your marriage staying together depends on you remaining the 24 yo version of yourself for the next 50 years, good luck. Matt Chandler said “I've been married to 20 women and they've all been my wife.”

Biblical love isn't based on compatibility, not based on how happy I am. It's promised-based. As Christ has promised to stick with me, I've promised Christ that I'm going to stick with Rebecca. Marriage represents an unconditional covenant. Read what I said to Hayley! Bonhoeffer: "It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love." That means if you go down through all the layers of the marriage at the bottom isn't happiness it's a covenant. It's a promise I made to God. I said "I do" not "I will if I'm still in love". One of the keys to happiness in marriage is making sure that happiness isn't the foundation of your marriage.

Robertson McQuilkin was the president of Columbia Bible college and seminary. Wife got Alzheimers and went downhill... ..recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just "discontent." She is filled with fear—even terror—that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home. So it is clear to me that she needs me now, full-time... The decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel "in sickness and in health...till death do us part." So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; if I cared for her for the next 40 years I would not be out of her debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more: I love Muriel. She is a delight to me—her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I don't have to care for her. I get to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person." Robertson McQuilkin Marriage is designed to reflect God's unconditional covenant.

- Designed to TRANSFORM:

- Marriage is designed to make you holy. (Eph. 5:22-33)

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

God has designed marriage to be a instrument of sanctification. What is sanctification? Process of becoming more like Christ. Marriage is a holiness development initiative. All throughout Scripture we read about the one another. Be patient kind, gentle, forgiving one another, bearing one another's burdens, no bitterness, not just seeking your own interest. Where he takes selfish, impatient, ungrateful, selfish people, and puts them together in the same cage where they have to figure it out. Marriage is the arena is God train us and make us more like Christ. It can be painful—Mickey said "all of it" has been hard. No marriage is a fairy tale. But it is a journey—to Christ. And when you understand this, part of the joy of marriage is getting to watch the other person be gradually transformed into the image of Christ.

"Within this Christian vision of marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of what God is creating, and to say, "I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, 'I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!'" Keller God has handpicked your spouse as a tool to sharpen your rough edges, and make you holy. To push you towards Godliness and help form you in to the image of Christ. And he's called you to do the same for your spouse. My job is to prepare Rebecca for another husband; to prepare her for the day when this shadow gives way to what is represented all along—union to Christ. And marriage is the dress rehearsal—the prep work, the reenactment—for that glorious reality.

Now in saying what marriage is designed to do, we need to be equally clear about what it's *not* designed to do. Our culture sells us the lie that marriage or romantic love is the solution to your brokenness; that it is a key ingredient to true satisfaction and fulfillment in life. And we see the romantic comedies and we hear the music



on the radio, and we're tempted to think, I struggle with guilt and shame anxiety low self-esteem. But if I found someone they would make me feel valuable and safe and worthwhile. And if I had lover, I could look to them to find the joy and strength hope that I really need. They could carry me out of my brokenness and rescue me. But friends this won't work for two reasons.

First, this isn't love it's idolatry. In our culture there is this idea that the measure of your love is seen in how much you need them to be happy and fulfilled. How vital they are to your joy. If you couldn't live without them, that's deep love. "How do I, Get through one night without you? If I had to live without you, What kind of life would that be? Oh, I...I need you in my arms, need you to hold, You're my world, my heart, my soul, If you ever leave, Baby you would take away everything good in my life, And tell me now..How do I live without you?"

**Leann Rimes** If you danced to this at your wedding. I'm sorry. This is too often pitched as a picture of love to celebrate but if this is how you look to your spouse it's sin to repent of because you are placing them in a position in your heart that only God should occupy. If you look to someone to be your joy for today and hope for tomorrow when you say "I love you" what you really mean is "I worship you." So looking to our spouses to be our source of deepest joy hope places them in a position that only God should occupy.

And second, it asks them to give them what only God can give. No human can possibly satisfy your desire for your and happiness. And if you look to your spouse to do that for you and be your everything then you will crush them with unrealistic expectations—that they can never meet—and you'll think that when your relationship isn't working it's because your spouse it's doing a good enough job. I see this all the time. Where spouses look at one another and say: your job to facilitate my happiness. **Things start fine, then it's not as fun, then we chalk it up to irreconcilable differences.** We just fell out of love. This is why the divorce rate is 50%. You asked them to give you what only Christ can.

- Only **Christ** can satisfy your deepest longings for joy and satisfaction. (Ps. 16:11; Jn 10:10)

And it's only when you are satisfied in Christ that you will be free from demanding that your spouse be your joy in life. Will Smith "Her happiness was her responsibility and my happiness was my responsibility and we decided that we were going to find our individual internal, private joy and then we were going to present ourselves to the relationship and to each other, already happy. Not coming to each other, begging with our empty cups out demanding that she fill my cup and demanding that she meet my needs. It's unfair and it's kind of unrealistic and can be destructive..." I would say Jesus Christ. **Ps. 16:11, Jn. 10:10.** This freed up my marriage so much! I never came into thinking Rebecca could satisfy me. Your happiness is wrapped up in Christ fueled by the joy or his glory and the intimacy you have with him so that you don't come to your spouse with your empty cup but with a cup that has sipped from the river of delights and are then able to pour into your spouse out of the fullness you have in Christ with the ultimate hope of seeing him face to face and being united with him. That's the end game. That's our ultimate hope. That's what marriage points to from the second you say I do!

John Piper wrote a book called This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence. He's talking about how marriage is just a temporary picture of something that will find it's permanent expression when we see Christ...writing to his wife he says. **Noël, if we live another twenty years (till I am eighty-two and you are eighty), the marriage will be sixty years old. And judging from what I see in the Bible and my memory, it will have been a momentary marriage. But it has been so much more than momentary. It is a parable of permanence written from eternity about the greatest story that ever was. The parable is about Christ and his church. It has been a great honor to take this stage with you. What exalted roles we have been given to play! Someday I will take your hand, and stand on this stage, and make one last bow. The parable will be over, and the everlasting Reality will begin.** Solve conflict like that is true. Serve like that is true. Encourage like that is true. Forgive like that is true. Are you guilty of looking to your spouse to be your everything? **Marriage Video**