

God's Meaning of Marriage

- **Marriage** covenant is a binding agreement between a man and a woman who are legally and spiritually joined together as husband and wife. Jesus says of the husband/wife relationship

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"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6).

- **Marriage** ceremony refers to the rite of joining a man and a woman in wedlock.

"She is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. ... So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth."

(Malachi 2:14–15)

The Covenant Commitment

- The marriage covenant is not just between two people, but between two people *and* God.
"What God has joined together, let no one separate" (Mark 10:9).
- The marriage covenant requires self-sacrifice and a commitment till death.
"May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:18).
- The marriage covenant holds each person singly responsible to demonstrate a covenant of love and loyalty, even if the mate does not respond accordingly.
"As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).
- The marriage covenant keepers realize that keeping a lifetime commitment is a continual process of submitting their will to God, allowing Him to develop the character of Christ in them.
"I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace" (Acts 20:24).

God's Heart on Marriage

Throughout Scripture, God has given us insight into His heart regarding marriage. Clearly, His mind-set has always been that the marriage relationship is ...

- To be honored and kept pure
"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4).
- To provide companionship and intimacy
"However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).
- To exhibit unity
"Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand'" (Matthew 12:25).
- To last a lifetime
"For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him" (Romans 7:2).
- To not end in divorce
"I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel (Malachi 2:16 NLT).
- To avoid contamination by hardened hearts
"Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery'" (Matthew 19:8–9).
- To share oneness of spirit, soul, and body
"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Wives, Your Husband Desires ...

- **Respect:** *"... the wife must respect her husband"* (Ephesians 5:33).
 - Reaffirm his positive character traits.
 - Reassure him of his capabilities.
 - Respect his burden of responsibility.

- **Companionship:** *“The two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one ...”* (Mark 10:8).
 - Develop mutual interests that the two of you can share.
 - Discuss knowledgeably your husband’s job and work environment.
 - Determine to become interested and/or proficient in activities your husband likes.
- **Household Support:** *“She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness”* (Proverbs 31:27).
 - Maintain a peaceful home atmosphere.
 - Manage the home efficiently.
 - Maximize your efforts together to plan for the family’s future.
- **Attractiveness:** *“She is clothed with strength and dignity ...”* (Proverbs 31:25).
 - Develop inner beauty that earns respect.
 - Display inner strength regardless of outward circumstances.
 - Dress in an appropriate, feminine manner.
- **Sexual Fulfillment:** *“Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life”* (Proverbs 31:11–12).
 - Be willing to be a responsive wife.
 - Be willing to communicate your sexual needs.
 - Be willing to give assurance that your husband is sexually adequate.
- **Honesty:** *“An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips”* (Proverbs 24:26).
 - Commit to being totally truthful with her.
 - Confide in her your true thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires.
 - Communicate your plans clearly and thoroughly.
- **Financial Security:** *“Anyone who does not provide ... for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Timothy 5:8).
 - Shoulder financial responsibility for the family.
 - Strategize with her on how to best use finances.
 - Set a budget together to deal with debt and to plan for the future.
- **Commitment:** *“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers”* (1 Peter 3:7).
 - Seek to make your wife and family your highest earthly priority.
 - Schedule quality and quantity time alone with her.
 - Speak often about your commitment to her.

Key Verse to Memorize

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
(Ephesians 5:21)

Key Passage to Read

Ephesians 5:22–33

*“Not looking to your own interests
but each of you to the interests of the others.”*
(Philippians 2:4)

Husbands, Your Wife Desires ...

- **Affection:** *“Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them”* (Colossians 3:19).
 - Tenderly hug, hold, and kiss her.
 - Tell her how much you love and care for her.
 - Take time to learn what speaks love to her and put it into action.
- **Communication:** *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen”* (Ephesians 4:29).
 - Learn to share your feelings with her, not just your thoughts.
 - Listen with concern and interest.
 - Lovingly encourage her while complimenting her positive character traits.

How to Divorce-Proof a Marriage

- **Become** aware of your vulnerability.
 - “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty”* (Proverbs 22:3).
- **Guard** the gateway to your mind against inappropriate thoughts and influences.
 - “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things”* (Philippians 4:8).
- **Focus** on building up your mate.
 - “Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- **Value** and practice forgiveness.
 - “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32).

- **Keep** the lines of communication open.
"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal"
 (1 Corinthians 13:1).
- **Confide** in another committed Christian.
"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed"
 (Proverbs 15:22).
- **Renew** your commitments.
"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5–6).

Mutual Submission

- **Choose** to live under your God-given authorities.
 (Romans 13:1)
- **Choose** to pray for those in authority over you.
 (1 Timothy 2:1–2)
- **Choose** to respect the position rather than the personality.
 (Romans 13:1)
- **Choose** to sacrificially submit to others out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:2)
- **Choose** to please others rather than seeking your own way.
 (Philippians 2:3)

- **Choose** to put your future in the hands of God.
 (Jeremiah 29:11)
- **Choose** to be submissive, even if it means hardship and suffering. (Romans 5:3–4)
- **Choose** to thank God, regardless of the end result.
 (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Covenant Checklist

- C**ommit to working through problems, not walking away.
 (1 Corinthians 7:27)
- O**ffer love to your mate even when you don't feel like it.
 (1 Corinthians 13:4–8)
- V**iew your marriage as God's setting for spiritual growth.
 (Proverbs 15:31)
- E**liminate the emphasis on your rights. (James 1:19–20)
- N**urture your identity in Christ. (Galatians 2:20)
- A**sk God to change you. (Psalm 51:10)
- N**ourish your extended family relationships. (Exodus 20:12)
- T**urn your expectations over to God. (Psalm 62:1–2, 5)

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