

MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO GOD *(Ephesians 5:25-33)*

When the Apostle Paul addressed the issue of marriage in his epistle to the Ephesian believers, he was writing to a group of people living in a culture which debased and corrupted the sanctity of biblical marriage. Today's culture still reflects the perverted views and practices of marriage. Reflecting from Paul's instruction concerning this issue, here are two glorious truths about marriage according to God Himself.

1. Marriage is a _____ from God.

In the course of his discussion about the role of the husband and wife in a marriage relationship, Paul alludes to the original divine design of marriage in Genesis 2. He writes: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). In the creation account of Genesis 2, God created the woman as a helper suitable for the man (Gen. 2:18-23). The Lord provided the woman as His precious gift to the man. God Himself is also the One who instituted marriage as a sacred union and lifetime bond between the husband and the wife (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:6). Marriage then should be regarded as a valuable and sacred gift and blessing from God which should be honored, treasured and enjoyed (Prov. 5:18; 18:22; Eccl. 9:9).

2. Marriage displays the glory of _____ for the church.

Paul further explains that the sacred union of the husband and wife points to a much greater and more glorious relationship. He puts it this way: "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). God has chosen to display the glory of Christ's covenant love for His church through marriage. Marriage exists to reflect the glory of God in saving His people through Christ's death on the Cross (Ezek. 16:8; Lk. 22:20; Eph. 5:25).

Since marriage is patterned after Christ's covenant relationship to the church, one's marriage vow involves a covenant of sacrificial love (Eph. 5:25; 1 Jn. 4:10). However unworthy and sinful we are, the Lord Jesus Christ chose to bind Himself in a loving covenant with us by giving His life to redeem us. Sacrificial love in marriage means a total commitment and wholehearted allegiance to one's spouse until death. This kind of love covers a multitude of sins, failures and weaknesses. It also entails faithfully clinging to your covenant promise no matter what happens.

A Christ-honoring marriage vow also involves a covenant of mutual sanctification (Eph. 5:25-27). The Lord Jesus had a sacred goal when He died for His people. His goal is to sanctify His church, to set us apart and to purify us from the guilt of our sins so that we would be radiant, blameless and holy. One's marriage vow entails the commitment to promote the spiritual beauty of one's spouse. A marriage which glorifies God is devoted to see one's spouse grow in increasing holiness, in purity of heart and in practical godliness.
