

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

THE TRUTH ABOUT MARRIAGE

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

The divine arrangement for marriage is in trouble. Statistics reveal that approximately one in every two marriages ends in divorce. Years ago this was practically unheard of. But today marriage is “put on” and “put off” with such frivolity that the failure of marriages is a common thing. We need to understand today that God has much to say about the subjects of marriage and divorce. If we understand the purpose of marriage, and God’s teaching on divorce, it will help increase the importance and value of marriage in our minds.

All the way back to the earliest chapters of Genesis—in Genesis 2:18—the Bible records, “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’” As a result, we are told in Genesis 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” From the very beginning, God made the marriage arrangement to be one man and one woman for life. Today, then, if we understand what marriage is all about, if we understand the purpose of marriage, if we understand God’s arrangement for the home, and if we understand how marriages can be like God wants them to be, then marriages will be a success once more. It is true that if marriage is going to be successful, it will become that way only if people are willing to follow the will and teaching of God, Who Himself created marriage. Your marriage can be great, and it can be successful. But there are certain things that you must understand about marriage, and about the purpose of marriage, for it to be successful.

I believe that your marriage can be great if you understand why God created marriage, and if you understand the purpose of marriage in this life. Why did God create the home? Why did God create Eve for Adam? Why did God institute marriage? We learn insights into these things in Genesis 2:18. God created marriage to provide companionship. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and as a result He made a helper for man. It is a proven fact that man generally does not fare well alone. Man was created to have a companion with whom to share his feelings, thoughts, joys, and sorrows. No one likes to be alone in life. It’s a proven fact that loneliness causes lots of problems in our day and age. What is one of the purposes of marriage? It is to provide needed companionship. How thankful we ought to be for the companion that God provides for us, and for the fact that we do not have to spend life alone. Instead, we can have someone with whom to share this life.

Another purpose of marriage, as found in the early chapters of Genesis, is the propagation of the human race. In Genesis 1:26-28 God’s command to Adam and Eve was that they should be fruitful and multiply in order to fill the Earth. God created marriage so that the human race could grow and increase. Children are one of the reasons that marriage can be seen as an institution from God. This allows us to have someone to carry on our heritage, and gives us someone else with whom to share our joys in this life.

Another purpose for marriage is to be able to help one another to get to Heaven. Although marriage certainly allows for companionship, and although it allows for the propagation of the human race, perhaps one of the most important benefits of marriage is so that mates

can help one another get to Heaven. In Genesis 2:18 God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so He provided a helper comparable to him. Was this helper merely to wash dishes, do the laundry, cook, and clean? No, that is not why God provided men with wives. That is not why God set up the institution of marriage. God gave Adam a helper for one main high and holy reason—so that each of the mates could help one another get to Heaven. Our mates can serve along life's road to pick us up when we get down, and hold our hand in this pilgrimage we call "life." Before people get married, if they were to realize that this is one of the purposes of marriage, then they would know to ask themselves, "Before I enter into this marriage, is this person going to help me get to Heaven? Will this person help me grow spiritually? Does this person have an eternal goal in mind? Or are we just living for the flesh?" The divine purpose of marriage is to help one another get to Heaven.

Marriage also was instituted by God to prevent immorality. From 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 we learn that it is "better to marry than to burn" (in the passions and lusts of the flesh). People ought to marry rather than giving in to sexual immorality. This, then, is one of the purposes of marriage. It is not the reason **to** get married. But it is a by-product of marriage—so that we do not have to live in sexual immorality.

Another reason for marriage is to help people develop spiritually. I believe that God gave man a wife, and gave woman a husband, so that they could help each other grow spiritually. Ephesians 5:21-31 presents a beautiful depiction of marriage. Husbands are to love their wives, and wives are to submit to their husbands, even as we are all to submit to Christ. In this arrangement, we are all to give God the glory. The text of 1 Peter 3:7 tells us that husbands are to dwell with their wives "with understanding." Thus, a part of marriage is having the ability to develop spiritually in this life.

If we want our marriages to be what God wants them to be, and if we want our marriages to be successful, we must let God and the Bible be our standard. I want to suggest that most marriages are ending today because most people have not turned their marriages over to God and the Bible. They are not living according to God's will, and they are not letting the Bible be the guide for their marriage. As a result, they are going in directions that are not approved by God. We must allow God and the Bible to be the standard of marriage if it is going to be a success. For example, God ought to be the foundation and center of every marriage. The Bible says in Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." It can be said of marriage that unless it is held together and strengthened by Christian principles, it will be a vain effort to make the marriage work because God is not at its center. There will always be things like selfishness, pride, and lust that get in the way. Marriage must be held in reverence, and the only way to accomplish that is to put God at the center of marriage. Husbands and wives should make it their goals in life to help each other to be more godly. Marriage is a divine institution, and in it the husband and wife should strive every day to grow together in Christ and to be more God-like in their lives. We can let God and the Bible be the standard for marriage if we study the Bible with each other. One of the things in the past that held the home together was the fact that husbands, wives, and children would sit down and study the Bible together. What a great strength that was for the family. And what a great strength it is for any person today. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:15 that we are to study to show ourselves approved unto God as workmen "who needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." If the individual is to study, then the family should study as well. We see this in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 where Moses instructed the people of God to teach their children God's truths. Moses wrote:

“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

At every available opportunity, parents are to teach their children the Word of God. We need to study the Bible with our mates. We need to study the Bible with our children.

Another thing that will help is for us to learn to pray together, and to pray for each other. James teaches us about the power of prayer in James 5:16—“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” If we want to have help in the home and with our marriages, then we must pray together. As a family, we must pray for each other, that we will grow together and learn to love the Lord more. In Luke 18:1, Jesus said, “Men ought always to pray, and not lose heart.” We must not grow discouraged, but should instead turn to God in prayer. We know, of course, that when it comes to prayer, there are certain guidelines that must be followed, even in the home. For example, we learn from 1 Timothy 2:8 that men are to do the praying everywhere. Men are to be the leaders in prayer. That does not mean, of course, that as a man prays, a woman cannot pray along silently along with him (or that children cannot do the same). But we need to pray together and for each other.

Most important, however, we need to be willing to put God before each other. Before a person marries, he should ask his potential mate, “Do you love God more than me?” Any person who loves God more than you has your best interest at heart. If they love God more than you, then they naturally are going to want to make God happy. And, as the Bible teaches, they will want to live by the principles that will make marriage a success. Jesus taught in Matthew 10:37, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” We could include in that sentiment, “He who loves wife or husband more than Me is not worthy of Me.” If a person does not love God more than his family, then that person is not worthy of being a follower of Christ. God always must come first in the home. Matthew 6:33 teaches, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things [food, shelter, and clothing] shall be added to you.”

For marriage to be a success, the standard of living in the home must be God’s Word. Until we decide that each marriage is going to be guided by “the marriage manual”—God’s Word—then marriage never will be the success that God intends for it to be. I love the words of Joshua in Joshua 24:15, which ought to be the motto for every home: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” That should be the motto for every single marriage today. We need to let God be the center of our homes, and we need to live our lives according to His Word. This means that matters in the home will be decided by the Word of God. It does not matter what the husband’s opinion is, or what the wife’s opinion may be. What really matters (if the marriage is to be a success) is what the Word of God says. In Jeremiah 37:17 the question is asked, “Is there any word from the Lord?” There is word from the Lord on every subject. We simply need to turn to God’s Word and do what it says. I love the example of Mary in John 2:5. As Jesus was about to turn the water into wine, Mary said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” What a great idea for the home that is. When we decide on matters, and there are varying opinions or disagreements, on **all** matters we simply need to let the Bible be our guide. In fact, husbands and wives need to help each other live up to God’s Word. They should not discourage or look down on one another. Instead, they should help each other live up to the Word of God. They should help each other to grow spiritually and in the application of the Bible to their lives. Parents need

to make sure that their children are trying to live their lives according to the Bible. Parents have a divine command from God to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. God and the Bible must be central to our marriage.

Another thing that can help marriage be successful is for the husband and wife to be truly committed to one another. When people make wedding vows they often include the phrase, “till death do us part.” Often, however, they do not actually mean that. The idea is that the husband and wife should be committed to each other, and should forsake all others. The husband and wife must be committed to staying with each other. Genesis 2:24 teaches us the idea that we must be committed to leaving father and mother: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Part of the commitment required of those who would be married is that they be willing to “leave father and mother.” In matters of expediency, what someone’s mother or father did or did not do should not rule a couple’s marriage. Part of the problem in some marriages is that one of the mates cannot let go of mom and dad. There has been no “leaving behind” of father and mother. Rather, one of the mates will continually call his or her mom or dad on the phone. In reality, the husband and wife are to work out their problems together—which is why God gave them each other.

We need to be committed to permanency in marriage. A lot of people say “till death do us part,” but they really do not mean it. A lot of people say, “I do,” when in reality there is a question mark in the back of their minds. We need to be committed to saying, “This is permanent. This is my one chance to have a successful relationship in this life.” Malachi 2:16 says, “God hates putting away [divorce].” It is not something of which God approves. God intended marriage to be one man and one woman for life. Anything contrary to that is against the will of God. We understand, of course, that in Matthew 19:9 Jesus said, “Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” There is an exception made regarding divorce for fornication. But it was never God’s intention for that to be the case. Rather, God intended marriage to be permanent —“till death do us part” (Rom. 7:1-4). People should think to themselves, “When we do this, it is for life. We must make it last, regardless.”

In marriage, we need to be committed to facing the problems of life together. This is the idea behind “for better or for worse.” There are going to be good days in marriage. But there also are going to be bad days and difficult times. What separates the Christians’ successful marriages from others is that they are determined to stick together through both the good and the bad. Some people want to stick together only through the good. But we must be committed to sticking together all the way through marriage—even through the difficult times. If two people will stick together during the difficult times in marriage, they will learn that they come out stronger on the other side, love and appreciate each other more, and have a stronger desire to go to Heaven.

In the marriage relationship, of course, we must be willing to provide for one another. From 1 Timothy 5:8 we learn that if a man will not provide for those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel. Proverbs 31 provides the example of the virtuous woman who helps provide for her family. Thus, there is a commitment to each other in every area of life. If the husband and wife are both committed to making marriage work in every way, then it will be a success.

But in order for marriage to be successful, the husband and wife must be bound by love. The Song of Solomon says that “love is as strong as death.... Many waters cannot quench love” (8:6-7). The idea is that love is strong, and is what binds the marriage together. Do you really have that type of love—the type of love discussed in 1 Corinthians 13 that puts

others before yourself? It is the type of love that is sacrificial. Husbands, do you love your wives as Ephesians 5 commands? We are to love our wives as ourselves, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. God did not set up husbands to be dictators or tyrants. Rather, they are to be leaders in the home so that they can help their wives and children get to Heaven by loving them just as husbands love themselves. This means that husbands will always look out for their family's best interest. Husbands will always try to do what is most beneficial. Husbands will never do any harm to their families. And wives are to love their husbands in a similar fashion, and submit to their authority and leadership. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-3 we learn that God is the Head of Christ, Christ is the Head of man, and man is the head of woman. In the divine arrangement, God established man as the head and leader of the home. Wives must understand that they are to submit to their husbands, and children are to obey their parents. That, then, is what will help the home function as God intended for it to function. Thus, these are some things that will help marriage be successful.

Now I want us to think about the subject of divorce and remarriage as well. We need to understand that the Bible has a lot to say about divorce. God never intended for divorce to take place. But He did make allowance for the innocent party to divorce his or her mate when fornication occurs, and to remarry. We are not talking about the guilty party. We are talking about the innocent party—the one against whom the guilty party has committed adultery. Notice what the Bible says concerning divorce. In Genesis 2:24 we find God's arrangement for the home. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." When God established marriage, His intention was that a man and woman should leave their fathers and mothers and be permanently joined together in this life. That was God's original plan—one man and one woman together for life. That is how God set it up. God never intended for divorce to occur. But we know that it did occur among God's people.

Another passage that deals with divorce is Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Moses wrote concerning divorce:

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance."

God told the people that if a man finds "some uncleanness" in his wife, he could divorce her. Many Bible scholars believe that phrase refers to sexual uncleanness, indicating that the wife had done things that were sexually impure, and had not been upright regarding her marriage vows. In such an instance, the husband could write her a certificate of divorce. Again, this goes hand in hand with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:9. Moses allowed the people to divorce during that time. But again, from the beginning God has hated divorce. Look at Malachi 2:16—"For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, 'for it covers one's garment with violence,' says the Lord of hosts. 'Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.'" What is God's view of divorce? God hates for divorce to occur. It is something that He despises. It is against His original institution of marriage. It destroys homes. It leaves people in a world of hurt. And children especially are affected negatively by divorce. Thus, God said that He hates divorce.

Has God ever commanded someone who was in an unscriptural marriage to get out of that marriage? Yes, He has. If two people enter into a marriage relationship, divorce for reasons other than fornication, and then marry other people, they are not married according to the law of God. To be right, they must repent of those evil actions—which means that they must stop committing the sin and get out of that “marriage.” Look at Ezra 10:3, where we find an example of some people whom God told to get out of their ungodly marriages.

“Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.”

These people were in unscriptural marriages. They had married people whom God had told them not to marry. As a result, in order to get back in a right relationship with God, they had to get out of their sinful marriages and stop living sinful lives. Today, then, if people are not in a scriptural marriage, and if they have been living in adultery, to get right with God they must repent—which means that they must stop committing the sin and get out of their sinful state so that they can live a single life that is acceptable in God’s sight. Someone might ask, “Where does the Bible say that the only acceptable reason for divorce is fornication?” Jesus said this in Matthew 19:9, which is the only reason for divorce within the Scriptures. “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” The basic principle is this: If you divorce your wife for any reason other than fornication, and then you marry another, you are committing adultery. If your divorced wife marries someone else, then she also commits adultery. The exception is “except for sexual immorality.” This means that if a man divorces his wife because she has committed sexual immorality (fornication), and has had some sort of sexual relations with someone else, then God allows the innocent party to divorce his wife and remarry someone else who is a scriptural candidate for marriage. So, the Bible does teach that there is only one reason for divorce—fornication. And only the innocent party may remarry.

Now I want to turn your attention to Hebrews 13:4. I believe that this passage can help us understand God’s teaching on marriage, and how marriage ought to be held in honor. The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” How can we help marriages today? We can help by keeping marriage honorable. Marriage is something that ought to be put on a pedestal, so to speak. It should be something that young people look up to as honorable—something to be desired and achieved because it is the right thing to do. The marriage bed must be undefiled because it is something that is holy in God’s sight. God said that whoremongers and adulterers (those who live sexually immoral lives) God will judge. May God help our marriages to be right as we put Him at their center, by letting the Bible be our guide in marriage, by being committed to one another, and by truly loving one another as the Bible says we should. May we understand that God’s teaching on marriage and divorce is very strict, and that if we are not willing to follow that teaching, then our souls will be in jeopardy.

The greatest “marriage” that we could discuss is your relationship to the Lord. Becoming a child of God is likened unto marriage (Rom. 7:1-4). Christ is the Bride, and thus we, as God’s children, must be in a relationship that is right in God’s sight. Are you in a right relationship with God today? Have you obeyed the Gospel? Are you a New Testament Christian? If not, you can become one by hearing God’s Word, believing that Jesus is God’s Son, repenting of your past sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and being baptized in water for the remission of your sins. It is my hope and prayer that God will bless your marriage as you seek to do His will.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE TRUTH ABOUT MARRIAGE”

1. Studying the subject of marriage is important for many reasons, not the least of which is the current divorce rate in America. What is that divorce rate?
2. One of the best ways to ensure that a marriage does not fail is to make certain that it is built upon a solid foundation. According to this lesson, what is that foundation?
3. According to Genesis 2:18, what is one of the reasons that God instituted marriage?
4. Explain the meaning of Hebrews 13:4.
5. In 1 Corinthians 7:9, Paul wrote that it is “better to marry than to burn.” Assuming that his comment was made in reference to marriage, what is its meaning?
6. According to Romans 7:3, what is one scriptural reason for one of the parties in a marriage to eventually remarry?
7. According to Matthew 19:9, what is the only God-approved reason for a husband and wife to divorce?
8. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:5 that if problems arise in a marriage, a couple can take a certain action. What is that action and how long should it last?
9. According to Malachi 2:16, what does God hate?
10. Genesis 1:28 gives one of the reasons for marriage. What is that reason?
11. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 imparts instructions to parents regarding their children. What is the essence of those instructions?
12. According to 1 Peter 3:7, how are husbands to treat their wives?
13. Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3 both designate a specific function in the home to the husband. What is that function?
14. Joshua 24:15 provides instruction that ought to serve as a motto for every home. What is that instruction?
15. What does Ephesians 5:22 tell wives to do in regard to their husbands?
16. According to both Old and New Testament teaching, how long did God intend for a couple’s marriage to last?
17. According to the teaching found in Song of Solomon 8:6, how strong should a person’s love be for his or her mate?
18. According to Ephesians 5:25, how are husbands to love their wives?