



Proverbs What is a Godly Marriage?

Summary: Marriage is a gift from God, Proverbs gives us four keys to maintain it.

Over the past two weeks we have looked at the spiritual ideals for what it means to be a man or a woman. This morning we're going to see how you put the two together and look at what makes a godly marriage. There are a lot of ideas floating around about marriage so it's good to consider what God's Word has to say. But I want to point out – much of what we'll learn about marriage can be applied to other relationships too, so there should be plenty for us to consider this morning regardless of your relationship status.

Just to give you a quick outline, we'll see that Proverbs says marriage is a gift - to us, from God; and we'll have some things to say about that to both singles and married people. But then we'll look at four keys to a healthy marriage. And since Proverbs is a book of practical guidance for daily life we'll be sure to point out some action steps you can take immediately to begin strengthening your relationship.

We begin by taking a quick trip back to Proverbs 31 and then adding to it. Remember, we started last week with

Pr 31:10 *Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth is far above rubies.*

Think about that again for a moment: there is nothing more valuable than a virtuous wife. You wouldn't trade her for anything. She will do you good all the days of your life. I wonder how much we really believe that? And yet, it's a point that Proverbs continues to drive home. Consider:

Pr 18:22 *He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
And obtains favor from the LORD.*

When you understand Proverbs 31, this makes complete sense, doesn't it? Finding a wife is like finding a pile of hidden jewels. Do you ever think of your spouse as proof that God loves you? Do you ever thank Him for the good your husband or wife does to you?

Friends, this is not a passing thought, it's repeated in:

Pr 19:14 *Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers,
But a prudent wife is from the LORD.*

And which would you rather have? Well, you'd love to have both if you could, right? But, the point is, a good spouse is a gift to you from God. And who do you think gives the best

gifts? Friends, we have to remember that marriage is a gift to us from God.

In the very first pages of Scripture we find God creating the world. He made the sun and the planets, the earth and the sky, the land and the oceans and filled them all with life. And He looked at it and said, it was good. But then He made the man and God Himself said that it was not good for the man to be alone, so He made the woman and brought her to the man. So, companionship, partnership, marriage, is a gift to us from God.

Marriage is the answer to a problem God recognized and diagnosed and when done well it produces more competent, well-rounded, resilient people. I remember reading an autobiography written by a Navy SEAL who observed that the men going through SEAL training who were in a good relationship were not only happy men, they were better trainees. Having a wife had done them good, and gave them someone to do good for.

If that's true in some of the most grueling military training on the planet, what about in our daily lives?

Friends, marriage is a gift to us, from God and it is intended to make us better.

It might not be doing that right now, so we'll talk about how to maintain and repair it in a moment, but for now, I want to make the point: marriage is a gift to us, from God.

Pr 18:22 *He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
And obtains favor from the LORD.*

So, what about our singles? Well, as we have discussed before, there are really only two categories of single people – pre-maritals and consecrated singles. Pre-maritals include everyone from our teens to the widow or divorcee who wants to be married to again and the man or woman who has never been married and feels like time is ticking by without them. If you have a desire to be married, you are pre-marital.

But then there are consecrated singles. These are people who know, that for various reasons, they will never marry. They might not like it, they might have wished life turned out differently, but again, for various reasons, they know that they will never marry, and they have accepted that. Jesus taught in Matthew 19 that not everyone will get married, and Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7 that singleness is a gift, just as much as marriage.

So, one way or another, God is going to give you a gift, a gift of singleness or a gift of marriage. And if He has not given you the gift of singleness, then I want to suggest it's good to be looking for a mate.

Pr 18:22 *He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
And obtains favor from the LORD.*

Now, this may seem rather basic, but I'll say it nonetheless: in order to [find](#) someone, you

have to be looking. Don't expect her or him to fall into your lap – if you are single, think of yourself as a treasure hunter – there is someone out there more valuable than rubies waiting to be found. God says it's good to look, and not to be easily discouraged in the hunt. So ask Him to show you His favor, and to guide you in your search.

If you have found your spouse, if you are married today, part of the practical application you can take from this morning's message is: thank God for what you have. Find some aspect of your marriage you can thank God for and do that. And keep doing it. You might have to look in the past, or you might have to find something small, but find some of the goodness in the gift God has given to you, and thank Him for it. It's the first step to strengthening a weak marriage and it's part of the regular maintenance of one that is healthy.

Speaking of regular maintenance, Proverbs gives us four keys to help with the task.

A quick editorial comment though – remember Proverbs was originally written as a gift from a father to his son – it's a collection of wisdom and instruction for life, but it's written with a primarily male audience in mind. Ladies, you'll need to reverse the gender in many cases, but you'll notice the core of the teaching can be applied to either men or women.

So, with that disclaimer in place, the **first key to maintaining a good marriage is: be kind**. Listen to these proverbs:

Pr 19:13 A foolish son *is* the ruin of his father,
And the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dripping.

Pr 21:9 Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop,
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

That's a pretty vivid picture, right? But now watch this:

Pr 21:19 Better to dwell in the wilderness,
Than with a contentious and angry woman.

If she's contentious, it's better to live up on the roof. But if she's contentious AND angry, it's better to leave the house all together and go sleep out in the woods.

Now, this might be understandable in other times and places where marriages were arranged by families. You can imagine a situation where you might be "stuck with" someone. But in our day and age most of us pre-screened our mates and chose them for a specific reason. So, when things hit a rough spot, when you would rather dwell in the wilderness than sleep with your spouse, you have to ask: what happened?

Why is there tension, and contention, within our marriage? Why are we fighting?

There are three basic categories of answers. Number one, maybe it's environmental factors – something happened at work, or in the economy, or with the kids or your parents, but something outside your marriage is sapping all your strength and energy and you're bringing that into your marriage. Or, number two, maybe something has happened to your spouse – maybe he or she has changed in some way, maybe something has happened to them, maybe they don't seem like the man or woman your married, and now you're fighting.

And, number three: maybe it's you. Maybe your goals, wants, needs, desires, have changed and you're restless all the time and that leads to fighting.

In some ways, this is the answer to everything else. Because, regardless of the changes in your circumstances or spouse, you can still choose your response. And your response will either mellows things out, or add fuel to the fire.

No matter what the other factors are in my life, they all involve me. And I'm responsible for me. If I'm fighting with the person I once swore to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part – something has gone wrong with me. It might be time to show that I really meant that “for worse” part and see if we can somehow make things better again. And part of that is going to be me, doing my best to be kind instead of contentious.

Jesus said something very important on this subject, we find it in:

Luke 6:45 “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

If my words are like a constant dripping, if my speech makes other people want to get away from me, what does that say about what's going on in my heart?

So, for our practical application, maybe you need to take time to pray, and very specifically ask God to cleanse your heart, to drive out the anger, the bitterness, the frustration, and fill you with good SO THAT when you open your mouth to speak to your spouse, kindness, goodness, encouragement, enthusiasm, truth, and hope come rolling off your tongue. And keep praying that, over and over, day by day, until you start to hear the difference it makes.

Because, **the second key to maintaining a good marriage is: be supportive.** Consider the powerful imagery of these Proverbs:

Pr 14:1 The wise woman builds her house,
But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

Pr 12:4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
But she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.

That paints a pretty vivid picture in your mind, doesn't it? The point is: as a spouse, either a husband or wife, we have the ability to build up our mate or tear them down, make them better or eat away their strength.

You have probably heard of people who struggle with conditions like lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and thyroid disease. Those all have something in common: they're autoimmune disorders. That means the immune system, the body's own natural defense, has turned on itself and begun to attack healthy tissue.

Another autoimmune disease is multiple sclerosis, or MS, which is known for its impact on the body's nervous system. When you have MS, your immune system starts to attack the myelin sheath, which is sort of like the insulation around your nerve cells. So, as you eat away your own insulation, you experience pain from the affected nerves. You may feel the sensation of electric shock running down your back and your arms or legs when you bend your neck. You have trouble walking, trouble with your vision due to the optic nerves, your muscles begin to weaken and you have a hard time keeping your balance.

All of this, and more, because you are attacking you.

Now consider that in light of the fact that one of the most important things to know, and remember, about marriage is that it forms two lives into one. Remember, God knows you're not good enough on your own, so He brings you someone to help fill in your holes, to be His hands and feet in your life; to make you better together. Why would you attack that person? Why would you undermine yourself?

Take a good look at your relationship and ask – am I helping us, am I a point of pride in my spouse's life, like a crown on their head? Don't start thinking about what you wish they would do, or how this should be even or fair, just stay focused on yourself and ask: am I building up or tearing down our marriage and relationship? Is he or she better because I am in their life?

One way you can build up your spouse is by encouraging and affirming them.

Madeleine and I have a friend who pointed something out to us a few years ago: that the only affirmation she received any more was from her husband.

As a stay-at-home mom, a domestic engineer, a team lead for a family of family projects, she's not winning employee of the year, or most sales by volume for the quarter, she's not earning a bonus anymore. No one really notices all the work she does and that's why she needs affirmation and approval from her husband *even more*.

She said that's one of the appeals of mommy-blogs and things like Instagram, Pinterest, and Facebook – posting the things I've done – the meals I've made, the decorating I've done, the activities I've done with the kids – all of it can be liked and commended. And what is a

“like” online except a vote of affirmation, a crown on your head, something that builds you up? Husbands, can you find ways to affirm your wife no matter where she spends her days? Can you be the one who builds her up so she doesn’t feel such a need to go looking for affirmation from others?

And ladies, can you do the same? Men need approval and affirmation, even if they shrug it off or play it down. They want to know they’ve done something good. They want to know they are valued. What can you use to put a crown on his head and build him up today?

We promised practical actions steps this morning, so let me ask: what is one thing that your spouse is trying to accomplish right now, one thing that is important to them, and how can you help or encourage them in it? Don’t be surprised that they need help or encouragement, remember you are God’s gift to them; one of the reasons you’re in their life is because you can make them better. What is one way you can do that today?

Two more to go. **The third key to a maintaining a good marriage is: be content.**

If you look at the sheer quantity of teaching in Proverbs, one subject gets more attention than others and that is: avoid immorality. Throughout the book, but especially in chapters 5-7 the reader is told to avoid relationships with immoral women and seek out a woman of virtue. Look with me at:

Proverbs 5:1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom;
Lend your ear to my understanding,
2 That you may preserve discretion,
And your lips may keep knowledge.
3 For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey,
And her mouth *is* smoother than oil;
4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death,
Her steps lay hold of hell.
6 Lest you ponder *her* path of life—
Her ways are unstable;
You do not know *them*.

Skip down to verse 24 where he says the point of all this instruction is

24 To keep you from the evil woman,
From the flattering tongue of a seductress.
25 Do not lust after her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her allure you with her eyelids.
26 For by means of a harlot
A man is reduced to a crust of bread;
And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

Proverbs is very clear: there are two ways to live – a life characterized by foolish self-indulgence and a life of disciplined, wise, commitment to God, to your spouse, to your family, and to your people. There is no doubt about the fact that you are surrounded by temptation – that’s part of life. But you must choose – which path will you follow?

The path of indulgence often looks good – it wouldn’t be tempting if there was nothing appealing about it. You wouldn’t need to be warned if there was no danger in it or if there was no strength in the desire you feel toward it. But when you read Proverbs you find warning after warning to avoid the momentary pleasures that are offered to you and choose to be content with what you have instead. Honor your commitments, honor your vows, honor the gift that God gives you or will give you.

Here’s another verse that you absolutely need to memorize or store in a note on your phone, because the time is going to come when you need to know this and bet your life, your marriage, and the health of your soul on it’s promise:

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

The practical application here is pretty obvious – you are going to be tempted toward other people. That can happen in the real world or virtually. It can be with paper or pixels. It can be with a screen or in person. It might be emotional, it might be physical, it could be both, but when it comes, see it for what it is: a calling to leave what you have or what you’ve been promised and find delight somewhere else for a season. My friends, for the sake of your marriage whether present or future, be content with what and who you have and do not go wandering.

Which brings us to **our fourth and final key to maintaining a good and godly marriage: be committed.**

When it comes to marriage, Proverbs has a long relationship in mind. Early on, in Chapter Two, the author tells his son that when wisdom, knowledge, and discretion enter your heart they will preserve you and keep you, they will

Proverbs 2:16 ... deliver you from the immoral woman,
From the seductress *who* flatters with her words,
17 Who forsakes the companion of her youth,
And forgets the covenant of her God.

Now, again, remember, this is written to a young man, but you could just as easily invert the gender and keep the principle. It’s very possible that an immoral man might seduce a woman with his words and forsake the companion of his youth, forgetting the covenant of

his God.

Compare that with the fidelity and joy we read about in Proverbs 5. Things get a little steamy here as the young man is told:

Pr 5:15 Drink water from your own cistern,
And running water from your own well.
16 Should your fountains be dispersed abroad,
Streams of water in the streets?
17 Let them be only your own,
And not for strangers with you.
18 Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice with the wife of your youth.
19 As a loving deer and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
And always be enraptured with her love.
20 For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman,
And be embraced in the arms of a seductress?

One of the keys to maintaining a good marriage is to be committed, to the same woman, to the same man, til death do you part. Be satisfied with her; be enraptured by her, over the long haul. Don't share what you have with anyone else and don't take anything from anyone else. Be committed to each other and each other only.

Yes, it is true, physical beauty will diminish over time, and strength will fade too but as you grow in your relationship with God you should become more and more attractive in your spirit. And, you should be more and more impressed with each other – men, you know that those stretch marks on her sides are from the times she carried your children. Ladies, you know that pain in his shoulder is from all the work he did with his arms to provide for your family. You know what each other has accomplished, you know why things are the way they are.

When marriage is done right, you become increasingly helpful, increasingly valuable, and yes, even, increasingly attractive to one another over time – you grow in the conviction that there is no one else on earth you would rather be with. And there is no one else who has ever done you as much good. There is no one who has helped you as much, been through as much with you, or believes as much good about you as the man or woman you married in your youth and who stuck with you for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, there is no one else that you are confident will still be there, no matter what happens until death do you part. Other men and women may still be attractive, they may still capture your attention at times, but there's no way you would trade the depth and strength of your marriage for something that seems shiny on the surface.

The practical application on this one is: just keep going. Day in and day out, in all the

seasons of life. Tell yourself there is no ejection seat from this thing and there is no turning back. And then, take some time tonight and ask your husband, ask you wife – what did you most enjoy about the early days of our relationship? Whether that was two years ago or two decades ago, what did you enjoy about the wife or husband of your youth? And what do you enjoy today?

The book of Proverbs is unique in the Bible, it's a lot of practical wisdom for daily life, there's a lot of do this, don't do that, but there's not a lot of Jesus. So let me end here by reminding us how to find forgiveness for all the ways we've blown it so far in marriage, in relationships, and in life, and how to find the strength we're going to need to be the spouses God calls us to be. The apostle Paul said:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Whether you are single or married, Jesus loves you and has given Himself for you. Receive Him, remind yourself of what you have in Him, and then, by His grace and with His strength, seek to live your life for others, especially your spouse.

Let's pray.