

May 31, 2015 by Steve Brandon



A Marriage Reminder

(Various)

- 1. Marriage is Created by God**
- 2. Marriage is a Picture of the Church**
- 3. Marriage is Intended for our Joy**

We held an Art of Marriage event at Rock Valley Bible Church three years ago. Many of you have attended this event. But, we are planning to hold it again so as to give those attending Vacation Bible School another event to attend as a follow up. I would love to be able to promote the event at our Fun Fair (June 14). But, we are only going to do it if we have at least a dozen families sign up and commit to come.

The Art of Marriage is a one-and-a-half day video event built designed to be used by churches, small groups or as a community wide event. The Art of Marriage consists of six video sessions and an accompanying manual that provides couples with projects to help apply the principles taught during each session. The Art of Marriage brings together some of the most respected and influential pastors and experts on marriage and family all in one setting. It also brings a fresh approach to a video event by weaving together some of the following elements to help couples fully experience God's design for marriage: engaging stories, real-life testimonies, man-on-the-street interviews, humorous vignettes.

I know that many of you attended this event three years ago. I would strongly encourage you to consider attending again. You would do well to be reminded of these things. Nobody here today has watched through the entire event more than I have. I find them helpful every time. I have used these in marriage counseling on several occasions, using them as a springboard to talk about the issues of marriage. The purpose of marriage. The problems of marriage. The roles in marriage. The romance of marriage. This has been good counsel to help a marriage.

This video event does a great job of laying out the foundational issues in a Christ-centered marriage. And they are the sort of thing that we need to hear over and over and over again. God designed the institution of marriage. Because of sin, our marriages face times and seasons of struggle. Yet, if we follow God's blueprint for marriage, working on our communication, working on our roles, working on our shared vision for life together, then we set ourselves on a joyful path.

These sorts of things aren't new to most (if not all) of us. But, they are the sort of thing that bears repeating. I know many that bigger churches often provide a yearly marriage event to strengthen marriages. We need to be reminded of these foundational things.

And so, my message this morning is entitled, "A Marriage Reminder." I simply want to remind you of some of the foundational ideas behind a Christian marriage. I want to hear them again, and consider attending the Art of Marriage event.

So, with that as a long introduction, here's my first point, ...

1. Marriage is Created by God

This is one of those statements that is so Biblically obvious, that it hardly needs to be stated. Yet, because of the culture in which we live, it must be stated. Marriage is Created by God. Turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis, chapter 2. Genesis 2 tells us how marriage came about. And it was created by God. In this chapter, we see the creation of the first man and the first woman, which led to the first marriage.

The man is created in verse 7, ...

Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

This is amazing. God took that which was not alive, and fashioned it into something that was alive. And this something was not some half-cocked machine. No, it was the most complex organism that is found in the universe. It is capable of movement, capable of thought, capable of a relationship with God and with others.

And we see another created later in the chapter. The first woman. Now, she didn't come from the dust of the ground. Rather, she came from the side of the man. We read this, beginning in verse 21, ...

Genesis 2:21-23

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

And in the next verse, we see the first marriage. As Moses comments, looking back on the event.

Genesis 2:24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Here it is: two becoming one. The man and woman joining together to be one flesh. That is marriage. It is one man with one woman for life. Now, that's not what our society is telling us today. But this is what God's word says. Let's hear it from Jesus. So, turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 19.

At this point, we see Jesus in the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. That is, where John the Baptist was ministering. By this time, he had been put to death because he stood up for marriage. He was preaching that it was unlawful for Herod to have his current wife. He had divorced his first wife, the daughter of Aretas, Arabian king of the Nabateans. He divorced her so that he could marry his brother's wife. But, his divorce was wrong. And his marriage to his brother's wife was wrong. And John the Baptist wasn't shy about preaching this. Thus, Herod had him imprisoned to silence him. And eventually ordered his head on a platter.

And so, the question to Jesus naturally pertains to marriage. The Pharisees would love to trap Jesus, so that he would experience the same fate of John the Baptist. We pick it up in verse 3, ...

Matthew 19:3-6

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

When it came to the question of divorce, Jesus took it right back to the creation account. Right back to the words of Moses. And he begins by defining marriage. A man leaves his father and mother, and cleaves to his wife, thereby becoming one flesh. And as they are joined together, Jesus said, "They are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6). Now, the fact that those joined are separated in divorce is a result of sin. Jesus said in verse 8, ...

Matthew 19:8

Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

Divorce hurts, because sin hurts. You talk to anybody who has gone through this process, and it hurts. The picture the Bible gives is of a husband and wife being one flesh. And divorce pulls that away. Ripping flesh apart is a painful process. There are those in this room who have gone through this process. Talk with them, and I'm sure that they will agree. And those who have gone through divorce need our compassion, not our condemnation. Now, it's not my aim this morning to talk about divorce. It's my aim to talk about marriage.

And when Jesus defined marriage, he went back to the beginning and was very clear. It is a man who should leave his father and mother. And he shall cleave to his wife, a woman, and they should not separate. One man with one woman for life. This is Biblical marriage.

Now, of course, in our day an age, this is changing. Right now, same-sex marriage is legal in 37 states. On April 28th, 2015, the Supreme Court of our land heard the Obergefell v. Hodges case, which argued whether or not same-sex marriage should be legal in our land. And I would be surprised if this came down any other way than to legalize same-sex marriage in the United States.

But, I don't care what you call it, it's still not Biblical marriage. I love what Sam Crabtree has said about this when a vote to legalize same-sex marriage came to Minneapolis, Minnesota (where he lives). He responded to a sign in the lawn that read, "Vote NO. Don't limit the freedom to marry." He wrote, ...

[Saying], "Don't limit the freedom to marry ..." [is] like saying, "Don't limit the freedom to draw square circles." So-called gay marriages are just as oxymoronic. No matter what label is put on two men or two women in conjugal union, it is impossible for it to be a marriage. No matter how much freedom we try to legislate, legislation does not make orange become blue, triangles become spheres, or homosexual unions to have one head (as in "Christ is the head of the church," which is the point of marriage —to point to Christ and the church).

That's why so-called gay marriage isn't marriage. If we call that marriage, then we'll have to find another term to use for real marriage. There's a distinction between one-man-one-woman marriage and homosexual unions, and distinction is the point.

No matter how free they are, and no matter how committed to each other they are, two lines do not make a triangle. They

don't have THAT freedom. Two connected lines only do angling. They don't do tri-angling, or curving, or parabola, or cursive penmanship.

We are not free to call light dark.

What marriage IS is the thing in dispute. [\[1\]](#)

John Piper adds these words, ...

The point here is not only that so-called same-sex marriage shouldn't exist, but that it doesn't and it can't. Those who believe that God has spoken to us truthfully in the Bible should not concede that the committed, life-long partnership and sexual relations of two men or two women is marriage. It isn't. God has created and defined marriage. And what he has joined together in that creation and that definition, cannot be separated, and still called marriage in God's eyes. [\[2\]](#)

Do you understand what the Bible teaches? It teaches that one man and one woman joining together is marriage. You cannot altar that definition and still call it marriage.

Our country is trying to do so. But, try as they might, so-called, "same-sex marriage" cannot be regarded as marriage as the Bible defines it. One of the reasons has to do with my second point, ...

2. Marriage is a Picture of the Church (Eph. 5)

Again, this is the clear teaching of the Bible. Marriage is beyond a human institution. It speaks of divine realities. This is the clear teaching of Ephesians, chapter 5. Turn with me to Ephesians, chapter 5.

I want to read these familiar words from verses 22-33. And as I do, I want for you to listen for two things. First, the roles of husband and wife. And second, the picture that those roles signify.

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

This is how a marriage should function. The wife submits willingly (verse 22). The husband loves sacrificially (verse 25). This is God's design for marriage. He didn't design marriage where each partner plays the same role. As if everything is 50-50.

Now, God could have designed it that way, but he didn't. He created equal partners (both made in the image of God), with different roles. This is by design, so as to give a picture of the church.

By the way, those within the professing church who advocate for same-sex marriage, have first fallen to denying the Biblical roles for marriage. In other words, there are those who profess to be followers of Christ who say that a wife doesn't need to submit to a husband. Rather, the submission must be mutual. They bring us back to verse 21, "Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." And then, verse 21 governs the entire section on marriage, to the exclusion of the particular role of wives in verses 22-24.

That is, we are to "submit to one another" in the church and in our marriages. Thus, there are no gender distinctions in the church or in our homes, and thus, same-sex marriage is the inevitable result.

In fact, it often goes this way. First, gender roles in the church fall. Women are given a leadership role in the church, despite the fact that elders and deacons are offices to be held by men, not women. They are given a platform to preach and teach to the entire body, despite the fact that Paul said, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man" (1 Timothy 2:12).

Once the gender roles fall in the church, the next step is that they fall at home. Husbands aren't encouraged to be the loving leaders of the home. Wives aren't encouraged to be support and serve their husbands. Instead, there is this effort at obtaining an "equality" in the home. Now, I'm all for equality. But, equal roles on a team often fails. Some need to throw the ball. Others need to catch the ball. Still others need to block. And this is how God designed marriage. Different roles, based upon gender.

And once the gender roles fall in the church and at home, support comes for same-sex marriage. Men and women are equal in every way. There is no real distinction between them. Why can't they get "married"?

This path has been taken by many. Take the mainline denominations as an example. There are several of them that are willing to perform same-sex marriages. Several of them allow openly gay pastors and bishops (who oversee the matters of the church). And in every single case, the progression was the same Gender roles in the church fell first. Followed by gender roles in the home. Followed by acceptance (and promotion) of same-sex marriage. And these churches are falling. You show me a church that is accepting of same sex marriage, and I will show you a church of declining numbers.

But, it all begins here in Ephesians, chapter 5. If you don't follow God's counsel in Ephesians, chapter 5, then you have taken yourself out of submission to God's design for marriage. And why do you need to listen to Genesis, chapter 2?

OK, let's go back to Ephesians 5, ... Did you notice how the instruction in this passage always goes back to the greater reality of Christ and the church? Look at the role of a wife. Verse 22, ...

Ephesians 5:22
Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

In some regard, wives should look at their husbands as if they were the Lord Jesus. Listening to him, and submitting to what he says, and following where he leads. Is that not what verse 22 says? "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord."

Now, the important caveat at this point is this: it doesn't say, "Husbands, see to it that your wives submit to you as to the Lord." In other words, there is no room for demanding submission and enforcing it upon an unfeeling wife. That's not how Jesus leads. Jesus leads by showing Himself lovely. Jesus leads by convincing His followers that His way is best. Because, He gets no glory when His followers are forced into submission. But, He gets great glory when His followers have seen His character and His love for them, and so have no greater joy than following after Him. So also here in verse 22.

So, why are wives to submit to their own husbands in this way? Because the husband is the head of the wife. This is what it means to be "the head" of something. It means that the husband has been given the authority in the marriage, just as Jesus has been given the authority in the church. That's what verse 23 says, ...

Ephesians 5:23-24
For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

And as wives submit to their own husbands, it gives a picture of the church. If people want to learn about the Lordship of Christ, they simply need to look at Christian marriages.

Now, when it comes to the husband's role, it works in much the same way. In verses 25 and following, we see husbands called to love their wives. In fact, the admonition comes twice. Verse 25, ...

Ephesians 5:25
Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

And in verse 28, ...

Ephesians 5:28
In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

And both times, it comes back to the church. Ephesians 5:25 says to love your wives like Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. And Ephesians 5:28 says to love your wives as your own bodies, as Christ does with the church (verse 29).

Men and women, your marriages are more than a simply union of a man and a woman. They are pictures of Christ and His church! And so, husbands, I plead with you. Love your wives in such a way that lets others see the wonders of the love of Christ, that He would love the church with such passion and tenderness!

Let the world see that and say, "Wow, what a wonderful savior they have!" Let your children see it and say, "Wow! I want to follow a Christ that is as lovely as that."

One of my favorite quotes on roles in marriage comes in William Farley's book entitled, "Gospel-Powered Parenting." In that book, he writes, ...

What is our marriage telling [our children] about Christ and his bride? They see it all. They hear our fights. They absorb our attitudes. They know who or what really sits on the throne of our lives. They watch how we handle resentment. They hear the way we talk to each other. They know when we hear the Sunday sermon and apply it. They also know when we ignore it.

The message that our marriage preaches either repels or attracts our children. God wants your child to watch your

marriage and think, "I want a marriage like that, and I want the God that produced it." Or, "When I think of the beauty of the gospel, I think of my parents' marriage. I want to be part of a church that is loved by God the way my dad loves my mother. I want to be part of a church that finds its joy in submitting to Christ as my mother joyfully submits to my father ...

Christian marriage preaches [the gospel]. ... It makes it either attractive or ugly. When a husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, washing her with the Word, forgiving her, serving her, and tenderly leading her, his marriage says, "Christ loves his church. You can trust the Groom. He is infinitely loving. Serve him. You won't be disappointed." When a husband humbly loves a menopausal (or pre-menstrual) wife, his behavior says, "Christ loves the church even though she is sinful." His behavior tells his children, "Christ loves his bride even when she is unattractive." It says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, even our failings. But when a husband is unfaithful to his wife, verbally belittles her, loves her children more than her, or takes her for granted, his marriage says, "Christ's love is not that great. He loves us only when we perform. You can't trust this Savior. You can't meet his expectations. He doesn't keep his promises. Why serve a fickle despot?" His deeds say, "Many things can separate us from the love of Christ."

Wives also preach. When Mom joyfully submits to her husband "as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22), recognizing that he is her head as Christ is the Head of the church, and that she is his body as the church is the body of Christ, it makes an attractive statement. When she does this for an unworthy husband, not because she trusts him, but because she trusts Christ to care for her, it points her children to Christ. Her behavior says, "Christ is trustworthy." It says, "The Son of God is infinitely good. You can trust him. My father is very imperfect, but Mom trusts Christ to take care of her. If she can trust Jesus this way, I can also."

But when a wife tells her children to obey Christ, yet doesn't trust him enough to take care of her relationship with an imperfect husband, but seeks to control him, resists his authority, refuses to respect him, and declines to serve him, her actions speak loudly. They say, "The son of God cannot be trusted. He promises to exalt the humble, but I don't believe he will exalt me. He says he will take care of those who submit to lawful authority, but I don't really believe that. If I don't take care of myself, who will?" In most cases her children will internalize what she does, not what she says. [31](#)

I finish this point with some very practical advice for your marriages. It comes from verse 33, ...

Ephesians 5:33

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

If you get this verse right, you will do well in your marriage. It calls a husband to love. It calls a wife to respect.

Now, you can look at these commands as "duties." Or, you can look at these commands as "helps." In other words, has it ever crossed your mind that the reason husbands are called to love their wives is precisely because wives need love? And has it ever crossed your mind that the reason wives are called to respect their husbands is precisely because husbands need respect?

And might it be that women are good at loving, and so, they behave toward their husbands in a way that they think is "loving," without ever considering that his primary need is respect? And it might be that men are good at respecting, and so, they behave toward their wives in a way that gives them "respect," without ever considering that her primary need is love?

Of this verse, Douglas Wilson writes, ...

"The commands are given to our respective weaknesses in the performance of our duties. Men need to do their duty with regard to their wives--they need to love. Women need to do their duty in the same way--they need to respect.

But men are generally poor at this kind of loving. C. S. Lewis once commented that women tend to think of love as taking trouble for others (which is much closer to the biblical definition), while men tend to think of love as not giving trouble to others. Men consequently need work in this area, and they are instructed by Scripture to undertake it. In a similar way, women are fully capable of loving a man, and sacrificing for him, while believing the entire time that he is a true and unvarnished jerk. Women are good at this kind of love, but the central requirement given to wives is that they respect their husbands. As Christian women gather together (for prayer? Bible study?), they frequently speak about their husbands in the most disrespectful way. They then hurry home to cook, clean, and care for his kids. Why? Because they love their husbands. It is not wrong for the wives to love their husbands, but it is wrong to substitute love for the respect God requires.

... Men have a need to be respected, and women have a need to be loved. When Scripture says, for example, that the elders of a church must feed the sheep, it is a legitimate inference to say that sheep need food. In the same way, when the Scripture emphasizes that wives must respect their husbands, it is a legitimate inference to say that husbands need respect. The same is true for wives. If the Bible requires husbands to love their wives, we may safely say that wives need to be loved.

But we are often like the man who gave his wife a shotgun for Christmas because he wanted one. When a wife is trying to work on a troubled marriage, she gives to him what she would like, and not what God commanded and not what he needs. She loves him, and she tells him so. But does she respect him and tell him so.

We have difficulty because we do not follow the scriptural instructions. When a man in communicating his love for his wife

(both verbally and nonverbally), he should be seeking to communicate to her the security provided by his covenantal commitment. He will provide for her, he will nourish and cherish her, he will sacrifice for her, and so forth. Her need is to be secure in his love for her. Her need is to receive love from him.

When a wife is respecting and honoring her husband, the transaction is quite different. Instead of concentrating on the security of the relationship, respect is directed to his abilities and achievements—how hard he works, how faithfully he comes home, how patient he is with the kids, and so forth.

The specifics may cause problems with some because [she] thinks he might not come home, and she thinks he doesn't work nearly hard enough. But love is to be rendered to wives and respect to husbands, because God has required it, and not because any husband or wife has earned it. It is good for us to remember that God requires our spouses to render to us far more than any of us deserve. [\[4\]](#)

Emerson Eggerichs wrote a book, entitled, "Love and Respect." The subtitle is this, "The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs." The foundation of the entire book is Ephesians 5:33.

Ephesians 5:33

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The price of the book is worth everything for a few diagrams in the book. The first is called, "The Crazy Cycle." It works like this. A husband fails to love his wife. And so, she fails to respect him. And so, he fails to love her even more. And so, she fails to respect him even more.

And, the remedy can be easily seen. Eggerichs calls this "The Energizing Cycle." It works like this. A husband loves his wife. And so, she respects him. And so, he loves her even more. And so, she respects him even more.

And the question is this: "Which way is your marriage heading?" Is it a downward spiral, lacking love and lacking respect? Which leads to less love and less respect. Which leads to less love and less respect. Or, is it an upward spiral, giving love and giving respect? Which gives energy to more love and respect. Which gives energy to more love and respect.

And if it's on the crazy cycle, the only way to change it around is to respond rightly, even when your response is undeserved. This is what Eggerichs calls, "The Rewarded Cycle." It works like this. Regardless of how much (or little) a wife respects her husband, he still loves her. And regardless of how much (or little) a husband loves his wife, she still respects him. And soon, there is peace and joy and happiness in the home, as all functions well.

Which leads us to our last point this morning, ...

3. Marriage is Intended for our Joy

When God created marriage in the first place, it was because of a lack. There was a lack of relationship for the man. He was alone. And so, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18). And when the man and woman were created, God called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

And marriage, when done rightly, is very good and very enjoyable. It's enjoyable on a relational level. It's enjoyable on a physical level. It's enjoyable on a spiritual level. You are growing together and experiencing life together. It is enjoyable! This is affirmed in Proverbs 18:22, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD."

When God gave a woman to Adam, he gave him "a good thing." He gave him a companion, a friend, and someone to know and understand. Indeed, this is one of the greatest pleasures of marriage: to get to know another human being personally and deeply. It is deeply enjoyable to share life together.

Don't you want to share your life and your experiences? When you are hiking in the woods with your friends or family and notice something especially unique, isn't your natural response to point it out to them so that you can share your wonder with others? Have you ever had the experience of watching a movie or a YouTube clip that you found especially amusing, and calling others to share in your joy? Now, think about marriage. Marriage is a lifetime of doing this same thing with the same person, as you build into one another more and more deeply. This is a great joy in marriage.

I can easily picture the man who has been married for many, many years, who loses his wife to cancer. I can picture his sorrow as he has events in his life that he wants to share with her, but can't. The sadness of not sharing your life points to the joy in sharing your life.

Have you considered Proverbs 31? We often think of this in terms of the virtuous woman. And indeed it is. But, have you considered the husband? The husband who says, "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all" (Proverbs 31:29) cannot say those things without a joy in his heart. She serves him and the family. He trusts in her (Proverbs 31:11). She does him good all the days of her life (Prov. 31:12). Her value is "far more precious than jewels" (Proverbs 31:10). These words draw us back to the joy of a husband in his wife.

Isn't there something special about a team that accomplishes great things together? Each teammate plays their own role and the championship is won! The joy that comes is different than the joy that comes to the champion swimmer or high-jumper. They can share the event with friends and family, but they can't share it with teammates. Marriage is a team effort until the end. And a long life together brings a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment and joy in a job well done.

Jesus demonstrated this joy in His life and death. The church is his bride and he happily gave himself for her. Hebrews 12:2 says this, "... looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus was delighted to sacrifice from the church. He knew the joy that was set before Him. He knew that it was worth it.

Husbands, it is worth it to sacrifice for your wives. This is, "A Marriage Reminder." Understand that God has designed for marriages to work as we have talked about them here. As you love and respect one another, it will be your joy.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 31, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] <http://www.hopeingod.org/document/so-called-homosexual-marriage-gay-activist-assertions-responses>

[2] <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/let-marriage-be-held-in-honor-thinking-biblically-about-so-called-same-sex-marriage>

[3] William Farley. Gospel-Powered Parenting, pp.. 110-113.

[4] Douglas Wilson. Reforming Marriage, pp. 25-26.