

# What God has joined together let no man separate

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Often in church life there are times when God wants to bring a particular message or a particular theme through that is helpful for bringing the church through a transition period.

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This morning I believe I have one of those types of messages that I believe Jesus wants me to preach on and that message is about marriage.

When the thought dropped into my mind the other week, I thought that what would be good would be to do an question and answer style interview with a few of the couples who have been married for quite a while.

What I didn't realize is that the couples I had in my mind all celebrate either 20yrs of marriage or in our case 25yrs of marriage over the next two months - a total of 85yrs of marriage between 4 couples.

Before I do that let's go to God's word to get a glimpse of how he instigated marriage in the beginning and see his view on this most wonderful of gifts he has given to a man and a women.

## Gen 2:18-24

**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."**

It doesn't say that all men and all women should be together otherwise Paul and Jesus and many others who remained single would have been out of God's will. Being single is a gift from God just as being married is. They both have purpose and function. For the single person, the purpose is to wholly focus on God and the life that he has called them to live without the challenge of working together with another person.

For the married couple the purpose is also to wholly focus on God and the life that he has called both of them to live together as though they were a single entity - the two are to become one.

But it does say that it is not good that man should be alone during his life and that it will always be that God will make a helper fit for us.

**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.

So God sets about preparing to make a helper suitable for the man and what is interesting here are two things.

First he doesn't create the woman from the dust as he does with man but rather from man himself and from his side so that in essence the union is already there. It's a side by side union.

Secondly notice he only takes ONE rib and not a RACK of ribs. The point here is that the marriage union is to be between one man and one woman. Not one man and many women.

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

Notice here that God brought the woman to the man. It was almost like he presented a gift to him.

“Hey Adam look what I was busy making while you were asleep.

What do you think”?

As someone has once said God's best work is done when men are asleep.

I also think that there is some truth in that for us guys, God will make a certain girl stand out from among the crowd as if he is presenting her to us.

Guys when you see this happening, sit up and take note - God is speaking.

That is how it happened for Rhonda and me. There was one night when she was singing on stage that this girl who I had known and seen for a couple of years all of a sudden appeared very different. Something changed in my heart that night and I pursued her.

**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.**

The marriage union is one that has the ultimate aim of producing one person in two manifestations. They are to become ONE flesh.

How do they do this?

They do this by the union of sexual intercourse - the man going into the woman as the Bible puts it. It's a wonderful gift within the covenant of marriage, but is a gross distortion outside of it.

God has brought them together and he made them for each other designed to fit together so that their mind, soul, will, emotions, and bodies come together through the wonderful gift of marriage. That is why adultery is just not on. It destroys everything as Tiger Woods has recently found out.

You are betrothed to ONE and to share this union with another is a violation.

Notice also that it says for this reason a man will leave his mother and father. You can't live a married life while still living with mum and dad.

Guys we need to be the ones that take the lead and leave the safety and security of mum and dad's house and begin the journey of a lifetime with the girl that God has presented to us.

Now what did Jesus - a single guy have to say about marriage?

**Matt 19:3-6**

**3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"**

**4 He answered, "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."**

The Pharisees were once again trying to Jesus up in regard to his knowledge of their customs of which one Rabbi said that *"a man could divorce his wife even if he found one that was fairer than her"*.

*ESV Study Bible P2545*

But what does Jesus do, he goes back to the source of authority - the Bible and to the very beginning to show them that their traditions we not founded on God's word and

totally misunderstood the intention that

**“What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”**

It is important to realise that marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman that God has initiated and sustains.

And finally what does Paul, also a single guy - say about marriage?

**Eph 5:22-33**

**22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

Wives as you submit to the Lord who is righteous, just, merciful, graceful and good so also submit to your husband as though you were submitting to Jesus himself.

It's also like the scripture that say we should work unto the Lord. We work for bosses that sometimes may not exhibit all the wonderful qualities of God, but we are to look beyond these and look to Jesus when we do our work.

This does not mean that we submit blindly when husbands violate God's ways and expect you to do the same

**23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.**

The husband is the head of the wife. This is a leadership position within the marriage relationship.

I am not the head of someone else's wife. I am responsible to lead my wife in the same way that Jesus lead's his wife the church.

Men we are to be the savior's in our marriages, the whites in shining armour who honour protect and if required die for our brides.

You could think this relationship like headquarters where major decisions are to be discussed together and passed by him so that the guy - while listening to both you, Jesus and the many ways God communicates to us can make the call - the final decision.

Girls this is a position of great safety and security for you.

Guys this is a position of great privilege and responsibility for you - do this with great care and wisdom.

**24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.**

**25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,**

Wives are to submit to husbands, but husbands we are to be the heroes of our marriages and LOVE our wives, just like Jesus did when he gave himself up for her - the Church - his bride - you and I.

Guys as we do this and speak highly of marriage and our wives - our wives will gladly and willingly submit to our leadership so that we can work together as helpers in the work that God has for us.

**26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,**

**27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**

**28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**

Jesus aim for his bride is to:

Sanctify her - set her apart for himself only, not to be shared with another.

Cleanse her with washing. Reading and speaking God's very own words to her so that she is continually beautified by him.

So that our wives will be presented HOLY, without spot or wrinkle or blemish, but in splendor.

**29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,**

**30 because we are members of his body.**

Guys we need to cultivate the lives of our wives, by building them up, encouraging them, and always - always pointing them to their ultimate groom - Jesus

**31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."**

**32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

Here is the mystery and Paul says it is profound that in actual fact this metaphor of marriage is actually speaking of Jesus' relationship with his bride the church.

This is why we MUST hold the church - God's people in very high esteem - because Jesus does.

**33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**

But Paul finishes off by saying that we should love and care for our wives as we look out for and care for our own lives and as Jesus himself loves and cares for his church.

Now for some Q&A with 3 of our deacon couples.

To finish off, let me give all you young guys and girls some practical advice that I pray is helpful to you as you navigate this sometimes tricky period in a person's life.

Before I do, I just want to let you know that I am praying regularly that City Edge would see many wonderful marriages that go the distance and are genuine examples of the relationship between Jesus and the church.

I am really looking forward to many marriages taking place over the coming years and seeing the children of these marriages growing up to live for Jesus and help to care for and serve his church.

**1) Don't hurry love.**

Let God bring you together. A one sided love will never succeed long term.

Song of Solomon 8:4

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

If love is there then go for it, if it's not then allow God to do it in his time.

**2) Don't lead each other on or be tempted to manipulate one another into marriage.**

Marriage is for LIFE. Don't play with each other's emotions pre-marriage and if you are going out together, ask God for wisdom about the future and if he is truly bringing you together.

Never be tempted to manipulate situations or people to get your way. You may just get it and more often than not be very dissatisfied with what you get.

**3) Don't be afraid to go out as friends**

Guys ask the girls out for a coffee. There is no need to be shy about this. How on earth are you going to get to know one another if you don't go out as friends

first. There may be chemistry and God's calling and there may not. But you probably won't find out by just looking at each other from a distance.

And don't place anything more on the request than it is two Christian friends going out together for some fellowship.

Also be wise as to where, and when and for how long you go out for. Don't give the enemy an opportunity to tempt you. Go to a public place and avoid being at home by yourselves together.

4) **Married folk and others don't put undue pressure on people to get married.** You can be encouraging - but let God be the one who brings two people together - ask questions yes but don't be the match maker, that's God's job.

5) **Court and don't date**

I want to leave you with this final thought. Court but don't date.

Wikipedia has this to say about the distinction between Courting and Dating

*In earlier centuries, young adults were expected to court with the intention of finding a marriage partner, rather than for social reasons. However, by the Jazz Age of the 1920s, dating for fun was becoming an expectation, and by the 1930s, it was assumed that any popular young person would have lots of dates. This form of dating, though, was usually more chaste than is seen today, since pre-marital sex was not considered the norm.*

The world says that you should try before you buy as in dating and they do heaps of trying without always buying.

For the believer however, everything we do should be done in our relationship to Jesus. Ask him if this is the girl or the guy for you. Don't try and force his hand also. Falling in love isn't a guarantee that God is behind it. It might just be infatuation on your part. Or you are in love with the idea of being in love.

You will know when it's love and when it comes from both sides, and when you are at that place where you can start asking the long term question of "God is this the one?".

We should always think this way that we are looking for the ONE without a plan B.

To court is to have all of this in mind and when you believe that God is bringing you together don't wait too long before you get married.

If God is in it and you know it with about good deal of certainty then don't put it off even if you are still considered too young to be married by today's standards.

Guys can I suggest that when you are at that place before you ask your girl to go out with you with a view to marriage, go to her parents and ask them for permission - both for courting and marriage. This might seem old fashioned, but it is a real way to honour your girl and her parents and will set the scene for a really great lifelong marriage.

In the world we are seeing people get married in their early to mid thirties, but why wait that long if God has called you together?

If God is in it then early twenties is not too early and later marriages are never too late.

Why not grow up together and enjoy the wife or the husband of your youth?

Let's pray.