

## **“MARRIAGE MATTERS.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Ephesians 5:31-33; Hebrews 13:4**

### **Introduction.**

"Marriage has no guarantees. If that's what you're looking for, go live with a car battery." -Erma Bombeck

"Marriage is an adventure, like going to war." -G. K. Chesterton

"I love being married. It's so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life." -Rita Rudner

"Why does a woman work ten years to change a man's habits and then complain that he's not the man she married?" -Barbra Streisand

### **I married the wrong person.**

How many of us discovered after we got married that we weren't married to the same person we were dating and engaged to? You should have seen the look of shock on my wife's face when she found that out.

Let me burst some bubbles. We never marry the right person.

People today are looking for the perfect someone who fulfills their desires and meets their expectations and with whom they can live happily ever afterward.

Let me give just two reasons why this expectation is doomed to failure.

*First*, whenever you put two flawed and sinful human beings together in marriage what you get isn't going to be pretty or fulfilling or satisfying. The person you marry is spiritual broken by sin.

As one author pointedly put it, "Why should neurotic, selfish, immature people suddenly become angels when they fall in love?" (Denis de Rougemont).

**Second**, we always marry the wrong person. We are never the same person after we get married. Marriage profoundly changes all of us. So one of the challenges is learning to love and care for this stranger in your house and in your bed.

### **We never start with enough love.**

A woman from a war-torn country told an American, “The difference between Americans and the rest of the world is that you expect everything to go fine and are surprised when something bad happens. The rest of the world expects life to be dreary and is surprised when something good happens.”

We pledge to stay married “for better or for worse” but most of us never really expect the “for worse.” If our expectations are that only good things should happen, when something bad happens, we question our commitment.

When a bride and a groom gaze into each other’s eyes at the altar, exchanging rings and vows, they are not saying, “I really do love you,” but “I really will love you.” Marriage is not mainly a love found, but a love promised — not mainly a love discovered, but a love declared.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, love doesn’t create marriage but marriage creates love.

No couple starting out has enough love to sustain their marriage, it will have to grow to survive.

A marriage based on self-fulfillment and someone meeting all your needs misses the underlying reality of the purpose of marriage.

One of the biggest hurdles we all face in our marriages is one of *expectations*. Most all of us marry with a certain set of expectations. We marry to get our needs met, to be emotionally satisfied, for the romance and thrills of intimacy, for security or to cure loneliness, because we are in love and we like that feeling and we want to keep it.

It never occurs to us that there might be some grander purposes at work, supernatural spiritual forces at work. We are not at all prepared for what happens.

### **What if marriage isn’t about happiness, but is about holiness?**

Wait, first you tell me I married the wrong person, then you tell me we don't have enough love to sustain our marriage, and now you tell me marriage isn't about happiness? Why get married?

Because there is something better than happiness, something far more lasting.

It has been said that everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die. The same can be said about marriage. Everybody wants a great marriage but no one wants to die.

Every good marriage has to begin with a funeral, a dying to ourselves and our expectations.

This is part of the profound mystery of marriage.

### **Marriage is a profound mystery.**

How could it not be. Marriage is God's idea, and God's ideas are above our ideas, God's ways are above our ways. We have dragged marriage down to our level, when we need to rise to His level, to see it the way He sees it.

The fact that we live in a culture that calls a union between two men or two women marriage gives you a good clue how far we have fallen and how clueless we are. We are so far from true north we can't even imagine the profound mystery and majesty and glory of the goodness of God's gift of marriage.

It is God's doing, it is God's design and it is meant to display God to the world.

God created us male and female, a profound mystery. God created a being uniquely and perfectly suited to be a wife. God made her. God walked her down the aisle.

Paul says there is a profound mystery here and that it refers to Christ and the church.

There are two kinds of mysteries in the world. There are mysteries that can never be known, and then there are mysteries that remain mysteries for a long time until the secret is revealed.

From before the foundations of the earth God had a purpose and plan for marriage, a mystery that would only be fully and finally revealed when Christ came to earth.

Paul is saying the meaning of marriage has remained a mystery for a long time but now it has been disclosed, brought into the light by Jesus and His relationship with His Church.

For thousands of years people married and gave their children in marriage. For thousands of years people entered into marriage with high expectations and then struggled through the challenges and heartaches, the ups and downs, the tragedies and triumphs. For millennia men and women strangely drawn to each other to enter into lifelong commitments.

Why? Just to have a secure place to raise children? For companionship and intimacy? To complement and fulfill each other? What was God's purpose and plan? Why did God design humanity to be two sexes, male and female, suited for each other? Did He have a greater purpose in mind?

It points to Christ and the church. It points to the God-man, the second member of the Trinity and His Bride, His Church. Marriage is not first of all about us but about Christ.

It displays the glory of God to the world. It displays the Gospel to the world. It displays Christ's covenant commitment to the church. It displays true love to the world.

Christ shows us how marriage works with the wrong girl, with a girl who is sinful and flawed and less than desirable.

Christ shows us how a marriage works with a girl who doesn't measure up to expectations, who doesn't fulfill Him and meet all His needs.

Christ show us how a marriage works that starts with a funeral, a dying to Himself. Christ pays the bride price, the dowry in His own blood.

Christ loves first, Christ initiates, Christ takes responsibility.

Christ will never leave His bride, Christ will never cheat on His bride, Christ will never notice other women, never check them out on the internet, never degrade Himself with porn. Christ demonstrates a pure heart, a forsaking of all others for His bride alone.

If you are married, whether you understand it or not, your marriage is designed by God to be a display of His glory. It is designed to be a God-glorifying reflection of the relationship that exist between Christ and the church.

The world doesn't buy this revealed mystery. The world says marriage is an egalitarian partnership, 50/50, equal roles and responsibilities, redundant and reversable. Getting what I want.

The Biblical view is different and much more profound.

Christ is not in some sort of egalitarian partnership with the church, she is not His best friend. He steps up and takes responsibility for her, to love and care for and provide for, to protect and defend, to keep safe and secure, to cherish and above all to lay down His life for her.

He loves her and serves her and makes her to thrive spiritually and when she fails and falls short and doesn't measure up to His expectations, He loves her and forgives her. When she is weak and foolish, He loves her. He denies Himself for her sake even when she doesn't deserve it.

Every husband is called to be a reflection of Jesus's loving initiative, leadership, protection, and provision for his church.

And when a woman finds a man like that, that's a man she can respect and love and submit to, because she has no doubt that he will only do what is best for her.

**Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Marriage and family are God's idea, His invention, and when He invented it He did so for a reason. Whether we know it or not and whether we live up to it or not, God intends for His Son and His Son's bride to be repeatedly on display in all the earth, in all ages and cultures, for all to see. Indeed, the glory of God in His Son covers the earth like the waters cover the sea.

**To fight for your marriage is to fight for a mystery.**

“When you fight to stay intimate with each other, when you struggle to persevere and forgive, when you pray and work to defeat the personal demons that war against your marriage, your fidelity and your very soul, you’re not just fighting for your own happiness. You’re fighting for your kids and grandkids. You’re fighting for the church’s witness. You’re fighting for the glory of God” (Gary Thomas).

### **Implications and application.**

Let marriage be held in honor.

By the way we talk about it.

By believing God created it and designed it and His definition is best.

By put Christ in the center and putting Him first.

By dying to ourselves and living for the sake of another.

### ***By killing anger or kindness.***

The great marriage destroyer and the great marriage restorer are put together in two verses:

**Ephesians 4:31-32** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

**Colossians 3:19** Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Confess it, acknowledge it, pray about it, don’t harbor it, nurture it, excuse it, call it justified or good. Kill it.

I was wrong.

I am sorry.

Please forgive me.

Remember the rule, a hug, a kiss, an I love you every day. And let the kids see and hear it. To which I would add, pray together.

Don’t give your kids love and affection and your spouse a cold shoulder, the kids will notice.

What if you set a lot of bad examples in the past? What if the early years were messy and dark? God is sovereign over your mistakes. God can take the past and

use it for His glory. Contrast that past darkness with a present light, let the love of Christ shine brighter now. Show there can be a better future and hope.

Our early years were rough, more survival than thriving. But we persevered and now we are truly enjoying being married to each other. We want to show our kids it's worth it, it's worth fighting for, it's worth praying for.

***By putting our relationship ahead of technology.***

Smartphones are meddling in our marriages. Are we spending more time with our smartphones than with our spouses?

When you are home are you home, or are you at work, or with friends, or checking sports?

Are you present and engaged or checked out? Have you seen couples at restaurants on their phones? Make a practice of no phones at meals and on dates.

Your phone will strain already existing tensions. Couples will hide in their phones. You can feel a twinge of rejection, like a third party has moved in, something has come between you.

Forsaking all others needs to include that mistress called a smartphone.

The average couple spends only 20 minutes a week talking with each other. Turn off the technology and make it a point to spend 20-30 minutes a day catching up with each other.

What if we talked to each other as much as we spent on our screens? Think of the communication.

***By teaching our children about marriage before the world does.***

Our marriages should point others to Jesus, should show our children something of who Jesus is like.

Make clear there are two ways in the world, the world's ways and God's ways. Let them know there is a dark side and a light side, Satan and God, an enemy and a friend.

Teach them Genesis 2 and how marriage is God's idea and plan, He designed it a certain way.

Talk about how God made Adam and then how He made Eve, how God brought them together, and that is why people get married.

Show in your own relationship how valuable marriage is and your love for each other. Show how you are one, how you share everything, your hearts, your name, your home, your finances, your affection. Let them see how forgiveness works and restores.

Our world and our churches need examples of the God-glorifying relationship between Christ and His bride the church, examples of the self-sacrificing and self-denying love of Christ that changes and transforms homes.

Press into Jesus and show the difference Jesus makes in a relationship.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, that indeed is what we ask for, that you would cause and enable all our marriages to increasingly be a reflection of the love relationship that exist between Christ and His Church. Lord, we know that doesn't just happen overnight and we know that we are far from your best for us, and we know that we can't get back to where we should be without your divine intervention and help. Lord, begin today to spread a revival of marriage vows in this place that more husbands would love their wives the way Christ loves His Church and more wives would respect their husbands the way the Church honors and regards Christ. We ask you for this in the name of Jesus, for the sake of Him and His glory in the Church. Amen.