

GHarmony: Sex, Singleness, and Marriage
“What Is Marriage For?” (Ephesians 5:25-33; Genesis 2:18)
August 9, 2009 by Kevin Haah



I. Introduction

Welcome to New City Church!

We are in the middle of a series called “GHarmony: sex, singleness, and marriage.” G in GHarmony stands for God. This series is about relationship, not just any relationship but a relationship with a significant other. So, we’re going to be talking about what God says about sex, singleness, and marriage.

Each Sunday, we are going to have about 10 minutes of Q&A time right before we close in prayer. You can ask the question directly or you can write your question on the paper and put it in the offering basket.

Today’s topic is marriage.

People have all kinds of ideas of marriage. Before I got married, some of my friends were telling me that I better make sure I train Grace correctly. Make sure she knows who wears the pants in the house! If you are too good to her, she’ll expect that from you for the rest of your life. What a terrible advice!

Some of us walk into marriage thinking that it is going to be great! You are passionately in love with another and you believe that you will continue to be passionately in love with one another for the rest of your life. That passion will grow and grow. You absolutely can’t imagine this “love” subsiding. But, if it did, you think to yourself, I would never be able to continue on in marriage. Some of you have such romantic view of marriage, such perfectionistic view of marriage.

Some of you are more realistic. My parents fought all the time. They argued all the time. They came pretty close a few times, but they never got a divorce. Before I got married, I knew I was in love with Grace but I thought marriage was going to be hard. I expected our “love” to dissipate. I expected the worst. But, I was going to be committed to the marriage. I was not going to give up no matter what. That’s how I walked into marriage.

Before I got married, I tried to read as much as I could about marriage. There are a lot of books telling you about how to have a great marriage. How to Improve Your Communication in Your Marriage. The Act of Marriage. The Mystery of Marriage. How to Make Your Marriage

Last. There are a lot of books on marriage. Most of them talk about How to have a great marriage. I would love to do a series on HOW. In fact, I know we will do that someday. But, I think there is something more foundational than how to have a great marriage.

What is marriage FOR? What is the purpose marriage? I want to talk about what the Scripture teaches us about the purpose of marriage. If we really want to understand anything, we have to know the purpose of that thing. What is the purpose of marriage? What is marriage for? I think if we understand the purpose of marriage, we would understand how to approach it both as people considering entering into marriage and as people in marriage, and be better at making it work the way it was designed to work, which will in turn result in a fulfilling and successful marriage.

We are going to talk about three biblical purposes of marriage: (1) gospel reenactment; (2) deep oneness and friendship; and (3) living out the mission of God together.

In the olden times and in some cases now, the purpose of marriage was security. Getting married for love is a more recent idea. Nowadays, most people would tell you that the purpose of marriage is to find happiness—that you get married to be happier. Both of these views are true but incomplete. While you may find security and happiness in marriage, the biblical purpose of marriage is much deeper than either one of these two.

II. Purposes of Marriage

A. The first purpose of marriage is gospel reenactment.

The gospel is about God's unconditional love for us-- that while we were still self-absorbed and lost and messed up, God loved us. He loved us so much that he came to this world in the person of Jesus Christ and sacrificially gave himself on the cross in order to forgive us of our sins, gave us a new life, and leads us on a journey to wholeness. So, there are messed up people—sinners, there is sacrificial love, there is forgiveness when we don't deserve it, and there is this new journey towards wholeness.

Let's read **Ephesians 5:25-33**

25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
26to make her holy, cleansing[b] her by the washing with water through the word, 27and
to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other
blemish, but holy and blameless. 28In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives
as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29After all, no one ever hated
his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30for we are

members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." [c] 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

This passage tells the husbands to love their wives just as Christ loved the church (or us) 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. And then, the Scripture says: “**In the same way**, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.”

In essence, the passage is telling us that the relationship between a husband and wife is gospel reenactment. We are to reenact the relationship between Jesus and us in our marriage. There are three realities in that relationship: (1) we are messed up and sinful; (2) he loves us unconditionally—he gave himself for us to forgive us; (3) he leads us on a journey of transformation and ultimately to become holy and blameless.

There are three same realities in our marital relationships: (1) your spouse is a sinner; (2) you are to love your spouse self-sacrificially and unconditionally; and (3) you are to go on a journey of transformation and help each become a better person. In other words, the purpose of marriage is to help each other become a better person through self-sacrificial love and service.

The way God is leading us to change is not by scaring us to change, it is not by nagging us to change, it is not by demanding change.

There was a couple having marital difficulties. They decided to go to see a pastor for counseling. The pastor asks what the problem is. The wife spills the bean and lays out all of the things that the husband does that bothers her. I don't like the way he flirts with other women; I don't like his long hours; I don't like the way he talks to me; I don't like his attitude towards me; he is not as loving as he used to be; he doesn't help out in the home as much as he should. She says that she can't live with him anymore. She can't take it anymore. She says that unless he changes, she will leave. The husband gets scared and commits to change. In fact, fear drives him to change. He stops doing whatever he was doing. He'll stop for a while but when the crisis is gone, when he no longer fears that she will leave, he will go back to the same routine that bothered her. If he does not go back, he will resent his wife for making him do all these things.

You can't change a person by demanding change. You can't change by threatening him or her. The only way to change is the way God changed us. He served us and loved us when we

didn't deserve to be loved and served. This self sacrificial love moved our heart and changed our lives.

How do we apply this in our marriage? We don't have to think in dramatic terms. We need to think in everyday terms.

I think it is generally changing our mindset, our approach towards each other.

It is so easy to have a consumer attitude about marriage. What do I get out of this marriage? I'll be the person I ought to be in marriage IF you become the person you ought to be. How is this marriage going to make me feel more secure? How is this marriage going to make me happier? How much freedom is this going to cost me?

But, if you understand the purpose of marriage as God designed it, you will approach marriage with a servant mindset. How can I love you more? How can I encourage you more? What can I do to help you maximize your God-given potential? How can I fully empower you? How can I help you become more fully the person God intended you to be? How can I help you grow in Christ? That's gospel reenactment. It is God's Agape love, God's self-sacrificial love in action.

Now, I am not saying that you should just be passive and serve your spouse in such a way as to enable his or her selfishness or destructive behavior. To truly serve and help your spouse, you would have to lovingly confront him or her, pray for your spouse, and encourage your spouse however you can towards spiritually healthy behavior. This is also love in action.

And when we do that, there is power to shape each other. When you are married, you have the power to either shape and program each other for good or for destruction. The whole world can say you are not good enough or you are not pretty enough, but if your spouse tells you that you are beautiful and that you are good, you feel beautiful, you feel good. Even if whole world tell you that you are beautiful and good, if your spouse doesn't tell you that, you feel ugly and bad.

I encourage you to harness this power in marriage by serving one another with God's agape love, his unconditional love that covers all things.

So, the first purpose of marriage is gospel reenactment.

B. Second Purpose: Deep Oneness and Friendship.

After God created man, Genesis 2:18 says: **“The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.”** Isn't it interesting that God didn't think loneliness is a good thing. So, he

created a woman. When God brought Eve to Adam, he was pretty excited. He broke out into the first poetry in history. Then, the Scripture says a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. As God designed it, the purpose of marriage is to establish deep oneness and friendship. Your spouse is designed to be your best friend, your deepest companion. To be married means you are completely vulnerable to each other. You understand each other. There is nothing hidden. There is no permanent secret. If you have secrets from your spouse for an indefinite time, you are in a dysfunctional marriage. If you have a friend who is closer to you than your spouse, you are in trouble. I remember when my best friend from elementary school got married, I started to talk to him about his wife like we used to talk about girls. I assumed I had the inside track. But, I remember it didn't feel right to talk about his wife like that anymore. You see, you can't talk about your wife like a third person anymore because she is not only your best friend, she is a part of you.

You are meant to be one in every way: intellectually, emotionally, politically, socially, financially, spiritually, and physically.

C. Third Purpose: Living Out the Mission of God Together

If you see the Genesis creation account, after he created Adam, he gave him work to do. In Genesis 2:15 says: **“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”** Then, he said, in verse 18, **“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”** By-the-way, the word for “helper” does not mean someone inferior or of lesser ranking. It is this word Ezer and it is mostly used of God in the OT: God is my Ezer. In Genesis 1:28 says: **“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”**

It's clear that the purpose of marriage is not just helping each other become a better person, becoming deeply one with each other, but also to engage in the work that God has for us together.

The third purpose of marriage is to submit ourselves to God's Great Commission to make disciples of all nations and his Great Commandment to love God with all of our hearts, mind, soul, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Everything in our lives should be subservient to these missions. Marriage is not an exception.

One of my favorite characters in the Bible is Aquila and Priscilla. They are a couple that lived out their mission. Wherever they lived, they hosted a house church. They befriended people and helped them. Became one of the closest friends of Paul. They corrected Apollos who had a great gift of teaching but did not know about the Holy Spirit and mentored him. They did ministry together. They used their jobs and their homes as a tool of ministry.

Being in mission together is a critical purpose of your marriage! Don't think that God has blessed you with marriage so that YOU can be happy. Yes, but God's mission is beyond your marriage. Don't worship your marriage.

III. Power for Marriage

Where do you get the power to live this kind of marriage?

Where do you get the power to love your spouse self-sacrificially so that he or she will become a better person?

Where do you get the power to become deeply one with your spouse?

Where do you get the power to serve together?

The gospel's new identity. The spirit's new power. Praying together.