

## **The Major Themes of the Bible Applied to Everyday Life** **Marriage and Divorce**

The purposes and goals of marriage for a believer are given to us in scripture and are completely different from what the world sees as the purposes of marriage. This is also true of the purpose of life in general. The unbelieving world struggles to “discover” the meaning and purpose of life.

WCF 24.1 says this: “Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband; at the same time.”

We live in a time when the laws about this are changing and often reflect that we don’t live in a Christian culture. Issues raised immediately –

1. Homosexual marriage
2. Polygamy

As we look into God’s word we see that His purposes are only carried out in monogamous heterosexual unions.

WCF 24.2 says “Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with a holy seed; and for preventing uncleanness.

Let’s examine several of these points and look at the scriptures that relate to them, starting with our homework questions A - C -

What purposes of God do you find in these passages –

- Genesis 2:18? “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’”
- Malachi 2:15 “Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.
- 1 Corinthians 7:2 and 7:9 “But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband....it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.”

Scripture also tells us who should and should not marry – let’s look first at WCF 24.3 “...it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord..... neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life....”

Let’s think about what that means as we look at our homework question D “What prohibitions do you find here about who may marry?”

1 Corinthians 7:39 “A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. “

2 Corinthians 6:14 “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

This is not a concept new to the New Testament, Old Testament laws for God’s people reflect the same commands – let’s look at Deuteronomy 7:3 & 4, Ezra 9:2, Nehemiah 13:25 – 27. The reason for the prohibition is that not only can a household not serve the Lord as one when not all are believers, there is also the grave temptation to abandon the faith and to encourage the children in unbelief.

While marriage to an unbeliever is certainly contrary to the word of God, once the marriage has taken place the believing spouse is still bound by the commitment to the marriage. This is not a just cause for divorce, though it can certainly be the cause for a very difficult marriage. Marriage, even between believers, always has difficulties and always requires selflessness for it to conform to the design of God. One pattern that is certainly a deviation from God’s plan is abuse. (See abuse handout)

Outside intervention from other believers, from the pastors, elders and church staff are sometimes required to restore a difficult marriage. If abuse is happening in your home or in the home or dating relationship of a friend or family member intervention is essential. Condoning abuse is encouraging sin and can have tragic results.

Adultery is a clear cause for divorce to be allowed, though not required.

Matthew 19:9 “And I say to you whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Desertion of the unbelieving spouse is also addressed in scripture. In these cases the leadership of the church is to be involved in counseling and in all decisions that are made. With desertion and abuse, efforts are always made to redeem the marriage before divorce is considered appropriate. We should always keep in mind that marriage is designed by God to be an exclusive covenant relationship of life-long commitment.

In our marriages, as in our Christian walk as a whole, we are to see the purpose of life as to glorify God. Our homes should be places where God is honored and served and children are trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**What is Abuse?** (Condensed from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project)

Coercion and threats:

Making or carrying out threats to injure the spouse (Proverbs 3:31)

Threatening to leave the marriage or to commit suicide

Threatening to take away the children

Making the spouse do anything illegal

Intimidation:

Deliberately causing fear by looks, actions or gestures

Smashing things

Abusing pets

Isolation:

Controlling what the spouse does, limiting outside involvement

Using jealousy to justify actions

Minimizing, denying and blaming

Making light of abuse or saying it did not happen

Shifting responsibility: blaming the spouse for causing it

Emotional abuse:

Name-calling

Humiliating and attacking

Making the spouse doubt his/her sanity or value

**On Submission – From Susan Hunt's The True Woman:**

1. Every woman is not to submit to every man, but every married woman is to submit to her husband. 1 Peter 3:1, Titus 2
2. Women are not to submit to sin.

3. The Biblical commands about women not usurping authority have reference to the home and church, not society in general.
4. All believers, men and women, are to submit to the ordained leadership of the church.
5. As members of the body of Christ, we are to submit to one another regardless of gender.

### **Homework for Reflection: Week 9**

#### **Marriage and Divorce**

1. We sometimes hear polygamy justified because of its practice in the Old Testament. Examine these passages (Matthew 19:3 – 9 and Genesis 2:18 – 25.) How would you explain God's ordination of marriage between one man and one woman to someone who believes in polygamy?
2. Examine 1 Corinthians 7:39 and 11 Corinthians 6:14 – 18. How would you explain to a believer why he or she must not marry an unbeliever?
3. WCF 24.6 says, in part "Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage..." How have you seen this to be true? What is the effect on our culture and our marriages?

Marriage is an opportunity for sanctification, obedience to God and growth in selflessness. It is important that we "tune out" the voices of our culture which tell us that marriage must be for our own individual happiness and has no other purpose. The purpose of Christian marriage is to glorify God, just as this is the purpose of our lives in general. Walter Wangerin, in As for Me and My House, says this:

"Gifting your spouse, volunteering whether he deserves it or not, for no reason whatsoever, for no payment in exchange, gratuitously, perfectly freely, for his sake alone, regardless of his work, his worth, or his investment in the relationship; giving him something for nothing – this is GRACE. This displaces the marriage contract again and again with newness. And this images in action the divine face of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus loved, so do you show the same love to your spouse."

This is certainly a high calling and none of us achieve this perfectly in any area of life. We all fall short every minute of every day, however as we abide in Christ and trust Him and grow, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we do grow closer to this ideal. True and lasting joy in any area of our lives is only in our growth in obedience to the one true and living God. He alone gives life and gives it abundantly.