"What Makes a Marriage Last?"

A message for all in honor of those Celebrating 50 Years of Marriage!

(Selected Scriptures)

2/8/2026

How can a marriage withstand the plethora of attacks which will inevitably come upon it and last a lifetime?

What Makes a Marriage Last?

I. *A marriage lasts when the couple …*

shares a common <u>relationship with God</u> through <u>Jesus Christ</u>

Before yoking up, ask, "Are we both committed believers in Christ?"

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14)

II. *A marriage lasts when the couple …*

shares a common <u>commitment to the</u> <u>permanence</u> of their wedlock

Once married, realize that divorce is no option since God will hold you to your wedding vows (keep your covenant promises)

"…yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away (divorce):" (Malachi 2:14-16)

III. *A marriage lasts when the couple …*

shares a common <u>decision to love</u> each other unconditionally

God never said to marry the one you love; He said to love the one you married.

"teach the young women … to love their husbands" (Titus 2:4)

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." (Col. 3:19 cp. Eph. 5:25)

- Love <u>gives</u> unselfishly (1 Cor. 13:4; Eph 5:33)
- Love <u>forgives</u> humbly & graciously (1 Cor. 13:5b; 1 Pet. 4:8)
- Love <u>protects</u> faithfully (1 Cor. 13:7a)
- Love <u>endures</u> trials & hardships continually (1 Cor. 13:7b)
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To be "unequally yoked" means to be unevenly tied together or to be mis-mated. The imagery comes from the Law, where God commands Israel through Moses, saying: "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass (donkey) together" (Dt. 22:10).

This command applys to the consideration of…

- Common ventures in business
- Common ventures in church ministry
- And certainly to the ultimate "yoking" in holy matrimony

God's People must not intermarry with unbelievers

As far back as the Mosaic Law, God forbade His people from intermarrying with ungodly pagans

This is first illustrated by the "Sons of God" seeing "fair" (good looking) women and taking them for wives.

(Genesis 6:1-2 - And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.)

"Sons of God" describes people identified with God.

"Daughters of men" – describes people identified with men (mere human flesh, nothing spiritual about them)

"Daughters of men" – had no spiritual life in them; that is why they are identified with men and not God. They were lost, worldly, corrupt seed, yet very attractive to the eye.

The "Sons of God" were attracted by what they "saw." (Note regarding the view that the "sons of God" refers to demons: Demons do not care what a person looks like, but people do. Men are attracted to beauty in women. These sons of God saw the external beauty (KJV – "fair" – good looking) of the ungodly women and fell into Satan's trap.)

By inter-marrying with the pagans, they would become corrupted and their offspring (which God wanted to be a "holy seed" – Ezra 9:2; cp. Mal. 2:15) would also be reared with an ungodly influence in the home. Such intermarriage would speed up the rate at which society and the world would become corrupt and ripe for judgment.

In the Law of Moses, God gave this warning against intermarriage with those outside of Israel:

(Deut. 7:3-4 - Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.)

Intermarriage with foreigners led to the corruption of Israel after they entered Canaan land

(Jud. 3:5-6 - And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:
And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.)

Solomon's intermarriage with foreign wives led to his ruin

(Neh. 13:25b-26 - saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.)

In Ezra's day, the same intermarriage occurred

(Ez. 9:2 - For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.)

Unequal yokes (cp. Deut. 22:10) between a saved person and an unsaved are a direct violation of God's Word!

Unequal yokes make for bad marriages because . . .

1) The couple does not share a common relationship with God (He should be the center of every Christian marriage)

2) The couple has a different world view, different standards of ethics and morals

3) The couple is destined for problems due to different goals, different motives and methodologies, different basic understandings regarding the home. Such as:
   (1) Roles and responsibilities
   (2) Convictions regarding the permanence of marriage
   (3) Love and submission
   (4) Child rearing and discipline

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:39 that a widowed woman was free ("at liberty") "to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (the phrase "only in the Lord" means only one who is "in Christ" – i.e. a Christian).

If you are currently in an unequal yoke in marriage, God's will is for you to remain married. Be faithful to your mate. Pray for their example. Follow 1 Peter 3:7-f to win him/her to Christ.

II. *A marriage lasts when the couple …*

shares a common commitment to the <u>permanence</u> of their wedlock

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Divorced couples in Albuquerque, New Mexico, can take advantage of a new business in town. The company is called Freedom Rings: Jewelry for the Divorced. Founded by jeweler and divorcee Lynn Peters, the company makes custom jewelry out of wedding rings. Each customer at Freedom Rings pays a fee, and the ring-smashing ceremony begins--complete with champagne and music. Just before the smashing the M.C. says, "We will now release any remaining ties to your past by transforming your ring--which represents the past--into a token of your new beginning. Now take the hammer. Stop for a moment to consider the transformation that is about to begin your new life. Ready? With this swing let freedom ring!"

She then uses a four-pound sledgehammer to whack her emblem of love and fidelity into a shapeless piece of metal. And the ceremony ends. The fact that women are pounding their wedding rings into pendants and men are grinding theirs into golf ball markers doesn't surprise me. We've all heard the divorce statistics. But let's focus on the women for a moment: How many American women stop short of divorce, but would love to make a clean break from their marriage if it were convenient? How many Christian women feel the same way? Brian Peterson, New Man, October, 1994, p. 8

What makes a marriage?

1. A <u>covenant</u> (a <u>vow</u> before witnesses - Mal. 2:14). This is the premiere essence of a marriage
2. A <u>consummation</u> (sexual union - Gen. 2:24; I Cor. 6:16)

*In the "vow" the two become one by verbal commitment, whereas in the consummation the two become one by a holy physical act.

One of the most plaguing menaces of all time is divorce.

Commitment is a rare commodity today.

The bottom-line, bedrock foundation of a home is commitment.

In order to have a stable and secure home -

***Both husband and wife must have a conviction that their marriage is <u>permanent</u>!**

In God's Word, the Bible, -

The permanence of marriage is evidenced by:

A. The Meaning of a "COVENANT" (Malachi 2:14)
(Marriage is a Covenant)

--Definition of a "Covenant"

--Examples of "Covenants" in the Bible
1) Gen. 15:6-18 - Abrahamic Covenant (cp. Jer. 34:18-19)
2) Matt. 26:28 - The New Covenant

1. The marriage covenant is an irrevocable Vow

Observe the nature of vows:
a. Numbers 30:2 - Your words are extremely important
b. Deuteronomy 23:21 - God holds you accountable
c. Example: Jephthah's vow - Judges 11:30-39

2. The marriage covenant is an unconditional Vow

"For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer"

B. The Bonding of "WEDLOCK" (Gen. 2:24)
(Marriage is an inseparable union)

1. The Cleaving of Marriage (v. 24a)
2. The Oneness of Marriage (v. 24b)
3. "Till death do we part" (Romans 7:2-3)

C. Christ's Relationship to His BRIDE (Eph. 5:22-32)
(Jesus will never forsake His wife, the Church)

1. The Church is one with Christ (Eph. 5:30; I Cor. 6:17)
2. The Church is the "Bride of Christ" (Rev. 19:7-9)
3. The Church has the promise of eternal security (Mt. 16:18; Jn. 10:28-29; Titus 1:2; Heb. 13:5)

D. God's Attitude about DIVORCE (Malachi 2:16)
(God hates divorce)

1. "He may not put her away all his days"
(Deut. 22:19, 29)

2. "Whosoever shall put away his wife. . . and marry another, committeth
adultery against her" (Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18).

--How did Paul interpret Christ's teaching about divorce? (SEE: I Cor. 7:10-11)
--How did Paul interpret the Law's teaching about divorce? (SEE: Rom. 7:1-3)

A believer is never justified to pursue a divorce. If the unbeliever departs, that's one thing (I Cor. 7:15), but a believer is never to leave his/her unbelieving spouse.

Romans 7:1-3 - The only legitimate way out of the marriage bond is death (No exceptions).

III. *A marriage lasts when the couple …*

shares a common decision to love each other unconditionally

God never said to marry the one you love; He said to love the one you married.
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"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." (Col. 3:19 cp. Eph. 5:25)

1. A spiritual love

By this I mean it does not come naturally.

It is a capacity that comes only from God. This love has its source only in God (I Jn. 4:7 - "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.")

No unsaved man has the capacity (ability) to have such a love.

2. Unconditional love

The kind of love God expects the husband to have is not dependent upon the worthiness of the wife. This love, as ultimately exemplified by God, is a love that gives even when the recipient of that love is an unworthy, evil wretch (Rom. 5:8).

There are "no strings attached" to agape love. It's not, "I will love her if she . . . retains her youthful figure, cooks like Betty Crocker, cleans like the world's greatest custodian; hugs and kisses like she did on your honeymoon, etc. etc."

NOTE: Your motive for loving your wife is obedience and love for God! Not the attitude changes it may bring in your spouse, nor for any other immediate reward you may be hoping for. if your motive is what you can get, then you will tend to love as long as you are getting the desired results. Your love will be fickle, on & off, conditioned by selfish motives.

3. A Volitional love (a willing love)

Love is a choice; a decision; an act of the will.

This kind of love is possible even toward an enemy (Mt. 5:44), because it is not based upon a feeling that you conjure up about a person, but rather it is based upon a knowledge that a person (whoever it is) is made in the "image of God" and therefore is worthy of the respect, honor, dignity, and benevolence you show.

"Love" - not a mere emotional feeling, but does not exclude feeling either. It means to feel for someone (to empathize) and thereby be motivated to respond to meet their needs

4. A Similar Love (Eph. 5:28, 29)

Love your wife as you naturally love yourself.

The better you treat your wife, the better you treat yourself. If you harm your wife, you are harming yourself. If you care for your wife, you are caring for yourself! Why? Because you are one with her.

.

- **Love gives unselfishly** (1 Cor. 13:4; Eph 5:33)

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own…" (1 Cor. 13:4-5)

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Eph 5:33)

- **Love <u>forgives</u> humbly & graciously** (1 Cor. 13:5b; 1 Pet. 4:8)

  "…thinketh no evil" (does not keep a record of wrongs) (1 Cor. 13:5b)
  "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." (1 Pet. 4:8)

- **Love <u>protects</u> faithfully** (1 Cor. 13:7a)

  "Charity (Love)…Beareth all things, believeth all things…" (1 Cor. 13:7a)

- **Love <u>endures</u> trials & hardships continually** (1 Cor. 13:7b)

  "Charity (Love)…hopeth all things, endureth all things."

  > Marriage is when you agree to spend the rest of your life sleeping in a room that's too warm, beside someone who's sleeping in a room that's too cold. -Contributed by E.J. Graff

- **Love <u>communicates</u> truthfully** (Eph 4:15)

  "But speaking the truth in love…" (Eph 4:15)

  Love speaks (does not clam up and give the silent treatment)
  Love speaks the truth (not lies or exaggerations)
  Love speaks the truth in a manner of love

  > Do you and your spouse feed each other a steady diet of put-downs? If you do, your marriage could be headed for divorce court.
  >
  > When psychologists Cliff Nortarius and Howard Markman studied newlyweds over the first decade of marriage, they discovered that couples who stayed together uttered 5 or fewer put-downs in every 100 comments to each other. But couples who inflicted twice as many verbal wounds -- 10 or more putdowns out of every 100 comments -- later split up.
  >
  > Watch what you say! Little, nit-picking comments are like a cancer in marriage, slowly draining the life out of a committed relationship.
  > Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family Bulletin, May, 1994
  >
  > "To keep your marriage brimming / With love in the loving cup / Whenever you're wrong, admit it / Whenever you're right, shut up!"
  > -Ogden Nash

How to have a marriage that lasts…

1. Don't rush into a marriage to begin with. Make sure before you marry that your spouse is saved and loves the Lord.

2. Be convicted that God says: *Marriage is for life.* (Rom. 7:1ff) [Even though you think you married the wrong <u>person</u> at the wrong <u>time</u> for the wrong <u>reasons</u>, you are married and

it is right to remain true to your commitment. One wrong does not justify another wrong.]

3. Do not allow conflicts to go unresolved.
   --Practice forgiveness
   --Don't go to bed angry
   One woman to another at the office, "Did you wake up grouchy today?"
   "No, I just let him sleep in."
   --Talk! Learn to communicate. "*Speak the truth in love.*"
   --Seek Godly advice.
   --Learn to say the words: "I love you." "I was wrong." "Please forgive me

4. Meet your mate's needs.
   --physically
   --emotionally
   --sexually (I Cor. 7:1ff)
   [Note: Beware of an over-demanding, time-consuming vocation. You need to spend time together.]

5. Guard yourself against anything you might read, hear, or see that causes discontentment (Beware of Satan's attempts to breed covetousness). Don't compare your wife or husband to any other wife or husband to make a point (Example: "Mary's husband faithfully mows the grass every Saturday. Why can't you?"). God didn't give you to _____; He gave you your husband or wife, so you should be grateful, and quit looking at the greener grass at someone else's home!

6. Be faithful to your spouse (Illicit sex [adulterous affairs] pulls down and destroys a couple's trust and respect for each other).

   There is one couple I shall always remember from my days as a hospital admitting clerk. The husband, a heart-attack victim, was immediately whisked away by the staff. Hours passed, though, before his wife was allowed to see him. She was dismayed to find him hooked up to elaborate machines that blipped, hissed and beeped. She tiptoed toward his bed and, bending over him, whispered, "George, I'm here." Then she kissed him. Suddenly there was a blippety-blip-blip from the equipment. "He was okay," she later explained. "But after forty-seven years of marriage it's nice to know that I can still make his heart skip when I kiss him."
   -Contributed by Katie Barnes

   "An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have; the older she gets, the more interested he is in her," said mystery author Agatha Christie, who was married to one.

   Before you marry, keep your two eyes open; after you marry, shut one.
   Jamaican proverb

7. Fulfill your God-given roles in the marriage.

Once when Mark Twain was lecturing in Utah, a Mormon acquaintance argued with him on the subject of polygamy. After a long and rather heated debate, the Mormon finally said, "Can you find for me a single passage of Scripture which forbids polygamy?""Certainly," replied Twain. "'No man can serve two masters.'" --Louis Utermeyer, A Treasury of Laughter (Simon & Schuster)

There were two lines of husbands in heaven, one for the dominant husbands and one for the passive, submissive husbands. The submissive husband line extended almost out of sight. There was one man in the dominant husband line. He was small, timid, appeared anything but a dominant husband. When the angel inquired as to why he was in this line, he said, "My wife told me to stand here."

Ladies, allow your husband to serve you, by fulfilling his leadership role!

8. Cultivate a close walk with Christ as a couple. "*A family that prays together, stays together.*" Sincere prayer is the surest way to release Satan's strangle-hold on your marriage.

9. Realize that love is not a "feeling" or a "romantic emotion" but it is action based on a commitment! In fact, "love" is a commitment (i.e. a decision to be loyal to your responsibility).

Be committed to your marriage:

More and more people seem to forget Henry Ford's sage advice when asked on his 50th wedding anniversary for his rule for marital bliss and longevity. He replied, "Just the same as in the automobile business, stick to one model." Christian Clippings, Page 27