Disciples Church

Marriage & Singleness Series - Session 1 -

Q29. What is Marriage?-Part 1

Week of January 3, 2018

**TEACHING NOTES**

\*Open with Princess Bride Clip- “Marriage”

**The reality is Marriage is always urgent.**

There never has been a generation whose view of marriage is high enough.

The chasm between the biblical view of marriage and the fleshly view is, and has always been, sadly gargantuan.

Some cultures in history respect the importance and the permanence of marriage more than others. Many, like our own, have such low, casual, take-it-or-leave-it attitudes toward marriage as to make the biblical vision seem ludicrous to most people. I can almost promise you that any legitimate study of marriage from scripture will truly challenge your own view of it.

I mention this out the gate with the high hopes that it might possibly awaken you up to consider an understanding of marriage higher and deeper and stronger and more glorious than anything this culture—or perhaps you yourself—have ever imagined.

The greatness and glory of marriage is beyond our ability to think or feel without divine revelation and without the illumining and awakening work of the Holy Spirit.

To say it plainly: **The world cannot know what marriage is without learning it from God.**

If we want to truly understand how something works and what its intended purpose is, we must go to its creator, its author.

🡪On that note we must go to God’s word… go to God who is the author of marriage.. who is the Source of LOVE. The one for whom our marriage ultimately exist. I am excited to help us begin this journey tonight.

In my almost 20 year career as a Pastor of the Church, some of my greatest highlights and joys have been to see God’s awesome work in marriages by which they truly Honored Him and found deep satisfaction in all that Christ is and is doing in their lives.

On the other side of the coin, I have also had some of my hardest and painful moments of counsel, rebuke and work with Married couples and singles when sin and flesh caused rebellion against God and his will and design for marriage and singleness.

I have seen the sin of mankind be most potent and detrimental in betraying God and seeking to satisfy the flesh not in the area of money, or family, or fame, or drugs, or career but in the pursuit of relationship and sexuality at high cost to self, family, gospel testimony and most importantly God’s glory.

I love to see singles and married people thrive in the gospel and in glorifying God and putting the Gospel on display. I hurt to see singles and married people tear apart God’s wonderful design in the name of love, comfort or lust.

We, your elders pray for you all in this area so much. We long to lead you well and according to scripture. We long to see God honored in the area of Marriage and singleness here at Disciples Church and beyond.

I am so very hopeful that you come to this midweek teaching series ready to grow, to be stretched and challenged, to build on strengths/God honoring practices and correct to repent of weaknesses/sin.

That together we will seek to know and follow God’s will according to his word for these things.

I promise you that you will be stretched during this series. That we will cover things that your history, your worldview and or your current practices want to challenge.

All I ask is that you work to die to self and live to Christ. To walk by faith and not by sight.

To aim to honor and obey God and not honor and obey your desires or feelings.

I want to ask you to be in prayer throughout this series, to seek out your elders and group leaders for clarity and help and to work to come out of this time maturing in Christ and not the way you came into it.

My belief is that when our stewardship of Marriages and Singleness is healthy, our Church is healthy. And that when it is sinful and self-seeking our church will experience some of its hardest roads of hurt, shame and discord.

It is our pastoral commitment to teach and train our flock faithfully and to walk with you both in the highs and the lows. I have seen God do amazing things and I believe he has great things in store for us in that areas of marriage and singleness moving forward.

In the first 7 weeks of our series we will be revisiting the couple questions on marriage, roles, and singleness from the catechism that we skipped. We skipped them in preparation to teach them only when ready. I know that in recent years many of you have had questions we were not ready to fully answer and we know how important it is that your shepherds help you seek the Lord and answer your questions about how you can honor him. We simply did not want to rush into this teaching until it was time and we could be most helpful to you. I am excited it is time and I believe it will be for all of our good.

In these first 7 weeks we will cover the origin, definition and purpose of Marriage, the roles in marriage, the permanence of marriage and what that means for divorce and remarriage, and what is singleness and how dating and courting should happen to honor the Lord and each other.

Then, I will be offering a few of the more pragmatic sessions regarding marriage communication, stewardship of money, time and relationships, and intimacy.

Whether you’re married or single, all aspects of this content applies to you as you are a part of a church body and culture that has people in the positions you are not in and your understanding and counsel and prayer for them is a part of your Christian testimony and walk. So please don’t tune out of any part of this series and say, it doesn’t’ apply to you. It does! If not directly. Then indirectly with those you are walking with or via the children you are raising up in the Lord.

With that let’s dig in by looking at question 29 in ***the Word of Truth Catechism***…

**Q29. What is marriage?**

Marriage is a covenant relationship whereby God joins together one man and one woman into a one-flesh union designed to be faithful and last until the couple is separated by death.

**1. Marriage is God’s design and doing.**

**Our answer begins with “**Marriage is**”.**

That is a good place to start.. What is Marriage?

Our Catechism answer says**, “**Marriage is a covenant relationship whereby God joins together one man and one woman into a one-flesh union”

To flesh this out, let’s go to God’s word and see the origin and definition for marriage in Genesis 2.

[**Genesis 2:18-25**](http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/Genesis%202.18-25)

**18**Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for  him.” **19**Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. **20**The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam  there was not found a helper fit for him. **21**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. **22**And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23**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.”

**24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.**

**Here we read that God is the one who ordains marriage and therefore God is the one who defines marriage.**

**God Ordains Marriage: (Creation Ordinance)**

Lets start with the fact that God ordains or decrees marriage.

In other words, Marriage is God’s creation and therefore it exists for his purposes and is to be done by his guidelines.

Marriage is an institution created by God, not man, and therefore, the terms of it and purpose of it are set by God, not man.

This brings us to one of the fundamental Theological understandings we have about marriage.

When God created this world there were *specific things* that *God instituted* for mankind to *carry through this creation* that need to be identified and understood and carried out according to his design and plan.

**2. Marriage is a Creation Ordinance**

These things are often called “*Creation Ordinances*” or “*Creation Mandates*” in theology.

There are several creation ordinances, let’s briefly identify and consider four:

**Work** – In creation, God instituted and instructed the necessity and goodness of God-honoring labor. This includes the task of having dominion over the rest of creation. “God blessed them. And God said to them, …fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over … every living thing’” (Gen. 1:28).

Another creation ordinance is:

**Sabbath** – In creation, God instituted and modeled the Sabbath ordinance for mankind. A one-in-seven-day day of rest and worship to God. Genesis 2:1-3 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

And another creation ordinance is our main focus tonight:

**Marriage** – Marriage is instituted at creation as the unique covenantal union between one man and one woman. 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. This does not mean that a marriage union is for all people, but to those who are not gifted with singleness, are to be married in the way that God instituted in creation. And those who are gifted with singleness still have a role to honor the Marriage Creation Ordinance, we’ll see this later.

**Procreation** – In creation, God instituted and instructed that humans procreate to fulfill His plan and design for this world. His word tells us plainly that this is to happen in the context of marriage. By God’s decree, not all humans are given the ability to procreate, but generally speaking, it is the duty of mankind to multiply. “God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth…’” (Gen. 1:28).

The important things we need to understand about creation ordinances is that:

1. **An ordinance that is creational is perpetual.** (….meaning creation ordinances are to be carried out from the beginning of creation until the end of the creation.)
2. **Creation ordinances are commanded to be rightly *honored* by all men and women.**
* **Let’s consider the first point: *An ordinance that is creational is perpetual.***

The Apostle Paul shows us the importance of the creation design in his teaching in a number of places. For example, he appeals to the *creation order* when He asserts the distinct roles that men and women have in the church and home, such as in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2:13-15. In this creation, these roles do not change. He roots his arguments in creation; stating the framework God designed marriage and headship at creation is still to be carried out today. He emphasizes this when he says, *“man was created first, then the woman from man.”* 1 Timothy 2:13

Another example of this perpetual reality is regarding marriage. The marriage ordinance/reality/law that God brought forth in the Creation Ordinance does not change in this creation. However, look at this, human marriage goes away in the **new** creation, look at:

**Matthew 20:30**For in the resurrection they neither marry *nor* are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

This shows that at death, the end of ones interaction and life in this creation, human marriage is no longer. Human marriage is God’s design and purpose for this life only.

* Let’s consider the next point: **Creation ordinances are commanded to be rightly *honored* by all men and women—*creation ordinances* are over all of mankind.**

This means that work is not just for Christians. All people who are given the natural ability to work, Christian or not, are to work-in accordance to God’s design.

Sabbath is not just for Christians. All people, Christian or not, are given the ordinance of Sabbath and are expected to do it-in accordance to God’s design.

And, likewise, this means that marriage and procreation are not just for Christians. All people who are given the gift of marriage, Christian or not, are to seek it and procreation-in accordance to God’s design.

Now, this may seem odd to you, but it should not be.

Just think about it; No sound person is claiming that working is just for Christians.

And no sound person is claiming that marriage is just for Christians. We see in Scripture that marriage is for the followers of God and others. We see in the gospels Christ Himself, acknowledge the one man and one-woman marriages of non-believers around Him.

Now, as we’ve learned, a non-believer cannot do anything that truly honors God.

Non-believers should work according to their role and natural abilities. Even though they don’t do this “unto the Lord” as Scripture commands, it is still work.

And the same thing goes for Sabbath, non-believers should rest on a Sabbath day, and they should worship God. They won’t and can’t worship God as non-believers, but this doesn’t remove the obligation….rather it increases their guilt before God because they don’t obey Him in this.

The Sabbath ordinance really does sit over them, the fact that they are non-believers, doesn’t change this reality.

The same thing goes for marriage; while unbelievers in a one man-one woman marriage have a real marriage….in their hearts they do not intend it for the glory of God, and they do not intend for it to display Christ and the Church- as we’ll see further is a high purpose of marriage spoken of in Ephesians 5. But the fact that it isn’t done to God’s glory, does not mean the marriage is not real. If it’s between one man and one woman, it is a real marriage.

Therefore, as our point states: Creation ordinances are commanded to be rightly *honored* by all men and women—*creation ordinances* are over all of mankind.

If you are tracking with this, you may be wondering, “How does a person given the gift of singleness *honor* the marriage ordinance?”

We’re going to talk more about the gift of singleness in a later lesson, but the answer to that is; they would do this not by having a marriage themselves, rather they honor the marriage ordinance by lifting up God’s design for marriage, by speaking of God’s design for marriage, by encouraging others in God’s design for marriage, by **not** voting to approve an ungodly definitions/practices of marriage, by **not** tempting a married person with sexual immorality, and so on.

The ordinance is still a reality in the creation they live in—God’s creation—so they honor it in ways appropriate to them.

I hope that helps you understand what *Creation Ordinance* means, the importance of these, and what implications these have for mankind, created in God’s image.

Now, let’s see this further in Scripture in regard to our point that: **In creation God instituted the marriage ordinance for mankind**….there are some key texts that show us this.///

We saw Genesis already, I’ll read it again: **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.

Let’s see how this is affirmed by Jesus and the Apostles.

When Jesus taught on marriage in the gospel books He teaches clearly that marriage is an unbreakable union between one man and one woman, and to prove this is the unchanging standard for what marriage is, He calls back to the creation account and uses the *creation ordinance* for the basis for this reality. He says:

**Mark 10:6-9** But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’**7**‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, **8**and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. **9**What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

In this passage Jesus is referencing and quoting the creation account. One theologian says this point this way “The New Testament, and our Lord Jesus Himself, draws it’s teaching on marriage and on appropriate relations between men and women from [Genesis 1 and 2]. When the Pharisees are arguing over what the Law of Moses says about male and female relations, and about relations between husbands and wives and about divorce and remarriage, the Lord Jesus always takes them right back to Genesis 2 because the foundations for marriage are found in this passage.”

When Paul teaches the foundational point on the origin of marriage and the ultimate purpose for marriage, he teaches clearly that marriage is an unbreakable union between one man and one woman, and to prove this is the unchanging standard for what marriage is, He calls back to the creation account and uses the *creation ordinance* for the basis for this reality. He says:

**Ephesians 5:31-32** 31“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32This mystery is profound, and *I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*

Again, in this passage the Apostle Paul is referencing and quoting the creation account. **WHY?** Because it’s a creation ordinance.

What this means is because God is the one who creates and ordains/decrees marriage it does not change on the whim of culture or the desires, longings of any given person.

No institution has the authority to redefine or reorder the decree, design or purpose of marriage.

Hopefully you see how Jesus and the Apostles didn’t allow man’s desire or man’s tradition to redefine marriage...they used God’s authoritative creation design as seen expressed in Genesis.

Marriage is Ordained by God.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **Genesis 1:27**

Marriage is also ordained by God because he took the role of being the first Father to give away the bride.

Genesis 2:22: “And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and *brought her to the man*.”

He didn’t hide her and make Adam seek her out. He made her; then he brought her to him.

He created her and then gave her to the man and bound them into one flesh in what he decreed as *marriage. A relationship*, unlike every other relationship in the world.

Because God is the one who designed and decrees marriage he is the one who defines it too!

Jesus makes a strong argument for the ongoing responsibility of man to uphold God’s original design for marriage in his words in **Matthew 19:4-6** “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 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’? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Jesus is quoting here God’s definition of marriage which is from Genesis 2:24-25.

**3. Marriage is Defined by God**

**Genesis 2:24-25**

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Consider the absolute uniqueness of a marriage relationship in that a man and a woman make a vow to unity until death do them part and God binds that vow or covenant into a one-flesh union. Into a relationship and bond like no other.

\*My background in being discipled and then in my almost 20 pastoral career regarding relationships, and marriage. One of the things that has been almost unanimous with the couples I get to sit with whether just starting or 30 years into their marriage is a real lack of understanding of what Marriage really is according to God’s design and definition.

In this I have come to see two **2 contradicting views of marriage that must be understood.**

**The first understanding is what I will call:**

1. **Togetherness:**

I believe this is the way most people typically think about Marriage. Even Christians.

It is firmed in the idea of falling in love and then getting to a place where you think.. I Can’t imagine life without you. Lets solidify our relationship so we can be together for the rest of our days.

**The view is that you see yourselves as two individuals who are together.**

But you fail to often live out your togetherness so often what you have is called marriage but it is really more like roommates with benefits.. Because the frustrations of life come. The boredom of life comes. As opportunities to be lazy of selfish creep in.

**Surveys show that a large majority of people are unfulfilled or unhappy with their marriage!**

# Laying Bricks or building Cathedrals

Christopher Wren, who designed St. Paul’s Cathedral in London (one of the world’s most beautiful buildings), wrote about the reactions of construction workers who were asked what they were doing.

Those workers who were bored and tired responded by saying, **“I’m laying bricks” or “I’m carrying stones.”**

But one worker, who was mixing cement, seemed cheerful and enthusiastic about his work. Asked what he was doing, he replied, **“I’m building a magnificent cathedral.”**

One of the main reasons we get down in our marriages is our understanding of marriage **(togetherness)** leaves us short of what Marriage really is meant to be.

One of the main reasons why I believe this to be so is people don’t really understand what God has done in making them one flesh. I believe most people still see their marriage as two individuals who are committed to be together. But if that togetherness doesn’t work then their individualism means they can just move on and or try again.

So we are desperate to understand what God intended in what Marriage is meant to be. TO Understand what ONENESS is.

**Genesis 2:24-25**  Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

**Again listen to Jesus works in the Gospel of Mark..**

**Mark 10:6-9** But God's plan was seen from the beginning of creation, for 'He made them male and female.' [7] 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, [8] and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, [9] let no one separate them, for God has joined them together."

God made them… He made them Male and Female. He made families and procreation to produce children that would grow and as men and woman come together to form a new family. To have a bond that is sacred and God ordained. He unites them into ONE FLESH.

Jesus says, they are no longer Two but one. That means they are not two who have come “TOGETHER” trying to be two who do life together. He says, they are no longer two.

They are ONE! IN God’s economy, in God’s eyes, In God’s design.

This only happens between a man and woman. Not a man and a Man or a woman and a woman. That is not marriage. That is entirely something else. To call homosexual or multiple partners marriage is to completely reject and deny the Creator’s unique, precious and precise design for ONE biological man and one Biological woman. The gender he made them. Not the way they feel or want to be. He made one male and one female to unite into a ONE Flesh union…that is, listen carefully, uniquely different but complementary genders, united together by God into a one-flesh union.

Hear me please: Because many people think they get this but they really don’t.. they miss the depth and the vastness of it. Marriage is not a best laid effort to be together it is a binding of two into one. It is a covenant made until death ends the covenant. It is a union like nothing else, it is a one-flesh union.

A way I have found it helpful to understand this is a little morbid and weird but it is the only way I can help us see the uniqueness of the bond and the permanency of it.

**Oneness: Surgically united**

**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.

it is God who in each marriage ordains and performs a uniting called *one flesh*. Man does not create this. God does. And it is not in man’s power to destroy. Jesus is clear in this when he says, “*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate*.”

When a couple speaks their vows, it is not a man or a woman or a pastor or parent who is the main actor—the main doer. God is. God receives the vow or covenant both the man and the woman makes and in his power joins them as a husband and a wife into a one-flesh union. *God* does that. No one else can do that. No one else can bind two into one. No one else is the author of Marriage. That is why so-called homosexual marriage is not Marriage. It is outside of the construct of the creators design. The necessary recipe for marriage.

The world does not get this and sadly much of the church lacks a full or right understanding of this. Which is one of the reasons why marriage is treated so casually. This is one of the reasons marriage in world and often in the church is not seen as the miracle or wonder it is.

Now next week we are going to climb into the fullness of how ONENESS thrives and is healthy and much different then what many know marriage to be. To wrap up tonight in session one, I want to expand on something I just said which is in relationships to the vows. **Why is the vow such an essential part of a marriage ceremony?**

Because it is the declaring your willingness to enter into this thing called marriage. It is the act of placing yourself on the alter and dyeing to your individualism to be bound by God into one until death.

Most weddings completely miss the fact that vows are said at what is called the wedding alter.

Have you ever really thought about why we call it that? An alter is a place of death. That doesn’t seem to go with the white dress and the lights and the pristine thing a wedding often is. But it is an Essential part of making a wedding actually a wedding. **WHY?** Because it is exactly what is happening when God makes two become one.

You are laying down your individualism. You are saying, I no longer will act as an individual but instead one who wants you to be a part of every part of my life.. \*Expand..

Think about the vows themselves..

***I take you ….***

I take you and you take me. I give you me and you give you to me.

***To be my wedded wife/husband*** (To be wedded) meaning to be bound by God as one. To be formed one like nothing else is..

***To have and to hold ….*** meaning You are mine and I am yours. The scriptures in 1 Corinthians say. The mans body is hers and her body is his. You do not belong to yourself anymore. You are one. You have given yourself to this person. Signed over the rights to them.

***From this day forward*** …. This is Covenant language.. The beginning of the term of the covenant. Is legal, binding language.

***For better for worse ….For richer for poorer ….In sickness and in health ….***

This is further terms: meanings if our relationship gets better or if it gets worse.. If our lives get better or if then get worse.. IF we are rich or utterly poor, If we are healthy or utterly sick.

Meaning… There are no circumstances that divide our wedded union. There are no out clauses.

We are all in. We literally could say, whether faithful or not, whether present or not, we are still bound.

**To love and to cherish** …. Meaning.. I will love you and cherish you as my own life and body no matter what. Meaning… my commitment to love and to have a cherished place in my heart for you is not a matter of feelings or circumstance but of covenant made here and now.

**Till death do us part** ….this is the closing term. This is the only term that ends the covenant. Why is this the only one, because it is the one God is in charge of. He is the one who binds us and he is the one who separates us or ends the covenant or the one flesh union.

There is not marriage after death as we have said, it is only for this life. And the Covenant you make is only for the terms of the life of the man and the woman. If one dies the covenant is fulfilled and they are no longer in a one-flesh union. While some may want to romanticize the that they are still married after their spouse has died. They are not. The union is finished. The covenant fulfilled.

What is amazing to me is that these are the vows people say and yet so few really understand or embrace what they mean or what they have created. Let me say something here that we will build on later in the series. While it takes two participating people to have a relationship… it only takes one to stay faithful to the covenant they made before God and to the other person—meaning you cannot control your spouse, but you can honor God and the marriage covenant regardless of what the person you married has done or is doing.

Let’s look again at our catechism answer:

Marriage is a covenant relationship whereby God joins together one man and one woman into a one-flesh union designed to be faithful and last until the couple is separated by death.

Are you starting to see the fuller picture here of what God ordains marriage to be, what marriage means and the terms of uniqueness of what Marriage is in God’s economy?

Set up Next week.

Let’s pray.