

MARRIAGE BUILDING

Session 1

What is a Christian Marriage?

- **What is marriage?**
 - Marriage is a *union* - the joining of two - a man and a woman - into one.
 - Marriage is a *covenant* - Each party making non-revocable promises to the other
 - Marriage is the *establishment of a household*
 - Marriage is a *commitment for life*
- **What does the Bible say about marriage?**
 - Gen. 2:18-24

“The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

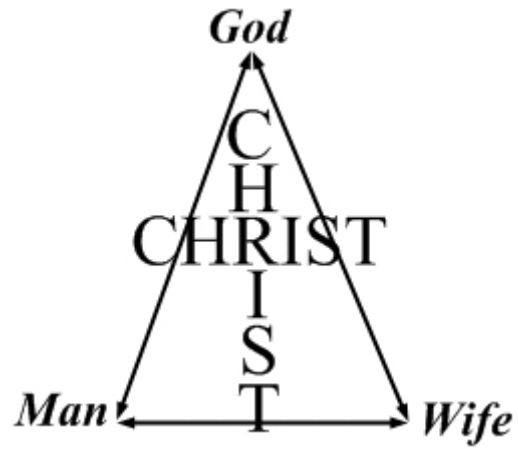
So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”
 - Prov. 18:22

“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.”
 - Mal. 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. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.”
 - Mk. 10:6-9

“At the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”
 - Ex. 20:14, 17

“You shall not commit adultery . . . You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”
- **Are all marriages Christian?**
 - No. Christian marriages are marriages between Christians.
 - Each must live to serve: first Christ, then each other and their family, then their fellow Christians, and finally the world.



- A Christian marriage has Christ at its center!
- A Christian marriage is a union of spirit as well as one of heart, mind, and body.
- A Christian marriage is kept, not through force of will or even through mutual love; it is kept by the power of Christ.

MARRIAGE BUILDING

Session 2

Husbands and Wives in the Christian Household

- **What is the significance of the “household”?**

- Gen. 2:24 – “. . . a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. . .”

- “headship”

- Read Eph. 5:23

- “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”

- Leadership

- Provision

- Responsibility / Accountability

- Agreement

- Read Gen. 2:18; Matt. 18:19; Eccl 4:9-12; Eph 5:21; Gal. 3:28

- “The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

- “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”

- “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

- “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

- “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

- The role of communication

- Issues?

- **What is the biblical role of the husband?**

- What do you say?

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- What does the Bible say?

- Eph. 5:25-28; Col. 3:19

- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with

water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”

“Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”

➤ 1 Peter 3:7

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”

➤ Family Shepherd

• **What is the biblical role of the wife?**

• What do you say?

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-
-
-
-

• What does the Bible say?

➤ Eph. 5:22-24

“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

➤ Col. 3:18

“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

➤ 1 Pet. 3:1-5

*“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands.
..”*

➤ Prov. 31:10-31

“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. 11 Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city

gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

➤ Helper

NOTE: The word *submssion* means: "a purposeful and willful act of yielding to another out of honor, respect, and devotion."
True submission cannot be coerced.

MARRIAGE BUILDING

Session 3

Practical Issues – Dealing with the Past

- **Leaving and cleaving**

Gen. 2:24 (KJV) - *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."*

- What must a man leave behind?
- What must a man take hold of?
- How does this apply to the wife?

- **Baggage from prior relationships**

- What emotional baggage might be brought into the marriage relationship?
- How might this effect the marriage?
- What can be done with it?

- **Repentance and forgiveness trust and faithfulness**

- Read Ps. 32:5, 103:8-14; 1 Jn. 1:9; Matt. 6:12-15

"I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

- What is repentance?
- How do repentance and forgiveness relate?
- What might be the role of each in the marriage relationship?

- **trust and faithfulness**

- How does one earn trust?
- How might another person's trust be lost?
- How could another person's trust be regained?
- Discuss Mal. 2:13-14

“Another thing you do: You flood the LORD’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.”

- **Ways to overcome the past**

Consider the following necessary steps:

1. Make sure you are in right relationship with God through Christ Jesus.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will change your heart.
3. Search God’s Word and let it guide your heart and mind.
4. Be willing to forgive and able to be forgiven. Deal with the past with an eye toward the future.
5. With God’s help, walk uprightly from here and now.

MARRIAGE BUILDING

Session 4

Practical Issues – Dealing with the Present & Planning for the Future

- **Family finances**

- Yours, mine, or ours?
- The big items - home, auto, big-ticket purchases
- Where does *faith* fit in?

Read Lk. 16:10-13 - *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*

Prov. 3:9-10 - *“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”*

Mal 3:8-12 - *“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse— the whole nation of you— because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*

Haggi 1:5-7 - *“Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.”*

- Make a tentative monthly / annual household budget. Be sure to include practical amounts for emergencies and for leisure time activities.

- **Jobs & Careers**

- Immediate shared goals
- Husband's short term goals
- Wife's short term goals
- Shared long term goals

- **Having and Rearing Children**

- When and how many?
- How do children and careers relate?
- How important is it for mom to be home with the children?

FAMILY BUDGET PLANNING WORKSHEET

| MONTHLY INCOME | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Husband's salary/wages | |
| Wife's salary/wages | |
| Alimony/child support received | |
| Interest income on accounts | |
| Investment dividends | |
| Real estate income | |
| Unemployment | |
| Other | |
| TOTAL TAKE-HOME INCOME | |

| MAJOR MONTHLY EXPENSES | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Rent | |
| 1 st mortgage | |
| Auto loans/leases | |
| Student loans | |
| 2 nd mortgage | |
| Other loans | |
| TOTAL MAJOR EXPENSES | |

| UNSECURED DEBT | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Credit card - | |
| Credit card - | |
| Credit card - | |
| Credit card - | |
| Store credit - | |
| Money owed individuals | |
| TOTAL UNSECURED DEBT | |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| MONTHLY LIVING EXPENSES | |
| Auto gas and maintenance | |
| Auto insurance | |
| Cable TV / satellite | |
| Child care | |
| Clothing maintenance | |
| Clothing purchases | |
| Electric bill | |
| Food (eating out-lunch, dining) | |
| Food (groceries) | |
| Gas bill | |
| Health club | |
| Homeowner insurance | |
| Household expenses | |
| Internet access | |
| Life insurance | |
| Memberships | |
| Personal care (hair etc.) | |
| Regular savings | |
| Telephone (home and cell) | |
| Tithe / charitable contributions | |
| Tuition and school supplies | |
| Water/sewer bill | |
| TOTAL LIVING EXPENSES | |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| SUMMARY | |
| Total take-home income | |
| Total major expenses (-) | |
| Total unsecured debt (-) | |
| Total living expenses (-) | |
| DISPOSABLE INCOME | |

How we might spend our disposable income:

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MARRIAGE BUILDING

Session 5 Covenants and Promises

- To **love**
 - Read 1 Cor. 13:4-8a

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”
 - Read Rom. 12:9-12

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”
- To **honor**
 - How does one "honor" his spouse?
 - Read Php. 2:3-4

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
- To **cherish**
 - The word "cherish" means to value highly. Does this differ from love? How?
- ... for **better or worse, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness or in health ...**
 - Sometimes the wedding vows use the words "in plenty or in want" or "in wealth or in poverty" instead of "better or worse." In any case these things fit on a sliding scale. What constitutes an acceptable standard of living for you, may be judged inadequate by someone else. How closely is your relationship tied to your standard of living? How closely do you think it should be tied to your standard of living?
 - Life will have its ups and downs. Sometimes things go your way and sometimes they don't. Are you committed to face both joy and sorrow together?
 - Sickness is not something we anticipate, but it can become a part of anyone's life. How might it affect the marriage relationship?

- ... **until death**
 - How long do these covenants and promises remain in effect?

- **Faithfulness / "forsaking all others"**
 - What are the 7th and the 10th Commandments?
 - How important are these to a marriage?
 - Read Matt. 5:27-28. *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* How did Jesus apply the 7th Commandment? How does this practically apply to the Christian marriage?

- To **share** every aspect of my life

MARRIAGE BUILDING

Session 6 **Planning the Wedding Ceremony**

Physical Arrangement of the Sanctuary

Scriptures

- Call to Worship -
- OT Reading -
- NT Reading -
- Benediction -

Symbols

- White = holiness / purity
- Unity candle = establishment of a new household
- Giving of the bride = transfer of authority and accountability
- Why is the groom first = He must be the spiritual leader
- Wedding ring = the covenant of marriage is unending

Music

- Prelude music
- Bridal Procession
- Special songs
- Recessional
- Other

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

Chapter 24 Of Marriage and Divorce

24.1 Marriage is a union between one man and one woman, designed of God to last so long as they both shall live.

24.2 Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and development of their moral and spiritual character; for the propagation of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

24.3 All persons who are able with judgment to give their consent may marry, except within the limits of blood relationship forbidden by Scripture, and such marriages are valid before God in the eyes of the church. But no marriage can be fully and securely Christian in spirit or in purpose unless both partners are committed to a common Christian faith and to a deeply shared intention of building a Christian home. Evangelical Christians should seek as partners in marriage only persons who hold in common a sound basis of evangelical faith.

24.4 Marriage for the Christian has religious as well as civil significance. The distinctive contribution of the church in performing the marriage ceremony is to affirm the divine institution of marriage; to invoke God's blessing upon those who enter into the marital relationship in accordance with his word; to hear the vows of those who desire to be married; and to assure the married partners of God's grace within their new relationship.

24.5 It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution save that caused by the death of either husband or wife. However, the weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows; yet only in cases of extreme, unrepented-of, and irremedial unfaithfulness (physical or spiritual) should separation or divorce be considered. Such separation or divorce is accepted as permissible only because of the failure of one or both of the partners, and does not lessen in any way the divine intention for indissoluble union.

24.6 The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the church, in keeping with the redemptive gospel of Christ, when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evidence, and a firm purpose of and endeavor after Christian marriage is manifested.

24.7 Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to discover if God's vocation for them is to remain unmarried, since one failure in this realm raises serious question as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union.