

4 Biblical Concepts for Successful Marriages

Marriage is important to God. Jesus reminded His disciples the Creator made humans male and female and designed them for sexual pleasure and procreation, within a mutual and committed relationship (Gen. 2:18-24, Matt. 19:4-12). The apostle Paul taught that sexual expression only within this committed relationship was a holy bond and marital “duty” (1 Cor. 7:1-5).

Here are four biblical concepts to understand and apply if we would have successful, holy and honorable marriages.

1. Marriage is both God’s idea and His ideal. Marriage should be honored by all as a solemn commitment between a human male and female and their Creator. This holy threesome is to make the commitment stronger and, like the three-strand cord, “not easily broken” (see Eccl. 4:12). If or when it is dishonored by contemporary lifestyles or even the ridicule of society, it is an offense to God.

For Christian believers, weddings are the place of public commitment to this lifelong, covenantal relationship with God and each other (Mal. 2:14-15). Ultimately, weddings are to serve us as an earthly expression of the bride of Christ and our heavenly bridegroom (Rev. 19:5-9). Because it is such a serious matter, the minister warns, “What God has joined together, let no one separate.”

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In this post-Christian era, we must do all we can to reestablish a God-honoring culture of marriage in our local churches and communities. Let us encourage, celebrate and protect marriages in our generation and in those generations

to follow after us.

2. The “marriage bed” must be “kept pure” (see Heb. 13:4). The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that to avoid immorality, “each man should have his own wife, and each woman ... her own husband,” and they should enjoy their sexual life together (1 Cor. 7:1-6, CEB). But the Bible also plainly condemns all sexual activity outside of marriage. Singles who are sexually active (in all forms and vices) are called “sexually immoral” or “fornicators.” Married individuals who are sexually unfaithful are called “adulterers.”

A marriage is more than photos in a book and certificates on a wall. It is to be a life experienced together “for as long as you both shall live.” Keeping our marriages pure means keeping our minds pure—especially in this modern digital world and highly sexualized society. God is faithful, and “when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Cor. 10:12-13, NIV). I think of it as an exit ramp on a freeway. Take it!

The prophet Malachi taught the importance of marital faithfulness and its relationship to rearing “godly children from your union” (Mal. 2:15 b, NLT). Because of its negative effect on families, he declared that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16a). He does not hate divorced people but the effects of the divorce that has separated them. Divorce harshly affects not just the husband, wife and any children who may have come from the relationship but also both of their extended families—for generations.

3. Sexual activity outside of marriage will be judged. The Hebrews passage above makes the clear declaration that “God will judge” any and all those who are sexually active outside of marriage. That judgment may be immediate, or it may be delayed, but it is certain. It will affect you, your loved ones and your witness for Christ. For me, the most fearful kind of judgment would be for God to remove His hand of

protection over me or my family members.

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Like other sins, sexual activity outside of marriage must be confessed, forsaken and consistently resisted until we depart in death. We must consciously erect active hedges of protection around our marriages so we can build them up and allow nothing (or no one) to tear them down. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help!

4. Let us renew our commitments and realign our marriages. The Bible calls believers to be the bride of Christ collectively, displayed as a holy and honorable reality for Him for all eternity. For this purpose, the apostle Paul gave us these practical suggestions for making our marriages work:

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her::

To make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself (Eph. 5:25-28).

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