

marriage

extra thought and discussion

• Marriage ceremonies

Various marriage customs can be traced through the Bible.

- Special clothing, jewellery, veil (Gen 24:65, Ps 45:13-14, Is 49:18, Is 61:10)
- Bridesmaids and attendants of groom (Judg 14:11, 20, Ps 45:14, Matt 25:1-10, John 3:29)
- Procession (Ps 45:14-15, Matt 25:1-13)
- Covenant (Prov 2:17, Ezek 16:8, Mal 2:14)
- Blessing by parent and friends (Gen 24:60, Ruth 4:11-12)
- Banquet and festivities (Gen 29:22, Judg 14:10-17, Matt 22:1-14, John 2:1-11)
- Wedding night (Gen 29:22-24, Joel 2:16)
- Gifts and dowry (Gen 34:12, 1 Kings 9:16)

• God's resources for marriage

Christians have many resources from God for the preservation of their marriage and for reconciliation.

- Love (1 Cor 13:4-7)
- Repentance and apology (Matt 5:23-24)
- Forgiveness (Matt 18:21-35, Eph 4:32)
- Prayer together (Matt 18:18-20)
- A covenant before God (Prov 2:17)
- Obedience to God (John 14:23-24)
- The Holy Spirit within (Rom 8:9)
- Sexual relationship (1 Cor 7:1-5)
- Headship of husband (Eph 5:22-33, 1 Cor 11:3)
- Church discipline (Matt 18:15-17, 1 Cor 5:1-6:8)

• Divorce - Bible principles

- Divorce was not instituted by God and was not intended by him. It was necessary to include laws regulating divorce because of our sin and hardness of heart (Deut 24:1-4, Mark 10:1-12, Gal 3:19). God hates divorce (Mal 2:16).
- God is a divorced person (Jer 3:6-10) and knows what it feels like to be rejected by an unfaithful partner. He can sympathise with us.

Case 1 - Husband and wife are Christians

- You should not even separate (1 Cor 7:10-11). It is God's command for a married couple to stay together (Gen 2:24, Matt 19:6). You should utilise all God's resources available to you to preserve your marriage (see above).
- If you do separate, you should remain unmarried and unattached and seek to be reconciled with your spouse. This should always be possible since it is God's will (1 Cor 7:11).
- If you remarry you commit adultery and cause the person you marry to commit adultery (Matt 5:32, Matt 19:9, Mark 10:10-12, Luke 16:18, Rom 7:2-3).

- Divorce is permitted if your spouse is guilty of 'marital unfaithfulness' (Matt 5:32, Matt 19:9). The word for 'marital unfaithfulness' is the general Greek word for sexual immorality (*porneia* from which we get our word pornography) and covers a number of activities (see Unit 13). If divorce is permitted then the covenant is ended and remarriage is allowed.
- However the whole tone of the Bible in this respect is forgiveness. When faithless Israel prostituted herself before other gods and abandoned the Lord, he was at great pains to woo her back again. The Lord's desire was for Israel to repent, for him to forgive and for the relationship to be restored (Jer 3:1-5, Jer 3:12-14, Is 54:4-8, Hos 2:14-16). All believers have been received back by God in this way when we were forgiven and we need to forgive others (Matt 6:12, Matt 18:21-35).
- Although you have the right to divorce your immoral spouse, the better way is repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. Patience, love and grace are required.

Case 2 - Christian married to unbeliever

- As a Christian you may be married to an unbeliever because you unwisely married one, or you have become a Christian since marriage, or your spouse has lost faith in Jesus. Whatever the cause you should remain with your spouse and should seek to see them saved (1 Cor 7:12-16, 1 Pet 3:1).
- Your family is sanctified through you (1 Cor 7:14). This does not mean that they are saved but it does mean that your own walk with God and your service to God are not compromised by your marriage to an unbeliever.
- If your unbelieving spouse abandons the marriage, then you are not bound (1 Cor 7:15) - and are therefore presumably free to remarry.

• Remarriage

- Some people come into the church with a marriage history where it is too late to apply the above principles. Often one has to write off the past and start again.
- Young widows are encouraged to remarry (1 Tim 5:11-14). Similar reasons for re-marriage could be given to young divorcees (1 Cor 7:8-9).
- You are not permitted to return to an earlier spouse (Deut 24:1-4). This means that if your previous spouse has remarried, your covenant has been irreversibly cancelled and you are free to remarry someone else.

• Polygamy - many wives

It is clear that monogamy (one wife) was God's original purpose (Gen 2:24, Matt 19:4-6). Polygamy was introduced with Lamech (Gen 4:19) and several significant people in the Old Testament had more than one wife and concubines (others they slept with) eg Isaac, David, Solomon. It produced family strife. In the New Testament monogamy is assumed (1 Cor 7:2, 1 Tim 3:2).

marriage

● Marriage instituted by God

* Genesis 1:26-28 * Genesis 2:18-25

Why did God create a wife for Adam (2:18)?

The essence of marriage is friendship and working together for God.

What do man and wife become when they are united?

Marriage mathematics

$$1 + 1 = 1$$

* Matthew 19:4-6

Who joins a man and his wife together?

● Covenant of marriage

* Proverbs 2:17

Before whom is the covenant made?

Marriage vows

There is no list of marriage vows in the Bible but there are clear principles showing what should be included in the promises. In some churches you may be able to compose your own vows. Here are parts of some often-used vows:

...will you love, comfort, protect and, forsaking all others, be faithful as long as you both shall live...?

...to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part...

...I give you a ring as a sign of our marriage. With my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you...

* Malachi 2:13-16

Which marriage promise is emphasised here?

What two things does God hate?

A covenant consists of a set of promises. There are four main strands to the promises made in Christian marriage.

Love - caring, protecting, honouring, respecting

Faithfulness - to have no affairs outside marriage

Sharing - of lives, bodies and possessions

Permanence - until death of one of the partners

Often the covenant is sealed with a sign such as the giving and receiving of rings.

* Matthew 22:23-33 * Romans 7:2-3 * 1 Corinthians 7:39

When does your marriage covenant end? _____

Marriage is for this life. When your spouse dies, you are free to marry again. The only marriage in heaven is that of the Lamb (*Rev 19:6-9*)!

Heartsearch

Look at the marriage vows on the previous page.

If you are married - how well do you think you are keeping your vows?

If you are not married - consider how you would feel making these promises to another person.

● Responsibilities of a husband to his wife

What husband's responsibilities are mentioned in these passages?

Col 3:19 _____

1 Pet 3:7 _____

Deut 24:5 _____

Eccl 9:9 _____

Eph 5:23 _____

* Ephesians 5:25-33

This passage compares the relationship of a husband and wife to the relationship between Christ and the church.

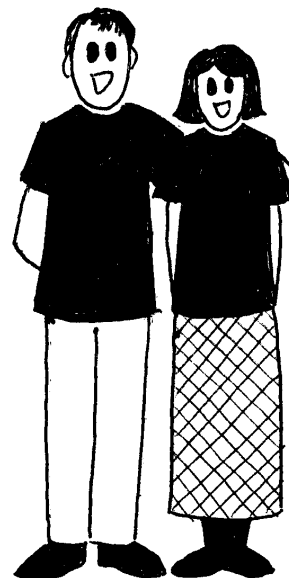
How should a husband love his wife?

v 25 _____

v 26-27 _____

v 28 _____

v 29 _____



● Headship

* 1 Corinthians 11:3

God's way is for the husband to be the head of his wife. This does not mean that he should dominate her but he is the leader of the team and responsible before God for the conduct of the relationship. As with all Christian leadership it should be characterised by being a servant leader as taught and demonstrated by Jesus (*Matthew 20:25-28, John 13:1-17*).

● Responsibilities of a wife to her husband

What wife's responsibilities are mentioned in these passages?

Eph 5:22-24 _____

Titus 2:4-5 _____

1 Peter 3:1-6 _____

* Proverbs 31:10-31

Find some of the qualities of a good wife.

v 10 _____ v 11 _____

v 12 _____ v 13-19 _____

v 20 _____ v 25 _____

v 26 _____ v 30 _____

What do you think of these responsibilities? Which do you think are most important?

As a husband or a wife how do you fare on these responsibilities and qualities?

Are there some which you need to work on?

Heartsearch

Heartsearch

Ideal spouse?

What are you looking for in your ideal husband or wife? Tick **six** qualities which are most important to you.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ can cope with problems | ☐ will make a good parent |
| ☐ loves me | ☐ is a keen Christian |
| ☐ will do what I want | ☐ is honest and upright |
| ☐ will tell me what to do | ☐ is good-looking |
| ☐ loves having sex | ☐ is dependable |
| ☐ is stable and predictable | ☐ is intelligent |
| ☐ is unpredictable | ☐ is interesting to talk to |
| ☐ is sexually compatible | ☐ has a nice shape |
| ☐ has a sense of humour | ☐ talks a lot |
| ☐ is well-organised | ☐ is a good listener |
| ☐ is popular | ☐ is successful |
| ☐ is warm and friendly | ☐ works hard |
| ☐ has good parents | ☐ respects me |

* Exodus 34:15-16 * Joshua 23:12-13 * 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

Why did God command the Israelites not to marry from other nations?

It is unthinkable for a Christian for whom Jesus is their first-love to marry someone who does not share in their love for Jesus.

