

Ten Key Truths Every Married Couple Needs to Remember

By Joshua Waulk

1. Marriage is the lifelong, covenantal union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24).

The biblical understanding of what a marriage is, and what it is intended to accomplish within creation is both simplistic, and profound. It is: a) entered into by only one man and one woman, and b) based upon the redemptive concept of an unbreakable bond, that is, a covenant (Deut. 10:20; Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14).

2. Marriage is a creation of God that ultimately has in view the proclamation of the Gospel, which is the blessed and eternal union of Christ and his church (Eph. 5:32).

The Apostle Paul, having given detailed instruction as to how a husband and wife are to relate to one another, gives what may be the most critical teaching on marriage in all of Scripture, and answering the question of the ultimate purpose of marriage. Paul's teaching makes marriage a great joy, and tremendous responsibility.

3. Marriage is unmistakably the union of two sinners in everlasting need of God's unending grace (Rom. 3:23).

There is no special, qualifying principle that exempts husbands and wives from Paul's teaching concerning the depravity of man. God is well acquainted with the sinfulness of man; therefore, husbands and wives do well to see themselves and each other as God does.

4. As marriage is the union of two sinners in need of God's continuous grace, husbands and wives must learn to relate to one another in the same way, extending to their spouse the same measure of grace and forgiveness that God has lavished upon them (Matt. 18:21-35; Col. 3:13,19).

When we consider rightly the enormous sin debt to God that has been forgiven us in Christ, we cannot help but act in grace and forgiveness toward our spouse, with whom we proclaim the Gospel in the context of marriage.

5. As biblical marriage is by nature covenantal, expressing the love of God for his people in Christ, faithfulness to that covenant on the part of husband and wife in all matters of sexual purity are paramount, to both honor and guard one another (Job 31:1; 1 Cor. 7:3-5; 1 Thess. 4:3; Hebrews 13:4).

The profundity of sexual intimacy within biblical marriage cannot be overstated. As this expression of love between a husband and wife is part of the covenant, it plays a significant role in proclaiming Paul's "mystery." For this reason, faithfulness to one another in word and deed is also paramount.

6. Marriage is the temporary cornerstone of God's design for human society, which is the family; it contains a God-ordained structure that is not wisely circumvented by popular culture's ill-conceived preferences (Prov. 22:6; Matt. 22:30; Eph. 5:22-24; Eph. 6:1-3).

In wisdom, God ordained that marriage have a hierarchical structure, with the husband leading his wife, followed by father and mother leading their children together. Contrary to popular culture (and some within the realm of Christianity), this hierarchy does not speak to the value of men and women, nor of their talents and unique giftedness, but to God-assigned roles within marriage and family. Men and women are equal before God in their value, but distinct in their individual roles.

7. Children are a blessing from God who further proclaim his glory; they are a natural and intended gift of God to the husband and wife within the confines of biblical marriage, whether by sexual intercourse or through adoption (Psalm 127:3-5).

According to popular culture, children are often seen as a burden to an otherwise enjoyable lifestyle of financial freedom and personal liberty. Within the confines of biblical marriage, children provide tremendous joy to the parents, and fulfill an amazing missional component by providing for a unique and special extension of God's kingdom.

8. The role of husband and wife together within the family is to model the character of God before their children, shepherd their hearts toward a love for Him, and in all ways proclaim His excellencies in word and deed (Deut. 6:5-6; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; 1 Pt. 2:9).

Popular theories of parenting suggest that the goal of father and mother is to survive child rearing, and move toward retirement. A biblical view teaches that parents have the privilege of helping to mold, shape, and guide young people who actually belong to the Father of all creation! Along with that privilege comes the responsibility to infuse the child's heart with a supreme love for God in Jesus Christ. Absent these truths, there is no success in parenting.

9. As marriage and family are designed by God to proclaim the Gospel, husband and wife must recognize the very public nature of their union, the manner in which their relationship speaks to those outside of Christ, and seek always to use their covenantal bond as an opportunity to bless others (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Although the context of the Great Commission and Jesus' words to his disciples before his ascension do not appear to deal with marriage specifically, it is important to recognize that marriage does not abdicate the call to living on mission as it applies to the believer prior to getting married. Paul's instructions in Ephesians 5 make clear the Gospel-proclaiming, missional nature of marriage.

10. To the extent that any of the above principles are lacking within the marriage, there is an abundance of grace and mercy available to both husband and wife in Christ, and the hope for growth together and individually in accordance with repentance and faith (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 4:16; 1 Pt. 1:3).

God's standards for biblical marriage are high. It is easy to look at a list such as this one and consider that we have fallen so far behind in so many of these areas, that there is little hope for our marriages or ourselves. The Good News of Christ informs us that nothing could be farther from the truth! Instead, the promises of God, and his desires for marriage provide us with a hope that transforms our hearts renews our most important earthly relationships.