

RESTART—RELATIONSHIPS (MARRIAGE PART 1)

MARRIAGE: A PROFOUND MYSTERY / A GOSPEL ISSUE

Ephesians 5:22-33

Introduction

The Bible presents a narrative of love that reveals the fundamental nature of our universe as one based on relationships. It begins by stating that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1), and that He designed a joyful garden for a couple named Adam and Eve. The story concludes with the promise of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1) where Jesus and his bride will find their eternal home. Marriage, far from being a human creation, is showcased in the Bible as a divine revelation and precious gift.

The Book Of Common Prayer begins the wedding ceremony this way:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this Congregation, to ioyn together this Man, and this woman in holy Matrimony, which is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of mans innocency, signifying vnto vs the mysticall vnion that is betwixt Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned, and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of St Paul to be honourable among all men, and therefore is not by any to be enterprized, nor taken in hand vnadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfie mens carnall lusts, and appetites, like brute beasts that have no vnderstanding; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordeined.

The Book of Common Prayer from the Original Manuscript: Attached to the Act of Uniformity of 1662. Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1892, p. 294.

Today we are told that a God-centered vision of marriage is mistaken, even oppressive. Marriage used to be a public institution for the common good, and now it is a private arrangement for the satisfaction of the individuals. Marriage used to be about us, but now it is about me. Genesis reveals something different as the Bible begins to explain the meaning of marriage, showing both glory and brokenness. All our personal stories, with both our glory and our shame, started in the garden of Eden. Don't hide from God because of guilt, shame, or failure because as we embrace the brokenness of life, we begin the journey back to God and healing. The gospel means that every marriage can RESTART.

Outline

Marriage belongs to God.

Marriage is meant to be glorious, grace-filled, and display the covenant-keeping love between Christ and His church.

There are no second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God whether single or divorced.

- The groom is waiting up front, he has pursued and won his bride. Now he just has to wait.
- When she comes in, the whole room just stands and stares, admiring her beauty, seeing her immaculate dress, pure, white, and spotless.
- When we repent of sin and place our faith in Jesus, we are changed and made ready– pure, white, spotless.
- She is presented and they declare their love for each other and make promises– they will have no other partners as they hold hands. To have and to hold, for better or for worse, forsaking all others.
- We give ourselves to Jesus, declaring him our most important relationship forsaking all other gods.
- They exchange rings – signs of the covenant promises they have just made, they sign names and make their union legal.
- An exchange of gifts – God gives us his righteousness and seals it by his Spirit.
- They walk out united as one – everything he has is hers.
- There is a legal declaration– we are made right with God and we are united to him through Jesus Christ as one.
- Everything he has is ours and everything we have is his– sin, shame, past
- Everybody celebrates with a meal. Later they will express their physical union and share all of their possessions and she even takes his name.
- We come to the Lord’s table to celebrate our union with Christ.
- We express our physical union through baptism.
- We give him access to all our possessions.
- We even take on his name and identity – we are Christians

Jesus obtained and sustains his bride by grace alone.

God has always been intended marriage to serve as a prophetic whisper of the eternal marriage between Christ and his church.

Application

To live in any relationship the way God intends, you must undergo a transformation by his grace and be betrothed to him.

How would you describe your marriage to Jesus right now?

What RESTART does your marriage need?

Questions

1. Pray and ask God to reveal what he wants to change in your heart.
2. Invite your spouse or others who know you well to share with you what he/she believes has a controlling influence—other than God—in your life.
3. Are there any actions or responses that flow from your heart that you would like to see changed?
4. Ask your spouse or others close to you for forgiveness for any wrong and sinful responses/actions you have allowed.
5. Fill in the blank – I hope that God will _____ in our marriage.

Marriage is meant to display the covenant-keeping love between Christ and His church.

You must be transformed by the grace of God and betrothed to him in order to live in any relationship the way he intends.

1. Communication Breakdown

Challenge: Misunderstandings and conflicts often come from ineffective communication. This can lead to feelings of resentment, frustration, and disconnection within the family.

Techniques:

- **Active Listening:** Encourage each member to practice active listening, which involves fully focusing on the speaker, avoiding interruptions, and responding thoughtfully.
- **Nonviolent Communication:** This technique involves expressing oneself honestly without blaming or criticizing others, and empathetically receiving what others are communicating.
- **Family Meetings:** Regular family meetings provide a platform for everyone to express their feelings, discuss issues and find solutions together.

2. Financial Stress

Challenge: Money-related issues can cause significant stress and conflict within families.

Techniques:

- **Budget Planning:** Creating a family budget helps track income and expenses, ensuring that spending is under control.
- **Financial Literacy:** Educating family members about financial management can help them understand the importance of saving, investing, and avoiding unnecessary expenditures.
- **Professional Guidance:** Seeking advice from a financial advisor can provide strategies for debt management, savings plans, and long-term financial stability.

3. Parenting Disagreements

Challenge: Differences in parenting styles can lead to disagreements and tension between parents, affecting the entire family dynamic.

Techniques:

- **United Front:** Parents should discuss their parenting styles privately and present a united front to their children. Consistency is key in effective parenting.
- **Parenting Classes or Counselling:** These can provide strategies for aligning parenting styles and resolving conflicts.
- **Compromise:** It's important to understand that there isn't always a "right" or "wrong" way to parent. Finding a middle ground that respects both parents' perspectives is crucial.

4. Balancing Work and Family Time

Challenge: The struggle to balance professional responsibilities and quality family time can lead to stress and strained relationships.

Techniques:

- **Time Management:** Prioritize tasks and delegate when possible. Use tools like calendars or apps to plan and organize time effectively.
- **Set Boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries between work and family time. For instance, avoid checking work emails during dinner or family outings.
- **Quality over Quantity:** Make the most of the time spent together as a family. Engage in activities that foster connection and fun.

5. Dealing With Illness or Disability

Challenge: A family member's illness or disability can place emotional and financial strain on the family.

Techniques:

- **Seek Support:** Reach out to support groups, counselors, or social services for emotional support and practical resources.
- **Open Communication:** Discuss the situation openly as a family. This can help reduce fear and uncertainty, and promote understanding and empathy.
- **Self-Care:** It's crucial for caregivers to take care of their own physical and mental health. This can involve regular exercise, sufficient rest, and time for relaxation and hobbies.

6. Navigating Major Life Changes

Challenge: Major life changes like divorce, moving, or loss of a loved one can disrupt family stability and cause distress.

Techniques:

- **Maintain Routines:** Keeping daily routines can provide a sense of security and normalcy during uncertain times.
- **Seek Professional Help:** Therapists or counselors can provide tools to cope with change and manage stress.
- **Family Bonding:** Engaging in activities that the family enjoys can foster unity and provide comfort during difficult times.

7. Resolving Conflicts

Challenge: Unresolved conflicts can lead to resentment, anger, and a breakdown in relationships.

Techniques:

- **Conflict Resolution Skills:** Learn and practice skills such as active listening, expressing feelings respectfully, and finding compromises.
- **Family Therapy:** A family therapist can facilitate productive conversations and guide families towards resolution and healing.
- **Forgiveness:** Encourage the practice of forgiveness. This doesn't mean forgetting the hurt, but choosing to let go of resentment and bitterness.

Remember, every family is unique and what works for one may not work for another. Personalizing these techniques to fit your family's specific needs and dynamics is crucial in overcoming challenges.

Perhaps the main reason that young adults are wary of marriage is their perception that most couples are unhappy in their marriages.

People believe that love should not be hard... professional sports

Marriage used to be about us, but now it is about me.

The Bible is a love story that helps us see that we live in a universe where ultimate reality is relational. The opening verses declare that God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1) and a happy home made for a couple named Adam and Eve. The story ends with a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1) and a final, eternal home for Jesus and his bride. Marriage is not a human invention; it is a divine revelation and gift.

The church needs to find a way to capture the moral imagination of the next generation. It needs to make the truth about human sexuality and its fulfillment in marriage not only attractive and appealing, but noble and exhilarating. This is a truth worth staking one's life on. —Ryan Anderson

if Jonathan Edwards is right, if brokenhearted people make the best Christians, then we who have not lived up to God's high standards for marriage and sexuality can serve best as advocates for those very standards. May our voices be humble but clear.

Let's clear the air... You are messed up and your marriage has problems. The temptation however, is to come into a church setting and pretend to be something we are not and over exaggerate our sanctification in marriage.

Marriage is wonderful. It can be exhilarating, comforting, but it is also blood, sweat, and tears, humbling defeats and exhausting victories.

Sin as such does not disqualify us; it is only unconfessed sin that disqualifies us.

The gospel can fill our hearts with God's love so that you can handle it when your spouse fails to love you as he or she should.

That frees us to see our spouse's sins and flaws to the bottom—and speak of them—and yet still love and accept our spouse fully.

If two spouses each say, "I'm going to treat my self-centeredness as the main problem in the marriage," you have the prospect of a truly great marriage.

In sharp contrast with our culture, the Bible teaches that the essence of marriage is a sacrificial commitment to the good of the other.

In a covenant, the good of the relationship takes precedence over the immediate needs of the individual.