

Marriage Is Not Old-fashioned



SABBATH—JULY 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 2:18-25; John 2:1-11; Ephesians 5:22-33; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

MEMORY VERSE: “Husbands, love your wives. Love them just as Christ loved the church. He gave himself up for her [the church]” (Ephesians 5:25, NIV).

ALL THROUGH THE BIBLE, THE IMAGE (PICTURE) OF MARRIAGE IS STRONG. Sometimes the images are of good marriages. Sometimes the images are of bad marriages. Sometimes the images show faithfulness. Sometimes they show unfaithfulness.

Marriage is often used in the Bible as a symbol for the relationship (connection) between the Lord and His people. This tells how seriously the Lord takes marriage. It also tells us that marriage is special.

This week, we will look at some Bible principles¹ about marriage.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What can we learn about marriage from the Genesis story? How should a husband treat his wife? How does Jesus' death show an important principle necessary for creating a good marriage?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 24.

¹principles—basic rules that are the basis for more specific rules.

SUNDAY—JULY 18

MARRIAGE IN EDEN
(Genesis 2:18-25).

What basic principles can we find in Genesis 2:18-25 about the husband/wife relationship (connection)? How can this story help us understand God's ideal for marriage? As you read, ask yourself the following questions: (1) Why is it important that Eve was created out of Adam's physical body? (2) What do Adam's words in Genesis 2:23 mean? (3) When they saw each other naked, why were they not ashamed?



Marriage is a gift God gave us in Eden.

Genesis 2:18-25 shows there is to be a special love relationship between a husband and wife. Husbands and wives are to share both a physical and spiritual

closeness. No other person has the right to break this closeness. God blesses marriage. Marriage is something holy that has remained from Eden. So it is important that we hold marriage dear.

How do both Paul and Peter point to the special closeness in a marriage? Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7. What principles should control how the husband treats the wife?

Notice how many times Peter and Paul say that the husband should love the wife. In Ephesians, Paul advised husbands to love their wives with the same self-sacrificial love that led Jesus to love the church.

Think about the idea of Jesus' death as an example of the self-sacrificing love that husbands should have for their wives. What great changes could the husband's self-sacrificing love bring to a home and marriage?



Christ's death is an example of the type of love a husband should have for his wife.

MONDAY—JULY 19

MARRIAGE—TILL DEATH DO US PART (Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9).

When some people have been married for just a year or two, they think they have made a mistake and go their separate ways. Other people may have been together for thirty or more years. But they decide that their marriage has become empty and dull. So they get a divorce. Also, more and more people live together without getting married.

What is the real cause of divorce? Why do so many people today have a problem staying married?

How do Jesus' words show that marriage is a lifelong responsibility? Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9.

Jesus' words are strong. His words do not leave us much room to bend the rules of marriage.

"An important part of God's holy plan for our world was the creation of humans made in His image. Humans were to marry, have children, and live together in purity, unity, and happiness. God brought forth Eve from Adam's side and gave her to Adam as his wife. This was the marriage God established in Eden. God created marriage. He was the Minister at the first marriage. . . .

"The church believes in God's view of marriage and home. The church be-

lieves that lowering God's view of marriage and the home is to lower God's perfect plan for marriage. The belief in marriage as God's holy model (example) is based on the Bible. All thoughts about divorce and remarriage must follow that holy model shown in Eden.

"The church believes in God's law. The church also believes in God's forgiving mercy.² The church believes that victory and salvation can be given to people who have broken the rules of divorce and remarriage. . . ."—Adapted from the *Church Manual* (2000), pp. 194, 195.

What hope does the last paragraph above from the *Church Manual* give you if you have broken the biblical standard³ of marriage? At the same time, what should Jesus' words tell us about how important it is for us to keep our marriages strong (Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9)?

TUESDAY—JULY 20

THE JOY OF SEX (Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:24, 25).

What do Genesis 1:27, 28 and Genesis 2:24, 25 tell us about sex? Who started it? Who encouraged it? Was there anything "dirty" about sex as it is presented in these verses?

²mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

³standard—rule; example.

Through many hundreds of years, there have been Christians who have believed sex was “dirty,” unspiritual, and sinful. Many Christians believed that people who wanted to dedicate their lives to God should remain celibate.⁴ Throughout church history, many religious groups did not permit sex even among married people.

But many religious people have at times praised even wrong sex as true freedom.

The Christian view of sex is a balanced view. Life is more than sex alone. But enjoying sex is an important part of life. Sex is a gift of God, who made us “male and female.”

The same as all God’s gifts, the gift of sex can be abused. And sex is more abused than many of God’s gifts. The important thing is for Christians to understand *when* God wants us to enjoy sex. When is the right time for sex, and when is *not* the right time for sex? These are important questions. Why? Our world is filled with the sad results of people who have wrongly used sex. Only the devil would take something as wonderful as sex and turn it into something that leads to the ruin of many souls!

How would you explain to a non-Christian the Bible’s view of sex? The following verses will help you: Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 5:15-23; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Song of Solomon;

Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 7:5.



Find joy in being faithful to each other.

WEDNESDAY—JULY 21

**WHEN THERE ARE PROBLEMS
(Matthew 5:27, 28; Hebrews 13:4).**

We live in a world full of temptations. Satan will do anything to lead Jesus’ followers away from the Christian path. And one of the best ways of leading them away is to lead them into wrong sex. The apostle⁵ Paul wrote about examples of wrong sex among church members. He warned the Christians in Corinth, “So be careful. When you think you are standing firm, you might fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12, NIV).

⁴celibate—avoiding sex for religious reasons.

⁵apostle—Jesus’ disciples were called “apostles” after Jesus returned to heaven.

What principle should married Christians faithfully follow? 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 13:4.

Ellen G. White makes an important point about our decision to remain faithful to a marriage vow. A decision to be faithful to spiritual matters will help us when we face sex temptations: “Jesus showed His disciples the principles of God’s law. He taught His hearers that a person broke the law when he or she even thought about doing evil. We are responsible for controlling our thoughts, and for bringing them under the control of God’s law. God gives us the noble powers of the mind so that we may use these powers to think about heavenly things. God has made it possible for us to always grow spiritually. . . .”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1145.

But all is not lost if we do fall into sexual sin. God is always willing to forgive. It is not more difficult for God to forgive wrong sexual thoughts or actions than it is for God to forgive a lie or an act of pride.

What useful steps can both women and men take so they do not give in to sexual temptation? What can they do to make sure they do not lead other people into sexual sin? How does where we go and what we read, watch, and wear, help us deal with sexual temptation?

THURSDAY—JULY 22

JESUS ENDORSED (BLESSED) MARRIAGE (John 2:1-11).

Some of the advice given by the apostle Paul would suggest that he did not support marriage (1 Corinthians 7:8). We must be careful when we read these verses. Paul was answering a question about an unknown situation (1 Corinthians 7:1). Paul later claimed the right to marry and referred to the “other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas [Peter],” who traveled together with “a believing wife” (1 Corinthians 9:5, NIV). The message of the Bible is clear: Marriage is permitted. Marriage is a great gift for believers who know the God who created marriage.

What is so special about the story of Jesus at the wedding in Cana? John 2:1-11.

It is important that John includes this story among the very few miracle stories he tells. The story makes it clear that Jesus was happy to be at the wedding. By being at the wedding, Jesus showed how good it is to have a party and to get married.

How does the wedding feast show the value and importance of marriage? Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:7-9.

“In Bible times, a marriage involved two important events,⁶ the betrothal⁷ and the wedding. The betrothal and wedding were normally separated by a period of time. While waiting for the wedding, the man and the woman were considered husband and wife. The wedding began with a parade to the bride’s house. Then the groom returned to his house with the bride for the marriage feast. By comparison,⁸ the church is engaged to Jesus by faith and is now waiting for the parousia⁹ when the heavenly Groom (Jesus) will come for His bride (the church) and return to heaven for the marriage feast which lasts throughout eternity.”¹⁰—Adapted from Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans Publication Company, 1977), p. 340.



The heavenly Groom returns for His bride.

Jesus gave Himself totally and unselfishly for His people. We, as a people, are to give ourselves totally and unselfishly to Jesus. How does the giving of oneself to another person show the important principles of a strong Christian marriage?

FRIDAY—JULY 23

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Comments on marriage and related topics by Ellen G. White are found in many of her books and writings. Her book *The Adventist Home* holds much material. For example, see Section III: “Choosing a Life Partner,” pp. 43–75 and Section V: “From the Marriage Altar,” pp. 99–127.

“Sin has stained every one of God’s good gifts. In the same way, marriage has been stained by sin. But it is the purpose of the gospel to restore¹¹ marriage’s purity and beauty. In the Bible, marriage is used as an example to show the holy union between Jesus and His people. He has purchased His people with His life. ‘Do not be afraid...’ Jesus says. ‘I [Jesus] made you. I am now your husband. My [Jesus’] name is The LORD Who Rules Over All. I am the Holy One of Israel. I have set you free’ (Isaiah 54:4, 5 NirV). ‘You people have not been faithful,’ announces the LORD.

⁶events—things that happen.

⁷betrothal—an engagement, or a promise to marry.

⁸comparison—showing how things are the same.

⁹parousia—the second coming of Jesus.

¹⁰eternity—life without end; forever.

¹¹restore—to make something new as it was in the beginning.

“Return to me [the LORD]. I [the LORD] am your husband” ’ (Jeremiah 3:14, NIV).”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, December 10, 1908.

“It should be both the husband’s and the wife’s lifelong duty to avoid everything that creates quarreling between themselves and to keep the marriage vows unbroken.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 85.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Sex is to be enjoyed only in marriage. So what should people do who do not have a partner, or who have lost their partner? Should they forget they are sexual beings? Can one be fully *male* or *female* without hav-

ing any sex? What does Jesus’ example offer them?

2. Read again the quote above from *The Adventist Home*. What useful things can both the husband and wife do to protect the holiness of their marriage vows?

SUMMARY: Many marriages fail. As Christians, we can never go along with a situation in which we can accept or excuse unfaithfulness in word or thought. At the same time, a forgiving spirit can save and restore many a marriage that would fail. The Lord looks upon marriage as something holy. We also should look upon marriage as holy.