



Marriage was ordained by God between one man and one woman. But if God ordained marriage, why does it seem so difficult at times? In this study, we look at the two primary reasons for that difficulty and learn about God's view on marriage and divorce. Marriage is a beautiful union, ordained by God, but not without its challenges and heartache. Come be encouraged and challenged in this message.

1. Context

- a. The end of **Colossians 3** discusses various kinds of relationships:
 - i. Relationships in a family
 - 1. Wives
 - 2. Husbands
 - 3. Children
 - 4. Fathers
 - ii. Relationships at work
 - 1. Bondservants
 - a. Some translations say "slaves."
 - b. The modern equivalent of bondservants and masters would be employees and employers.
- b. The importance of discussing marriage and divorce
 - i. We should all have a Biblical understanding of marriage because most of us either:
 - 1. Are married
 - 2. Were married
 - 3. Want to be married one day
- c. Marriage statistics
 - i. People between the ages of 18–29 (Gen Z) are the generation most pessimistic about marriage.
 - 1. Because of the many disastrous marriages they've witnessed, Gen Z tends to wait longer for someone to marry.
 - 2. Still, 81 percent of Gen Z still hope to get married.
 - ii. The average age of marriage has increased since the 1950s.
 - 1. In the 1950s:
 - a. The average woman married when 20 years old.
 - b. The average man married when 22.5 years old.
 - 2. Now:
 - a. The average woman marries when 28.4 years old.
 - b. The average man marries when 30.2 years old.

2. **Colossians 3:18–25** – "[18] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. [19] Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. [20]

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. [21] Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. [22] Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. [23] And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. [25] But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality."

3. If God ordained marriage, why is it so difficult?

a. We have an Enemy who hates what God ordained because marriage exemplifies Christ and the church.

i. **Ephesians 5:31-32** – “[31] *‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’* [32] *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*”

1. Paul was quoting **Genesis 2:24**, a verse on the marriage union.
2. Marriages exemplifies Jesus, the Bridegroom, and His relationship with the church.
3. **2 Corinthians 11:2** – “*I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*”
4. **DISCUSS**: Paul sought to jealously guard the spiritual purity of the church. Are you that zealous in guarding your relationship with Jesus? How does understanding that you are married to Christ change the way you choose to live?

ii. **Revelation 19:7-9** – “[7] *‘Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’* [8] *And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.* [9] *Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’*”

1. We will be with Jesus (the Lamb) for all eternity.

iii. **Matthew 9:15** – “*Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.’*”

1. Jesus used marital language about Himself in response to the criticism that His disciples did not fast like the disciples of John.

iv. Satan sows division, amplifies problems, encourages unforgiveness, tempts toward sin, and lies to one spouse about the other.

1. **2 Corinthians 2:11** – We forgive “*in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*” (1984 NIV)
2. Remember that your spouse is not the enemy—Satan is.

3. **DISCUSS:** How do you try to remember who the real enemy is when in the middle of an interpersonal conflict? Does it help?
- b. Marriage is about two sinners coming together as one.
 - i. Marriage is double the joy and fun, but also double the trouble.
 1. **Genesis 2:24** – *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*
 - ii. Marriage is like a mirror, exposing our flaws to us.
 1. Ask God to show you what is in your heart.
 2. Then give that to the Lord, asking Him to make you whole.
 3. **DISCUSS:** What is one way that being in close quarters with a fellow sinner has helped you better understand your own flaws?
 - iii. Understand your mission is to minister to your spouse’s hurts and weaknesses.
 1. A spouse will know his/her spouse’s weaknesses and must choose not to use those weaknesses against them.
 2. Only God can change us, but spouses should be instruments of God’s healing grace to each other.
 3. **DISCUSS:** How can you be an instrument of God’s grace today?
4. God’s command to wives
 - a. A wife is commanded to submit to her husband.
 - i. **Colossians 3:18** – *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”*
 - ii. What submission is not:
 1. Submission is not subservience.
 - a. **Galatians 3:18** – *“If the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”*
 2. Submission is not all-encompassing.
 - a. The Lord is our highest authority. A wife cannot violate a direct command of Scripture to please her husband.
 - b. This is why **Colossians 3:18** ends with the phrase *“as is fitting in the Lord.”*
 - iii. What submission is:
 1. We are all under authority.
 2. *“Submit”* comes from the Greek word **hypotassō**.
 - a. **Hypo** means “under.”
 - b. **Tassō** means “arrange in an orderly manner.”
 3. Submission is God’s order meant to create unity and harmony.
 - a. A couple should discuss important decisions.
 - b. However, when they cannot agree, God gave the husband the responsibility to be the tiebreaker and gave the woman the responsibility of supporting his decision.

- c. **DISCUSS:** What is the word “submission” associated with in our culture? How is that different to the Biblical understanding of submission?
 - b. A wife is commanded to respect her husband.
 - i. **Ephesians 5:33** – *“Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”*
 - ii. Respect brings out the best in a man.
 - iii. Respect should not be conditional.
 1. In the same way, a wife does not want to be loved only when she is acting lovable.
 2. Respect is easier to give when everyone loves Jesus, but it is our responsibility to obey God’s command.
 3. **Colossians 3:23** – *“Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”*
 4. **DISCUSS:** Are you doing what God commands only when the other person does his part?
5. God’s command to husbands
 - a. A husband should love his wife as Christ loves the church.
 - i. **Colossians 3:19a** – *“Husbands, love your wives.”*
 1. Christ’s love is unconditional. He doesn’t love us less when we falter.
 2. Christ’s love is constant. He doesn’t love us one moment and not the next.
 3. Christ’s love pursues us. He’s the initiator, loving us before we loved Him.
 4. Christ’s love is sacrificial. He gives of Himself for His bride.
 - ii. A husband should never think that he has arrived at the goal of loving his wife like Christ loves him.
 - b. A husband should love his wife like his own body.
 - i. **Ephesians 5:28** – *“Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.”*
 1. Just as a man takes care of himself and his interests, he should take care of his wife and her interests.
 2. Men can tend toward selfishness, but they are called to surpass that impulse.
 3. **DISCUSS:** Where do you get the strength to die to yourself? What are you called to live for (**2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 2:20**)?
 - c. A husband should not be bitter, harsh, or resentful.
 - i. **Colossians 3:19b** – *“Husbands . . . do not be bitter toward them [wives].”*
 - ii. In David Guzik’s *Enduring Word* commentary, he wrote, “The husband may feel perfectly justified in his harsh or unloving attitude and

actions towards his wife, but he is not justified—no matter how the wife has been towards the husband.”

1. **DISCUSS:** What is God’s antidote to resentment (**Colossians 3:13; James 1:19–20**)? How are you implementing this antidote in your life?

6. The starting points

- a. Just because a wife is commanded to respect her husband does not mean she does not need respect. She does.
- b. Just because a husband is commanded to love his wife does not mean he does not need love. He does.
- c. Just because a wife is commanded to submit to her husband does not mean a husband cannot defer to his wife sometimes. He should.
- d. God’s command to husbands and wives are starting points, not encompassing all the ways in which spouses should treat each other.

7. Divorce statistics in America

- a. There is one divorce every 36 seconds.
 - i. That adds up to 2,400 divorces every day.
- b. The divorce rate increases with each marriage a person enters.
 - i. 42 percent of first marriages end in divorce.
 - ii. 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce.
 - iii. 73 percent of third marriages end in divorce.
- c. Couples who live together before marriage have a 12 percent higher divorce rate.

8. A Biblical view of divorce

- a. Biblical grounds for divorce:
 - i. Sexual immorality
 1. **Matthew 19:9** – *“I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”*
 - ii. Abandonment
 1. Abandonment is not the same as separation, which can be a legitimate avenue for healing, but about a spouse bailing on the marriage.
 2. **1 Corinthians 7:15** – *“If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.”*
- b. Common objections
 - i. If your life is in danger, separate.
 - ii. If you’re in a loveless marriage, you cannot use that as legitimate grounds for divorce.
 1. God may use that marriage to teach you:
 - a. Perseverance

- b. Unconditional love
 - c. The importance of keeping your word.
 - d. **Psalm 15:4b** – God *“honors those who fear the LORD; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change.”*
 - e. **DISCUSS:** When has God called you to honor your word, even when it was inconvenient and difficult?
- 2. Often, people ask, “Doesn’t God want me to be happy?”
 - a. The what-about-me mindset is the death of a marriage.
 - b. Contrary to what culture believes, happiness is not the goal—holiness is.
 - c. However, you may gain happiness by learning to be content and honor God in that marriage.
 - d. **DISCUSS:** How has the Lord used trials to teach you contentment (**Philippians 4:11–13**)?
- iii. For more information on marriage and divorce, listen to Gary’s message on **1 Corinthians 7:15**.
- c. Biblical grounds for divorce do not make divorce necessary, only allowed.
 - i. Some marriages survived adultery and abandonment, provided that:
 - 1. The offender repented.
 - 2. The offended party can forgive and trust his/her spouse again.
 - ii. God is big enough to restore what was broken.
 - 1. Restoration is difficult work, but nothing is impossible with God.

9. Choosing divorce

- a. What if I didn’t know about the Biblical view of marriage before I got divorced? Is this forgivable?
 - i. Yes. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin.
 - ii. However, now knowing God’s view of divorce gives you greater accountability.
 - 1. You cannot undo the past, but you can decide to honor the Lord in whatever state you are in.
- b. Churches should not tolerate known, willful sin (**1 Corinthians 5**):
 - i. For the good of the sinner.
 - 1. Sometimes people claim to be Believers but continue their sinful lifestyle, and we do not help them by affirming them in their sin.
 - 2. The hope is that once the sinners are no longer coddled by the church, they will repent and be restored.
 - 3. **1 Corinthians 5:5** – Speaking of the person engaging in a sinful lifestyle, Paul said, *“deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”*
 - ii. For the sake of the congregation.
 - 1. Believers may interpret the church’s tolerance for sin as permission to sin.

- c. Church discipline should be rare but is sometimes necessary.
 - i. If church leaders learn about a Believer pursuing divorce without Biblical grounds, they will offer counseling and pastoral care.
 - ii. If the Believer pursues divorce anyway, he/she will have to find another place of worship.

10. Mandates for the married

- a. Marriage is beautiful and God-ordained.
- b. Anything valuable and God-given is worth fighting for, so fight for your marriage:
 - i. Lean on Jesus.
 - ii. Pray a lot.
 - iii. Show grace a lot.
 - iv. Rebuke Satan a lot.
 - v. Die to yourself a lot.
 - vi. **DISCUSS**: Which of these pillars of a healthy relationship are you working on? How have these pillars helped you?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)