

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 5:31-32 | 'Til Death Do Us Part**  
November 13, 2022

**WELCOME:**

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 5.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

**REVIEW:**

We are studying the Gospel of Matthew—specifically the Sermon on the Mount.

For the past several weeks, we have dealt with issues that are quite sensitive.

These are personal topics that can be uncomfortable to discuss in group settings—especially in church.

However, Jesus preached on them and as His disciples it's our responsibility to study them as well.

We've discussed anger in Matthew 5:21-26.

For the past two weeks, we've learned why committing the sin of adultery is the fastest way to ruin your life in verses 27-30.

And it's no surprise now that in verses 31-32, Jesus presses into our hearts even further and moves from adultery to divorce.

So there we have it—anger, adultery, and divorce—a trifecta of sermon topics that few churches address.

**LW KEYPOINTS**

1. *Sex is the exclusive activity that defines the marriage relationship.*
  - a. No other relationship involves sexual oneness.

2. *Our sexual sin is not a private matter—it is a public testimony that reveals the condition of our heart.*
- Why is our private sin a public matter?
  - Numbers 32:23—*Your sin will find you out.*
  - We're not going to get away with anything, especially adultery.
3. *The cause of lust is not beautiful people, but a sinful response to beautiful people.*
- It's absurd to blame others or God for my lack of self-control.
4. *Lust is a radical problem that requires a radical solution.*
- Jesus' hyperbolic teaching of gouging out eyes and cutting off limbs illustrates how to take drastic action in our lives to protect ourselves from lust. We know that Jesus was using hyperbole to convey His message because mutilation will not cleanse the heart.

Summarizing from last Sunday we can say this—

When God says, "**Don't commit adultery,**" —He is saying, *don't hurt yourself.*

God created sex, therefore God protects ~~sex~~ in His Word.

God has the authority to regulate and punish those who rebel against it—Believer or unbeliever.

Think of adultery as a raging fire that will burn your house down, but what if you have a raging fire in the same home, but it's contained in a fireplace?—That's called marriage.

God doesn't regulate sex because He wants to rob us of fun but protect us and give us a divine joy that only comes through marriage.

As Christians, we don't only want to be monogamous. We want to be pure in heart.

That's all a review from last week,  
today Jesus teaches on another vital element  
of marriage

## **INTRODUCTION:**

People love to ask questions like “What are the biggest problems in marriage?”

There are many answers: money, sex, children, in-laws, and communication.

But those answers are only symptoms of the root problem.

Because the two most significant causes of marital strife are the husband and the wife.

The root problem in our marriages is us!

If we don't own the fact that I'm the problem in my marriage, I will inherently blame everyone and everything around me.

We've all heard that the divorce rate is around 50% for first marriages, 67% for second marriages, and 75% for third marriages.

We've also heard that those percentages are the same within the Church.

*true or not,*

We've all been impacted by divorce—and divorce is tragic.

It devastates families, scars children and paints a blot on society.

But the foremost tragedy of divorce is that it violates God and His Word.

Many of know what the culture thinks about divorce—

But what does God have to say about divorce?

Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage is our topic this morning.

And what does that mean for you? Let's find out.

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:31-32 CSB**

**Matthew 5:31**—*"It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.*

**Matthew 5:32**—*But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

*\*\*This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

**EXEGESIS:**

**Matthew 5:31**—*"It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.*

Jesus continues his mode of teaching here by giving us a shortened version *the halaka*.

The halaka refers to all the oral traditions that the Jews placed above the authority of Scripture.

It was a false system of religion that was attainable—it focused on a works based religion.

*"You have heard it said...but I say to you."*

**Matthew 5:31**—*"It was also said, **Whoever divorces his wife...***

Divorce: *apōluō*, (op-uh-loo-o')— is defined as a physical dismissal, to leave.

Last week when teaching about adultery, we said that to understand the sinfulness of adultery, we must first understand the mystery of marriage.

So we went back to Genesis 1 and 2 and learned several mysteries of marriage.

We discussed the physical element and the spiritual component of marriage.

Through our study last week we learned...

### **LW KEYPOINT:**

*Marriage is not only a physical union but a spiritual reality.*

Today, we have a similar issue.

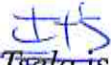
If we want to understand what God is saying about divorce— we must first understand another facet of marriage.

So once again, we must go back to the beginning—to the same passage from last week and keep digging for God's truth as if it were gold.

**Genesis 2:21**—*So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to come over the man ('ā·dām), and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place.*

Quick review 'ā·dām is not a guy named Adam—he is a man who somehow represents all of mankind.

The Hebrew word for rib is *tsela* (ṣē·lā').

  
*tsela* is translated as “rib, side, or side-chamber.”

Your collarbone to your waist is your side chamber.

**Genesis 2:22**—*Then the Lord God made the rib he had taken from the man— into a woman— and brought her to the man.*

The Lord is now bringing the woman to the man.

This presumes that there must be some distance between the two.

So here's the scene—we have God (as the Father) bringing a woman (His daughter) to be introduced and given away to a man—marriage.

**Genesis 2:23**— *And the man said:*

*This one, at last, is bone of my bone  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one will be called "woman," (ishshah)  
for she was taken from man. (ish)*

**Genesis 2:24**— *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds  
with his wife, and they become one flesh.*

Why does a man (ish) bond with his wife (ishshah)? Because she was taken from man in verse 23.

*They were designed for oneness.*  
Somehow they were one from the beginning.

*Bond*: Hebrew is *dâbaq*, daw-bak';—to cling, cleave, keep close, fasten its grip, hold fast, join together, remain steadfast, stay, stay close, stick together,

It's is an active verb, meaning there is no chronological time frame—it's a continuous bond.

### **KEYPOINT #1:**

*There is no expiration date on marriage.*

God established marriage before the first city was ever built, before any laws were penned—before any government formed— there was marriage.

Marriage was God's design—and mankind doesn't have the right to break it, modify it, or redefine it.

Because marriage is God's institution.

From the beginning, God intended a life-long commitment to monogamous marriage.

**+** **Genesis 2:24**—*This is why a man (ish) leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife (ishshah), and they become one flesh.*

In marriage, a man and woman are so closely joined together that they become one—which involves spiritual and physical oneness.

However, if we turn the page from Genesis chapter 2 to chapter 3, we learn how Adam and Eve sinned—which has significant consequences on God’s design of marriage.

Quick background—Eve is confronted with Satan in the form of a talking snake (that’s a sermon for another day).

Satan tempts Eve to eat the fruit she knows is forbidden.

She eats and gives some of that fruit to her husband.

Their eyes were opened, and they got into this huge fight and are now hiding within the trees of the Garden of Eden.

God shows up, Adam and Eve blame everyone and everything for their rebellion and do not take responsibility for their actions.

**+** **Genesis 3:16**—*He (God) said to the woman: ... Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.*

In verse sixteen, we see how sin immediately perverts the marriage relationship.

Before The Fall, the wife’s “desire” for her husband was to help him, support him and come alongside him.

God created Eve as Adam's *e-zer*. She was an ally, rescuer, and defender.

*E-zer* is the same word used for God, who helps, saves, and delivers.

But now, after the fall, she desires to control the marriage.

She wants to step outside her God given role and responsibility as a helper.

Let's look at the text again.

**Genesis 3:16**—Your desire will be for your husband...

Many men believe that this desire is sexual.

It's not.

The Hebrew is *teshuqah* (chew-qah).

This is the same desire that sin had for Cain in Genesis 4:7—God says to Cain

**Genesis 4:7**—If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Background: God accepted Abel's offering but did not accept Cain's. And Cain is furious.

In other words, sin has the desire to control each one of us.

And instead of ruling over sin, we tend to rule over people  
Which means all of us are control freaks at some level.

Women have a sinful bent towards controlling their husbands—we see that from our text.



Now, gentlemen, we don't get off so easy here.

If the sinful nature of a woman is to control, the sinful nature of a man is twofold.

The husband either has one of two default modes: anger or neglect.

We see both in Adam (Gen. 3:10, 12).

If we want to know where male chauvinism and liberal feminism began...it's right here at The Fall.

So now we have two controlling people—

Ish and ishshah/husband and wife, are thrown into the same household, and somehow we're supposed to make life work and get along.

But we don't get along.

We are always looking out for ourselves—which brings us back to our text today.

regarding  
divorce

**Matthew 5:31**—*"It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce."*

So we have someone in the marriage who is intentionally breaking God's design for oneness.

Now, why a written notice? Where does this formal document of divorce come into play?

Jesus is now pointing us back to the OT.

+ **Deuteronomy 24:1**—“If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he may write her a divorce certificate, hand it to her, and send her away from his house.

Terminology:

+ 1. Indecent in the Hebrew: *ervah*

Indecent means “the nakedness of a thing.” —refers to the genital area.

+ 2. A “divorce certificate” literally means “a scroll of cutting off.”

When a man divorced his wife in the first century, she was cut off and driven away from her home and family.

This punishment comes with indescribable shame, financial bankruptcy, and social trauma.

Most women were forced to get remarried to survive.

The key to understanding this verse comes from the word *indecent*— “the nakedness of a thing.”

And that’s why Jesus continues here in verse 32—He expands and provides some commentary.

+ **Matthew 5:32**—But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Now Jesus just said something that we don’t like or take seriously.

Jesus’ whole point is that divorce leads to adultery.

In fact, divorce causes multiplied forms of adultery.

Jesus is stating that a man or woman who has no right to divorce has no right to remarry.

Now, are we to take Jesus' words literally, or is He still being hyperbolic from verses 29-30 of last week (gouging out eyes and cutting off limbs)?

Well, let's find out.

*If Jesus is being literal*

It sounds like ~~Jesus is~~ being harsh toward women.

*He's*

But He's not. He's teaching The Law as it was given—that's why points us back to the OT.

Deut 24 is God's way of protecting women.

**Deuteronomy 24:1**—*If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he may write her a divorce certificate, hand it to her, and send her away from his house.*

Jesus points us back to Deuteronomy 24 because that “something indecent” had to do with marital unfaithfulness—specifically adultery—which Jesus had just preached on a few minutes earlier in His sermon.

Here's the issue.

The Pharisee's interpretation of Deuteronomy 24 was to defend their incorrect and superficial understanding of divorce in their eyes..

To the Pharisee, *displeasing* meant that his wife burns her husband's food, or if she talks too loud, or ~~if the husband~~ finds someone more attractive—all of those things are a potential cause for divorce.

They took *displeasing* out of context.

However, the context of *displeasing* deals with the context that's in the same sentence—*indecent*.

They ignored what God states is *indecent*— “the nakedness of the thing.”

And just in case we missed it, our Gospel writer Matthew gives us a more thorough teaching on divorce in chapter 19.

So let's turn a few pages to the right and see what He says there.

**Matthew 19:3**— Some Pharisees approached <sup>Jesus</sup> him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?”

**Matthew 19:4**— “Haven't you read,” he replied, “that he who created them in the beginning **made them male and female**, (ish and ishshah).”

**Matthew 19:5**— and he also said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?

**Matthew 19:6**— So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

**Matthew 19:7**— “Why then,” they asked him, “did Moses command us to give divorce papers and to send her away?”

**Matthew 19:8**— He told them, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives (why) because of the hardness of your hearts, but it was not like that from the beginning.”

**Matthew 19:9**— *I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery."*

So Jesus repeats himself from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 19.

Please note that nowhere in Scripture does God command divorce.

It's very dangerous to put words into a prophet's mouth as these Pharisees did.

Why did God permit divorce?

Because as we learned last week, the alternative is capital punishment (Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:22)

Adultery is so heinous to God that it was punishable by death.

So why did God have a change of heart?

God's permission for divorce was simply an accommodation/compromise of His grace for our sins.

And yet, what do we, as sinful people, tend to do with God's grace?

We abuse it.

We take it for granted—human nature.

And that's precisely what the Pharisees did.

The Pharisees used the exact verse to abuse the women that God was protecting.

They turned God's grace into a legal right.

The Pharisees were looking for any excuse to trade-out wives.

And they placed all the emphasis on a piece of paper.

As if a piece of paper overrides the institution of marriage that Almighty God has created from the beginning.

Jesus is essentially asking, "Why a divorce at all?"

Jesus is taking the emphasis from the divorce certificate and placing it where it belongs—the hardness of the human heart.

**Matthew 19:8**—~~He told them,~~ "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your hearts."

This verse boils down all our marital problems into one word.

People get divorced because of the hardness of heart of one or both spouses.

### **KEYPOINT #2:**

*The hardness of the heart leads to unforgiveness, which is incompatible with the Gospel.*

And that's <sup>one of the many reasons</sup> why Jesus is so stern here—divorce is preventable w/ A soft heart.

But even with hard hearts—adultery is forgivable.

The Lord speaks through the prophet Malachi on the issue of divorce.

God says this...

**Malachi 2:13 NLT**— *You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn't accept them with pleasure.*

The Jews don't understand why the Lord is not answering their prayers.

They're going to Church, praying, crying, and even tithing.

**Malachi 2:14 NLT**— You cry out, "Why doesn't the Lord accept my worship?" I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her...

**Malachi 2:15 NLT**— Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth.

**Malachi 2:16 NLT**— ~~For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel.~~ "To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty," ... "So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife."

All that to say this—God plans that two people remain married until death separates them.

Those who divorce and remarry, do commit adultery.

Now, let me give you some good news because I need you to stay with me and not tune me out.

This is a crucial key point.

### **KEYPOINT #3:**

*People commit adultery—they don't have to live in adultery.*

Adultery *can be forgiven* — just as with ~~your~~ other sins.

Yes, you may be like me, an adulterer— but are you a forgiven adulterer?

Dear friend, you don't have to live the rest of your life regretting the worst day of your life.

Believe it or not, God loves you—even on your worst day.

Yes, we may be a thief, and blasphemer, but are you a forgiven thief and blasphemer?

Dear friends, we're all sinners.

We've all missed the mark.

Look around you—we are all beggars and thieves in here.

We're *all* sinners. We *all* need a Savior.

**PREACH:**

God hates divorce—which means that divorce is never the solution.

Repentance is the solution.

A change in our hearts is the solution.

Jesus Christ and His Gospel of grace and forgiveness is the solution!

Let's not forget that good people don't go to Heaven—forgiven sinners do.

Gentlemen, as husbands, we are more than willing to protect our wife from a thief breaking into the home and dying so that she remains safe—

But, are willing to die to ourselves for the sake of the marriage (Matt 10:38, 16:24).

Men, we are to protect our wives as God protects them.

We are to love our bride as Christ loves the Church!



How does Christ love you--as the Church?

He gave Himself to you! (Eph. 5:25)

The best way to protect your wife is to stay married.

It's not to leave.

We made a promise in front of God, family, and friends on our wedding day.

+  
*to have and to hold  
from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish,  
**until death do us part.***

I mentioned earlier that the biggest problems in marriage are not money, sex, children, in-laws, or communication.

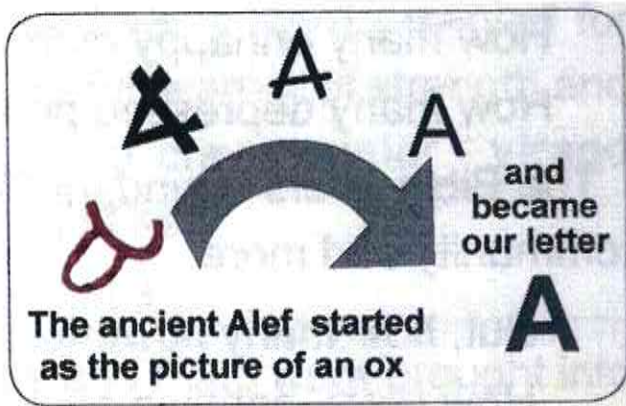
The biggest problem in marriage is the husband and the wife—*ish and ishsha*.

I want you to know that there is a specific reason that I teach you certain Hebrew and Greek words nearly every week.

And the reason is that these words tell a story that is not communicated in English.

There's a reason I have reiterated that husband and wife are *ish* and *ishshah* in the Hebrew.

What I am about to show you is the best marriage counseling you will ever receive. If you take this lesson seriously you will never get a divorce.

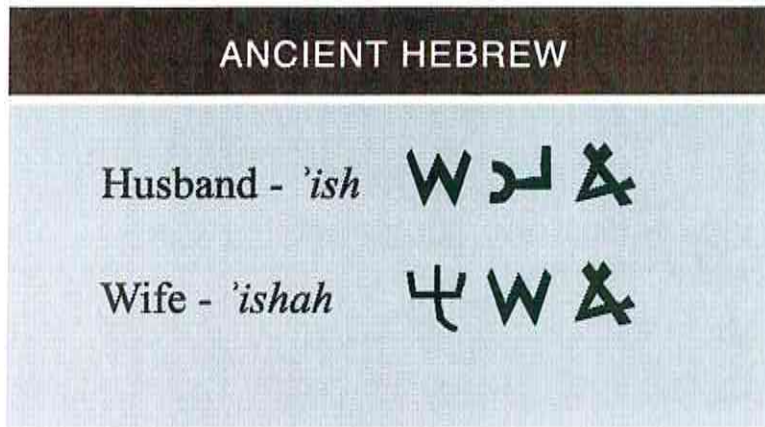


Ancient Hebrew used pictures instead of letters.

Our English letters came from Latin

Latin came from Greek.

Greek came from ancient Hebrew and Phoenicians.



+ From right to left we have the ish / husband in ancient Hebrew.

With the ~~letters~~ word pictures

All-if - Alef = Ox , strong

Yood = Hand—symbolizes work strength, creation or power.

Sheen = <sup>W</sup>teeth – Teeth devour

—  
The wife, 'ishah in ancient Hebrew.

From right to left: Alef, she is strong also—although I dare not call her an ox.

Sheen = <sup>W</sup>teeth – Teeth devour

Lastly, Hey— is the picture of a person with two hands raised.

Hey means “BEHOLD!”—symbolizes that a woman comes out of man. (Gen. 2:22). —worship (על



~~Do you see the similarity between these ancient Hebrew pictures?~~

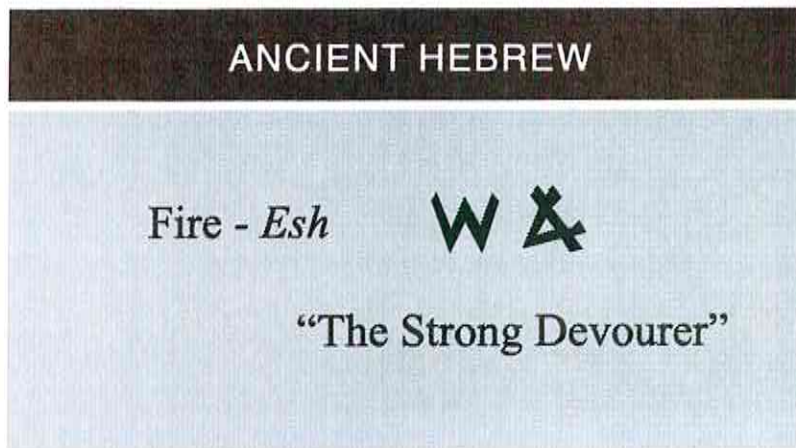
What happens when we take away the differences between man and woman?

Let's take away the *Yood* (work, strength, the strong arm) from husband...the husband whose hand is to work and provide for his wife.

And let's take away the *Hey* from the wife....which represents her femininity.

What are we left with?

↓  
taken out of us



+ We're left with the two word pictures...starting on the right to left—

*Alef*, meaning strong

*Sheen*, meaning teeth – devourer.

What happens when we take away the differences between man and woman?

Literally, the picture is a “The Strong Devourer”...

*Ish* and *ishah* actually come from this Ancient Hebrew word *Esh*.

And *Esh* is fire.

Fire in Hebrew destroys and purifies.

Fire is also used to reveal God's presence.

God is telling us that when you take away the the differences between the specific roles from man and woman (*ish and ishah*) husband and wife—you are not just left with fire –



You have two fires raging in the marriage.

Marriage now becomes *the fire of fires*.

In Hebrew, whenever you double a word it becomes the ultimate.

We see this in Scripture....The Lord of Lords, the King of Kings.

We also see it here between husband and wife—with *the fire of fires*.

When we don't celebrate the differences between men and women with their roles and responsibilities—

Or choose to ignore them, or choose to obliterate them, we get the fire of fires.

In other words, when you take God out of the marriage, and you ignore His Words—you will have ~~destruction~~. *A complete melt down of marriage*

AKA: Divorce

No marriage can survive *the fire of fires*.

This explanation should also give us new insight into homosexuality, bisexuality, the redefining of marriage, and polygamy.



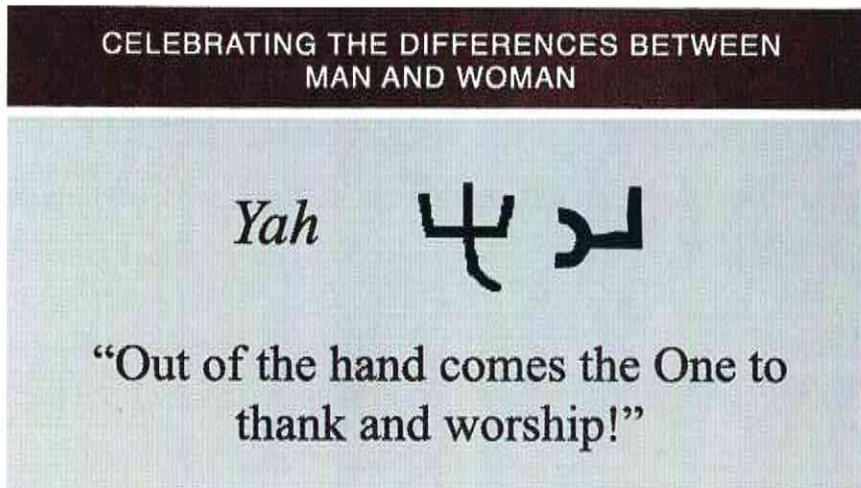
+ Now, let's look at this from the other perspective.

What do you think happens when we take the primary differences between Husband and Wife and combine them? *—Let's eliminate fire from marriage*

*Yood* from the husband – hand that symbolizes work, creation or power. The hand also refers to thanks and praise

*Hey* from the wife– “Behold!” It's a reminder of where she came from. ~~Act of Worship~~

But *Hey* also represents someone with both hands raised—a picture of worship.



When we celebrate the differences between men and woman a new word is created

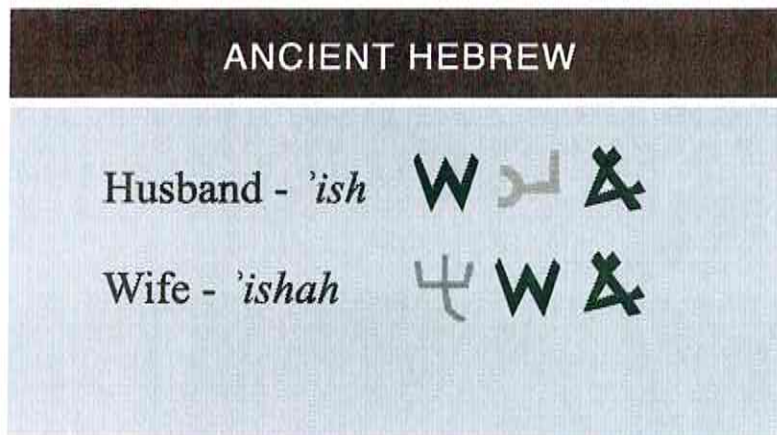
Actually a name is created.

These two word pictures spell God's name –

YAH - The shortened version Yahweh / LORD / “I AM”—hallelujah

Yah, in this context means—“Out of the hand comes the One to thank and worship!”





Now, look at the word pictures for husband—

Far right, *Alef* = Ox , strong

*Yood* = Hand that's in the middle—symbolizes work strength, creation or power.

*Sheen* = teeth – Teeth devour

And we just learned that the *Alef* and *Sheen* placed together becomes fire.

Here we see that a man's hand/work is in the middle of that fire.

What's God communicating?

Answer: Men work in the midst of fire—especially when it comes to our relationship with our wife.



Secondly, let's look at the wife.

Far right, *Alef* = The wife is also strong like an ox

Middle picture: *Sheen* = teeth – Teeth devour

Far left: We have the *Hey*.

Notice here that she's not in the fire like her husband—she's coming out of the fire.

What's God saying here?

There is a fire in the marriage that the wife will experience—but she can walk through it and out of it.

*As she worships God.*

CELEBRATING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN  
MAN AND WOMAN

*Yah*



“Out of the hand comes the One to  
thank and worship!”

All that to say this—

Husband and wife together—with all their differences—reveal the glory of God.

Out of the two words built on fire comes a word that describes the God who is a consuming fire.

Together as one, men and women, husband and wife, *ish* and *ishah*, proclaim the one True God!

And yet, many times in our marriages, we find ourselves complaining to ourselves that our spouse is too different from us—and we are try to change them...

When it's God trying to change us through our spouse.

**KEYPOINT #4:**

*Marriage was not designed for happiness but for holiness.*


Marriage is not the key to human happiness— God is!

So if God is the key to human happiness, any marriage can flourish.

But what about those of us who have been divorced?

Although God hates divorce—there is forgiveness from it

Is Romans 8:28 still in the Bible after divorce?

 **Romans 8:28**—We know that <sup>includes divorce</sup> all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Believe it or not, God uses divorce to accomplish His ultimate purposes for you.

### **PRAYER**

### **BENEDICTION**

*2 Cor 13:11—Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

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