

The Christian View of Marriage

Marriage was created by God. God said 'it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him' Therefore God took actions to create a partner for the man, who would be his helper. This shows that marriage was created by God.

Why did God create marriage then? From Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18 and Malachi 2:15 we could conclude three points: 1) they would be lifelong partners, 2) they would be trained and manage life as a family, and 3) have offspring inheriting our faith.

God sees marriage as a covenantal relationship. This kind of relationship is meaningful both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, Adam and Eve are connected to each other; whilst vertically, this covenant allows them to connect with God as a couple, for God is the cornerstone of and protection to marriage.

A covenant is different from a contract. It is not developed upon rights and responsibilities, but upon the never-ending, self-sacrificing love. It is a kind of relationship that always seeks to serve and never asks for returns. In this covenantal relationship, the husband and the wife are equal. Even though God created woman as a 'helper' to Adam, this kind of help carries a meaning of balance and complimentary in Hebrew. There is no sense of slavery or inferiority inside the word.

The Bible also says 'therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'. 'Leaving' here indicates 'not returning', primarily implying the psychological sense of independence, and not abandonment. Leaving our parents is to completely change the relationship between ourselves and our parents; as we are married and have our own family, we should live an independent life and prioritise our spouse above all the other relationships. 'Hold fast' literally means to 'adhere to one another'; but this does not only mean the physical union, but also the union in the mind and soul. This union is lifelong and cannot be separated, therefore Christians cannot divorce. As Jesus emphasises in Matthew 19:6 that a couple is 'no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.' As mentioned previously, marriage is a covenant that lasts eternally and carries no regrets.

Paul pointed out that marriage is a profound mystery that symbolises the relationship between Christ and the Church. Christ's love towards the Church never ends, and neither should the love between the husband and the wife. Divorce is an abandonment of the meaning of marriage originally set up by God. The teaching Jesus has on divorce is that 'everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.' (Matthew 6:32)

The key to marriage in the Bible's teaching is love and obedience. Ephesians 5:22-23 has a more in-depth teaching about the duties of husbands and wives. Wives' primary duty is to obey; this kind of obedience is proactive but not passive. It is not asking wives to be slaves and to be blindly obedient, but to obey her husband with a godly heart that follows God's

words, that is willing to serve, gentle and quiet, and rejoices always. The Bible juxtaposes this kind of obedience with the Church's obedience to Christ: living for the Lord, pleasing the Lord.

The duty of a husband is to love his wife. This kind of love is selfless, sacrificing and never asks for return. Jesus Christ has already made an example upon this. The wife needs her husband's delicate 'cherishment'; this is a kind of sacrificial love exemplified by Jesus. You need to complete, cherish and nourish her. I believe a wife who is loved by her husband would obey him wholeheartedly. In addition to loving his wife, there is a huge responsibility as a husband to lead. Matthew 20:28 accounts that a leader is not to be served but to serve; as a head, the husband should be a leader who serves.

Marriage is the union of the two sexes. Its primary purpose is not to reproduce, but to live together through weal and woe and build each other up. Sex is created for marriage; it is holy and wonderful. God created men and women and set up marriage so that a couple could enjoy sex, which is blessed by God, within marriage. Through sex, a married couple also takes up the responsibility of reproduction and the creation of new lives. A healthy and complete sex life within a married couple protects them from adultery – it is sinful to have sex outside marriage, including sexual thoughts.

To conclude, marriage is a gift from God, where people explore and experience God's love and the profound mystery of life, as well as living out the covenant between men and God. The setup of a covenant is not based on the principle of mutual benefits, but an unconditional commitment to each other.