

Biblical Foundations of Marriage

God's Word Above all Things

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Chapter Synopsis

Chapter one—Laying the groundwork. Every person has some idea as to what marriage is supposed to be like. These views are formed by culture and tradition. All culture and tradition are not wrong, but where they conflict with the Bible there must be a willingness to conform to what God says. Romans 12:1, 2 instruct us to renew our minds in order to please God. This means people must change their worldview. A worldview is that lens through which a person views everything. The problem is that many people are told to change their minds in their own strength. Married couples are told to spend time with each other, go on dates, or work on their communication skills. This is called moralizing. Moralizing is telling people to do things to please God without the help of the Holy Spirit. This is wrong advice. All of our good works are considered by God as filthy rags. While changes in behaviour may help, it does not get to the root of the problem. There must be a deeper, more long lasting change than just behavioural change. We will hear more about this in chapter two.

In order to have a good beginning we must define the words in the title.

By “biblical”, we mean that both the Old Testament and the New Testament are the authoritative Word of God. Jesus and the Apostle Paul quoted from the Old Testament as being authoritative.

By “foundations”, we mean that there are absolutes. Contrary to what people are being taught today, God has set up certain rules for marriage. These rules are valid no matter what the age, culture, or nation.

By “marriage”, we mean that it is a union between one man and one woman. Marriage is God’s idea. Neither the culture nor the church

instituted marriage. God brought Eve to Adam thus making the first marriage.

Chapter two—Loving from the heart. Jesus taught us that what we say and do comes from the heart. Unless there is a heart change any other change is only temporary and cannot please God. We must also look to see what we worship. Everyone worships something. If anything comes between us and Jesus, this “anything” then effectively becomes our god. It becomes our idol. Marriage itself can become our main goal and thus become an idol. Marriage is not primarily to make us happy. Rather marriage is an instrument that God uses to make the two people more holy. In other words it is a vehicle to make us more like Jesus. Love is more than romance. Christ like love is self-sacrificing love. It is willingness for one spouse to give up something for the other. Many times this can hurt very much.

Chapter three—Creation of humanity. It is very important to remember that God made us in his image. All people, both men and women, have value and dignity because they were made in the image of God. Cultures will often give more status and worth to certain groups of people. This cultural value system must be challenged because it is contrary to God’s will. God made man and woman differently. However, one is not inferior to the other. God made the man and the woman to work together more effectively than if they each worked separately. From Scripture it is clear that God made Adam, the man, to be the leader and Eve, the woman, to be submissive. Sin brings challenges in these roles. We need to understand clearly the biblical teaching about femininity and masculinity.

Chapter four—What does a biblical marriage look like? Scripture is clear in its blueprint for marriage. This blueprint is seen in the “leave, cleave, and become one flesh.”

By “leave”, we mean that the people who are to be married need to leave their parents. They leave the authority of their parents and form their own family. Contrary to what many people believe this leaving does not mean a complete disregard for one’s parents after marriage.

By “cleave”, we mean that the husband and wife must now hold on to each other. Of all human relationships on the earth, this relationship between the husband and the wife is the most important. Even when children come, the relationship between husband and wife is most important.

By “one flesh”, we mean more than just the physical. One flesh includes the physical union but it also reflects the oneness there is in purpose and emotions. They still retain their uniqueness but now they work together as one person. It needs to be understood that sex is not a dirty word. It has become a bad word only because of how it has been misused. God made this physical union to be beautiful between two married people. Marriage is often seen only as a contract. It is much more because God calls it a covenant. There is a big difference between a covenant and a contract.

Chapter five—Significance of the Fall. Everything that has been talked about up until now is before sin came into the world. Sin changed everything. Our worldview is different. What God has called good is now called evil by the world. Men and women misuse their God-given roles. Men would abuse or abandon their leadership roles. Women would rebel in their submissive function, instead seeking the leadership roles. Rather than working towards what is best for the other person, people work for his or her own purposes. This includes the husband and wife as they live together on a daily basis.

Chapter six—Role of the husband as defined by Scripture. God made man the head of the family. Man’s headship began in the Garden of Eden and continues to the present. Though sin has corrupted everything, God has a

plan for the husband-wife relationship. It is important to remember the relationships that exist between the persons of the Trinity. What we find in the Godhead is the same that God requires between husband and wife. There is leadership and submission as well as equality. Ephesians 5 makes it very clear that God's idea of authority has not changed. The husband is commanded to provide loving leadership. The husband's role model is Christ. He loves and takes care of his wife as Christ loves and cares for the church.

Chapter seven—Role of the wife as defined by Scripture. God made woman to be a helper. She is to follow the husband's lead. She is called to submit. Submission is a basic teaching throughout the Bible so it is no surprise that there is submission in the marriage relationship. There are both correct ways and sinful ways to be submissive and these ways need to be explained clearly.