

Marriage (And Related Sins)

As you've learned, when people are able and willing to rule themselves, no one else needs to rule them. And when God created Adam and Eve in the Garden, by all appearances He created them equal. Except for the obvious fact that God created Adam first, and thus he was elder; and that Adam was created bigger than Eve, and thus was stronger; otherwise, there is no mention of a male-dominated society in Eden.

But then they sinned. It was no accident that the Devil attempted to deceive Eve, not Adam; for he knew that Eve would be more easily deceived (**1 Timothy 2:12-13**). Eve was *deceived* first; but it was Adam who committed the first *sin*. Because Adam was more aware of the law, and thus more responsible. Eve was merely duped; Adam chose to follow his wife's example and sinned (**Genesis 3:17**).

And it is only after Eve took the fruit and persuaded Adam to sin that we find the first example of government on Earth in **Genesis 3:16**. At that moment, Eve – and her daughters – were placed under the rule of their husbands. Until then, they were apparently equal; but from now on, Eve's mission was to please her husband, "*and he shall rule over you*" – ***because she proved unable to rule herself***.

I have many female students, and much of what the Bible says about their role in society will offend them. That's too bad – but the fault is not with the Bible, the fault is with the world's religions for so badly distorting the plain words of the Bible that what the Bible says has become politically incorrect – some of what it says could even qualify as a "hate crime" by today's laws.

What the Bible says is contrary to most modern ideas on marriage and child-rearing. But then, let's see how well the modern ideas have worked. Most marriages don't outlast the appliance warranties today. Most children come from broken homes. Most of them are disrespectful of authority in every form, or else completely passive, incompetent and/or Ritalin-dependent. So maybe God's way is worth trying?

God's way is not anti-feminine. It *would* be considered strongly anti-*feminist* by today's definition of the term. But contrary to popular belief, it does not restrict women from owning property, having jobs, even leading the military; it does not bind them to a lifetime of service to men, nor condemn them to a harem-like existence. Not even in the Old Testament. So what I'm going to say will offend most people; but as much as possible, I'll let the Bible speak for itself in...

LESSON 42 – MARRIAGE (AND RELATED SINS)

To grasp the outline of this subject, let's work backwards from the heavenly pattern. In **Ephesians 5:32** Paul tells us that the foregoing statements were "a great mystery", that involved "Christ and the church". Backing up to **verses 22-31**, you see that Paul was talking about how a family should be run under the NC, and specifically where the authority in that family lay.

He concluded in **verses 32-33** by saying this was all a symbol of Christ and the church, but that it was literally true in the physical sense as well. Then he added a few verses in **Ephesians 6:1-4** about fathers

ruling their children. But now let's go through these verses slowly. In **Ephesians 5:22** you see Paul repeating the same thing God told Eve in the Garden; that she was to obey her husband.

This is grossly unpopular today, with the word "obey" having been removed from many wedding vows – and they might as well be removed from the rest, since no one honors that vow – but it's what the Bible says. If you have a problem with that, write the editor of the Bible, not me.

I'm being clear about this up front, because I'm going to be talking about this a lot, and I don't want to have to keep excusing or apologizing or justifying it; **God placed a wife under her husband's rule. Not guidance, influence, or direction; under his RULE. God's words, not mine.**

So we'll say no more about this and treat it as a fact; and you'll see before we're through that if the husband is righteous, it's by far the fastest route to happiness for both. Paul goes on to say that the wife is to obey her husband *as if she were obeying the Lord* because the human family is a *type* of a heavenly family. Every human family is intended to function after the pattern of God's own family.

Who is first in authority in God's family? **1 Corinthians 15:28**. Is the Father greater in authority than Jesus? **John 14:28**. Who is next in authority after Jesus? **Revelation 3:21**. After the Father and Jesus, who will be the highest authority in the universe? **Daniel 7:18, 27**. And what are the saints collectively called? **Revelation 19:7-8**.

So first the Father, then the Son, then His wife/bride/church – the first resurrection saints. This is the hierarchy. Then they will reign over all generations, and just as most marriages produce children, so will this one – trillions of children (**Romans 7:4**). Far more children than the OC or the old Earth ever produced (**Galatians 4:22-27**). And those children will forever be lower in authority than their mother (the Church), their Father (Jesus), or their Grandfather (He whom we are privileged to call "the Father").

So this is the pattern; do human families today fit that? No, actually they are the exact opposite. Today, God has cursed our land and our families for our sins, and we see in every home the fulfillment of the prophecy in **Isaiah 3:12**. This perfectly describes nearly every home I've ever been in – a weak, wuss of a man who boasts of his guns and strength and yet cowers when his wife glares at him; loud, unruly hyperactive children terrorizing everyone, while their parents ask them to "be quiet" every 30 seconds – which of course they ignore, knowing the threats aren't worth the air they're spoken into.

The backbone has gone out of the modern family and women are the acting heads of most houses, while children live in a bubble of anarchy. But don't misunderstand; while it *is* wrong, it's not primarily the women's fault. In most cases, the men are so weak-spined and ineffectual that the women **MUST** rule the house if any ruling is to be done.

There is no simple fix to magically repair a problem that resounds throughout society, the blame for which falls on the preachers for teaching a false god and the people for loving that false god and praising the teachers who teach about him. If you obey God diligently, He can work the rough edges out of most relationships, or give an honorable exit if not; but He can't make an evil people righteous or a foolish people wise, just because they read a few Bible verses.

But we'll come back to that. Meanwhile, we have laid out a clear pattern; the oldest living righteous male has seniority for the family; he is the patriarch. Next comes the husband, who rules his own house; next comes the wife, who rules the children; next comes the oldest son, and so on. There are minor exceptions to these rules which we'll address, but this is generally accurate. With that said, we need to cover a few side-issues before we tackle the main subject, starting with...

FORNICATION

If you turn on Christian radio – and I try not to – you cannot help but hear them railing against fornication. It seems it's the only sin the world really understands and is opposed to – in principle, at least. It's all they think about. But it isn't worthy of the air time it receives. In fact, of all the sins they COULD talk about, this one *isn't even a death-penalty offense!*

Fornication (sex without marriage) is a long way down the list of things God hates. This is not to say you **should** do it, or that I would baptize someone who was living with someone they weren't married to, but it's nowhere NEAR adultery (sex while married to someone else), which IS a death penalty offense.

Fornication/statutory rape was *expensive* in the OC. See **Deuteronomy 22:28-29**. To understand how much money that was, remember Judas' thirty pieces of silver in **Matthew 27:3-10**. So if 30 shekels bought, say, a suburban acre, 50 shekels were probably worth, relatively speaking, \$10,000-50,000 today. *And* they had to get married, unless her father forbade it (**Exodus 22:16-17**).

But for perspective, *this* cost 50 shekels of silver. On the other hand, if a man married a wife then falsely accused her of not being a virgin, and was proven wrong, then *that* cost him 100 shekels (**Deuteronomy 22:13-21**). Using the fine as a comparison of importance, **this was much more serious than fornication.**

More serious still was adultery, **which meant death for both parties.** So the world needs to get some perspective on what it condemns; yes, fornication is wrong. But it is SO far down the list of sins that need to be addressed, it is scarcely worth mentioning in the beginning. For more on that perspective, request and read the free booklet "Which Is The Greatest Commandment?"

A related question is prostitution. It's obvious that God is opposed to it from **Leviticus 19:29** and **Deuteronomy 23:17-18**; yet it hardly seems to have received as much attention as it deserves considering it is the "world's oldest profession". A classic example is the story of Judah and Tamar in **Genesis 38:12-26**.

He was going to have his (widowed) daughter-in-law burned for being a harlot, when he himself had partaken of her harlotry. Apparently he felt it was fine for other men's daughters, but not his own; and yet Judah was a reasonably righteous man for the OC. And one of the children of this union became an ancestor of Jesus.

I don't have a good explanation for this, as I said it seems less condemned than it should be, to me (which means I'm wrong). But fortunately, prostitution is not a very big problem in our time. Unless you're a politician... in which case, there are *many* much more important sins to talk about.

MARRIAGE

The Bible does not give any instructions for a marriage ceremony of any kind. The closest thing we have is a reference to Samson's wedding reception in **Judges 14**. Yet even there, it is clear that this was an outdated *custom* even when this book was written (**verse 10**).

Another example is Jacob and Rachel and Leah in **Genesis 29:16-30**. When I first read this what stood out to me is, Leah and Rachel did not resemble each other at all; yet Jacob was married to and then woke up next to a woman *before* he realized that she was the wrong one. How drunk WAS he the night before? But if we assume it wasn't just the amount of celebrating he did, **why didn't he notice?**

I can see only two other possibilities; one, she was so thoroughly veiled and covered up that he didn't notice; which is possible, but seems improbable; or, and this makes more sense in light of **verse 23**, is that the men had a "bachelor party" and Leah was delivered to Jacob's dark tent and he just couldn't see her. That seems to fit best. **But that means there was no marriage ceremony as such.**

As a purely personal note, I would surely have asked for a discount on the second wife under the circumstances, some sort of a buy-one-get-one-half-price deal, but Jacob paid full price for both. Back on point, while Leah was “given” to Jacob, her attitude throughout their marriage implies that she truly wanted Jacob for herself, and was probably complicit in the deception (see **Genesis 29:32-35, 30:20**). It *may* even have been her idea, though it doesn’t say that.

Another example of a marriage “ceremony” is Isaac and Rebekah. This was an arranged marriage where Abraham sent a servant to his home town because he wanted Isaac to marry a Hebrew woman, not a Canaanite as Ishmael did. The whole story is in **Genesis 24**, but the part relevant to us is in **verses 58-67**.

First note that although this marriage was arranged, the woman retained the option of refusing. Contrary to what every shallow Bible student on Earth believes, women *did* have rights in the OT. Second, note that as soon as she arrived she went into Isaac’s tent, for purposes that are left to our lurid imaginations, and then she “became his wife”.

If such a thing had happened today, the conservative church ladies would pronounce that they were “living in sin!” – and if this happened today *they almost certainly would be!* Yet apparently with Isaac and Rebekah this was an honorable thing, even though there is no marriage ceremony mentioned.

Elsewhere in the Bible is just as silent, so we will have to gather clues from all over the Bible and add them up to understand this subject which, frankly, no one understands. Some of what we uncover will shock the prudish Victorian values. Some will appear extreme by even those standards. But whatever the Bible says is what we’ll find – and what we’ll believe.

First, what was the purpose of marriage? **Genesis 2:18-24**. Man was alone. God pronounced this “not good”, so He set out to make him “*a helper, as his counterpart*” (**Rotherham**). After God concluded that no other creature would do, He anesthetized Adam and used his rib to make Eve. Since she was made from Adam’s DNA (rib), she would have been essentially a female clone of Adam.

Thus, while physically separate creatures, they were literally “one flesh”. As an interesting anecdote, the payment for Eve’s life came from Adam’s side while he slept – his rib. While the second Adam, Jesus, paid for His wife’s life with what came out of *His* side while HE “slept” – after He died (**John 19:33-34, 1 John 5:6**). Out of His side came the blood and water which allows us to enter the throne room of God, the “Eden” in heaven (**Hebrews 10:19-22**).

Moving on, God did not “marry” Adam and Eve, at least it isn’t recorded; she simply became “one flesh” with him and from then on is called his wife. This is the rule throughout the Bible, compare **1 Samuel 25:42, 2 Samuel 11:27, Matthew 25:10**, etc. Another example of marriage is when Christ marries his bride in **Revelation 19:7-9**, and a more detailed example in **Matthew 22**. Unfortunately none of these show any real example of a “do you take this woman... to have and to hold...” etc.

All we see in these examples is that the woman goes to live with the man and becomes his wife; in some cases a large feast is held prior to that. Those are the only facts we’ve gleaned so far – but there are more.

THE SYMBOL OF MARRIAGE

Today, marriage is symbolized by a wedding ring. In western cultures, the ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand. In eastern Europe, it’s on the third finger of the right hand. But in the Bible, it was a nose ring. Well, sort of.

Earlier in **Genesis 24**, when the servant of Abraham went to find a wife for Isaac, when he first met her at the well and knew she was “the one”, what did he do? **Verse 22**. This was only after he knew that God had answered his prayer made earlier in the chapter; this was a sign of his commitment. Did Laban know

something was up when he saw the rings? **Verses 29-30**. Where did Abraham's servant put the ring of gold? **Verse 47**.

The original Hebrew word there has many meanings so the translation is not clear, it may mean a jewel that dangled down from a ribbon across the forehead, or an actual modern nose ring, or a bracelet-shaped soft ring that is squeezed onto the nose, or perhaps just a plain earring on the ear. The YLT translates it "*and I put the ring on her nose*". Regardless of where it was, when Laban saw the ring there, **he clearly noticed it and knew what it meant**.

God says something similar of his own bride in **Ezekiel 16:12-14**. These jewels seemed to show the same purpose of proving that she was His bride. Here earrings *are* clearly intended. Like the modern wedding band, these symbols are customs, which can change with time and from culture to culture. But these symbols do two things; first, they provide a "keep off" sign to would-be suitors; and they provide a constant visible reminder of the vows the couple made.

A TOKEN OF THE COVENANT

God knows we are carnal, so we need these symbols. Marriage is a covenant, the details of which we will study later, but the symbol is simply a reminder that a covenant has been made; much as baptism serves as a reminder of the covenant you made with God. Does God give us tokens of His covenants? **Genesis 9:12-13, 17**. Did circumcision do the same basic job as a wedding ring does? **Genesis 17:11**. Does the OC passover blood serve as a token of the covenant God made to pass over our sins? **Exodus 12:13**. And so on throughout the Bible there are many "tokens" like this. Paul even signed his name to his letters as a proof or "token" that they came from him (**2 Thessalonians 3:17**).

But now let's focus on the earring. What did it symbolize under Moses? **Exodus 21:1-6, Deuteronomy 15:12-17**. Now clearly, to wear an earring your ear must be pierced. And as every young girl knows, if your ear is pierced and you don't wear an earring right away the hole will heal, and your ear would no longer be pierced.

So implicit in this command is the fact that the servant must wear **an earring as a token** to show his willingness to obey you forever; for he loved you and knew he enjoyed a good life under your leadership, and so he openly and plainly **gave up his freedom** to accept your rule and authority.

This strongly connects the earring with servitude. So naturally earrings that contain a symbol of a false god such as a cross, a sun, a dreamcatcher, etc., would symbolize that you love, obey, and accept the authority of that god. This explains why Jacob, before approaching Bethel to make his final covenant with God and to accept the NC, had his men get rid of all their earrings! (**Genesis 35:1-4**). **Why would they get rid of their earrings, if they did not symbolize obedience to false gods?**

God made men to be sovereign, civilly subject to the authorities in the land but spiritually subject to no one but Him. But men have always "*gone a-whoring after other gods*" (**Judges 2:17**), and have been desperate to put someone, anyone, in spiritual authority over them. Someone to intercede between them and God. This is how Satan became the god of this world, how Moses became arbiter of the OC, and why Israel always "*turned quickly out of the way*".

And as men have surrendered their will to false spirits, as they have lost their independence and will to choose their own destiny, so in exact proportion men have begun to wear earrings in our society. They are especially fond of round studs or hoops – which generally symbolize the sun – and crosses, symbolizing the death of Tammuz.

I digress with this just to show that the earring is a clear symbol of accepting the authority of someone else. There is nothing wrong with earrings, for men or women; it shows that a woman has accepted the authority

of her husband, or that the man has become a slave to a pagan God. If that's what a man WANTS to show, there is nothing at all wrong with an earring...

As I said before, some symbols change with time; in our society, earrings are not a keep-off sign like a wedding ring is, so there is no reason single women cannot also wear earrings; but the laws of God do not change with time, so for a man to wear an earring STILL represents slavery. So men should follow Jacob's example before they approach God to accept the new covenant, and "*put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean*".

THE VOW

I have been asked many times what constitutes a marriage. Is a Catholic marriage valid? A justice of the peace marriage? Does a witch doctor in Haiti blowing smoke on you while chanting a demon-possessed rhythm make you married in the eyes of God?

And the answer is forehead-slappingly obvious. No. And yes. Yes. Mostly. See, it's simple! No, it really is. It's just that people are looking for the answer in the wrong place. **It's not about what God does. It's what you do that makes a marriage binding.**

What does God say about vows? **Numbers 30:2-16**. Most of this chapter is about women making vows that overstep their authority. But the key is that anyone with the authority to make a vow – a man over twenty, or a woman living alone – has the right to make a vow, **but once made any vow is binding, and "he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."**

How does God feel about people who break their vows? **Ecclesiastes 5:4-5**. Are you ever obligated to make a vow in the first place? **Deuteronomy 23:22**. But if you DO vow, and don't keep it, will it be a sin? **Verse 21**. If you vow "till death do us part", then you part... before death... you have not been released from your vow. If you then marry someone else, *you're breaking your vow*.

It doesn't matter whether God stamped you as "married" in some book in heaven; it doesn't matter whether He even knows you exist. What matters is that you are not doing "according to all that proceeds out of your mouth". **That is a sin, no matter why or how you were married, or who did it.** If you vowed to "love, honor, and obey" a husband while Brother Rainbow sprinkled you with pixie dust and marijuana flowers, **then that vow was binding whether the ceremony was binding or not.**

If the vow is "till death do us part", then no matter who officiated the ceremony, **that's what God expects you to do.** To get out of that relationship, one of you has to die. There are no other legal options.

CHOOSING DEATH OVER MARRIAGE

Fortunately, dying isn't as hard as it might seem. How can you honorably get out of a marriage vow? **1 Corinthians 7:39**. So when one of you is dead, the bond is broken and you are free of your vow. "Till death do us part" has been fulfilled. But the world is full of foolish people, who make absurd vows in their youth that they cannot possibly live up to.

And if we were bound to honor every foolish vow we ever made, we would be weighted down with a burden we could not possibly drag into the kingdom. But God has provided us a way to cut that anchor to our past and be freed from those foolish vows (**Romans 6:3-13**). That rather long passage says, in a nutshell, that when you are baptized, the person you used to be died in the eyes of the law, and a new creature now walks "in newness of life".

That means that any vows your "old man" may have made are no longer valid. *Including marriage vows.* Everyone who is baptized has committed sins; made foolish mistakes that need God's help. The foolish person you used to be may have married a spouse with whom it is impossible to live a righteous life;

baptism is an opportunity to free you from that **if you both want it**. And that's where **1 Corinthians 7:12-16** comes in.

If you married someone before you understood the truth, and they are not interested in the truth but are willing to continue being your spouse and raising your children, **then you should continue being their spouse**. “Who knows”, says Paul – **you might just bring them to the truth as well someday by your example**.

But if they despise the truth and make your life miserable and “depart”, then you are not under bondage in God's eyes. You are free in that case to seek whatever legal divorce the local laws allow, because in God's eyes, the marriage was “finished” at baptism by your death; you need only to satisfy the local laws to “fulfill all righteousness”.

WHAT A MARRIAGE REQUIRES FROM YOU

In the Bible, there are no wedding vows mentioned. Only tacit comments about what men and women are supposed to do for one another. The biggest pile of these in one place is in **Ephesians 5:22-33**. Reading through that slowly, you'll see the elements which must be included in the vow of a Godly marriage; these things must be discussed between the husband and wife BEFORE marriage. And it isn't a bad idea for them to ask someone wiser to talk to them both about what will be required of them in marriage, if that's possible.

In **verses 22-24** and **33**; potential wives should ask themselves, “can I obey this man as if I were obeying the Lord's commands?” – as your husband, he will be in a position of authority over you, authority derived from God Himself; resisting that authority is resisting the will of God (**Romans 13:1-6**). So do you respect this man enough to be subject unto his judgment in every thing, as the church is subject to Jesus? To “reverence him”?

If you can't, then either you aren't humble enough, converted enough, or perhaps simply not ready to be a wife; or else he isn't enough of a man to deserve your trust and respect. In any case, you should not marry.

In **Ephesians 5:25-33**, potential husbands should ask themselves, “can I put her needs and desires above my own? Seek her happiness and welfare before mine? Devote my life to providing a safe and happy home, even though it may come at great cost to my own plans, lusts, and even my life itself?”

As “the greatest among you”, you will be her servant, and that of your children (if any). Not her servant in the “I'll make your coffee, dear” sense – but your life will be consumed with earning a living to support her, working to make a home for her, preparing for her future; it will mean the death of most of your teenage ambitions and selfish desires; and all of your freedom to please yourself without thoughts of tomorrow.

Your life will go to provide for hers, while hers will be spent in being “a help fit for you”, supporting you and picking up the pieces as you tackle the challenges – the many, many challenges – life will throw at you.

If it works well, if both parties understand these terms, it is a truly beautiful thing. If one or both of you are mostly carnal and got married for the wrong reasons – you know which reasons I mean – then it will not be a beautiful thing. It will be a difficult road, and you'll wish you had another death to use to get out of this marriage. **But you only get one free pass.**

Once you marry after baptism, this new person is a begotten child of God; his vows are binding for as long as he lives. If he makes foolish vows... well, if he wants to dwell in God's holy hill, what must he do? **Psalms 15:1, 4**. If he vows to his own hurt, **he still doesn't try to change his vow!**

So be very careful what you vow, and to whom you vow to be manacled for the rest of your life. Because this time if it doesn't work, if you can't work it out and you separate, even if they divorce you under the law of the land, **you're still married in God's eyes.**

Now there are some loopholes we'll discuss later, but this is the general principle. Does God require you to keep your vows made as a NC Christian? **Job 22:27**. What does He call you if you don't? **Ecclesiastes 5:4-6**. Your vow – your mouth – can cause your flesh to sin. By making a foolish vow that your body cannot live up to, you have brought sin on yourself for no reason. And the punishment is clearly stated there.

SPECIFIC VOWS

So far we've seen that the elements which must be in a vow contain at least the following:

1. That the wife "love, honor, and obey" her husband, and that the husband love, care for, and give himself for his wife.
2. That they "forsake all others".
3. That they vow to stay together "till death do us part".

Surprisingly, the traditional marriage vows are pretty good. Of course they're just words to most people, who never stop to think about the wife "obeying"; and I know people who have said "till death do us part" three times (and have three living ex-wives now). After a while, I have to ask... "why bother saying it since it obviously isn't true?"

But still, I don't see much wrong with the traditional vows, provided they avoid comparing the wedding band to the unbroken golden circle of the sun-god. And of course, almost every single thing done at weddings is thoroughly pagan; arches, rice, doves, cake, tossing the bouquet, and so on; research it for yourself sometime and see where all these customs came from.

Regardless, there isn't anything wrong with the traditional vows *if they're actually meant*. But no one means them. No wife really, deeply **COMMITTS** to obey her husband; not if she disagrees with him. No husband really understands that he has to put aside all of his childish fantasies and ambitions and devote his life to taking care of his wife; and neither of them **REALLY** mean that they'd rather die than break their wedding vows; **none of them truly mean till DEATH do us part.**

Modern wedding vows **SHOULD** read, what people really **MEAN** when they say their vows is something like this: "I vow to love, tolerate, and humor this person, in happiness and in not-quite-so-much happiness, in health and in minor illness, for richer or for low-middle-class income, keeping myself from most others (except the very attractive ones when my spouse isn't looking), for as long as we both aren't too bored and don't 'fall out of love'; till the honeymoon ends do us part".

Those aren't the words they say. **But those are the words they mean.** If you want a successful marriage, sit down with your spouse and go over those vows in great detail, thinking and talking about exactly what they mean to both of you. You're signing a contract with your spouse, a contract that will profoundly affect you and everyone you know for the rest of your life. **READ** the fine print! Memorize it and make **SURE** you can pay the cost. **THEN** – only then – are you fit to be married.

BACKYARD MARRIAGES

What you've learned here has shown that a backyard marriage between a man and a woman taking their vows alone "under the stars" is technically valid. In fact, it's not even "technically" valid – it is **COMPLETELY** valid. **HOWEVER...** people are carnal. Vows made in secret have no witnesses; no one to cry "foul" if the couple later claims the marriage never happened.

With sincere, converted, NC Christians, “going into his tent... and becoming his wife...” would be good enough. In the real world, it never is. In this world, a wedding with witnesses and papers, licenses and families helps to hold the marriage together simply because of the shame, hassle, embarrassment, and expense involved in dissolving the union.

When “getting a divorce” is a matter of simply saying “I don’t love you anymore; anyway, we were never REALLY married!”, marriage is a fragile thing. When it’s a matter of lawyers and settlements and alimony... well, today it’s still a fragile thing, but it’s better than nothing in a carnal world.

Bottom line, the Bible makes no specific requirements for a marriage ceremony *because God doesn’t care*. HOW you make a vow doesn’t matter to Him. He only cares that you KEEP your vows. Knowing that we are human and mostly carnal, and that at some point you’re both going to want out of the marriage, **you should think ahead and make it as difficult as possible to break your vows**. To keep your flesh from making your mouth a liar (**Ecclesiastes 5:6**).

OC VS. NC MARRIAGE

Many of the questions people cannot answer about marriage, or the Bible in general for that matter, are because of the differences between the OC and the NC. The OC was a limited covenant with very limited goals. It was not a covenant of the spirit or heart, it was strictly a covenant of the flesh. You might call it a pragmatic covenant. Rather than be concerned with ideals and dreams, the OC was strictly limited to the practicalities.

In the OC, the purpose of marriage was procreation – the creation of “a godly seed” – nothing else, it seems (**Malachi 2:15**). Marriage gave a woman a provider and protector, and gave a man a housekeeper and childbearer, but there seems to be no deeper intent for marriage under that covenant. Thus, polygamy served those goals as well, if not better, than monogamy.

There is no OT command against polygamy for that reason. Any intelligent man who read the story of Jacob and his wives, or Abraham and his “wives”, would have concluded that one woman was plenty of trouble and two was just begging for headaches and strife... but that was hardly a command.

But in the NT, Jesus pointed out the fact that God made only one man and one woman initially to show that it was God’s ideal that there be only one of each in a marriage (**Matthew 19:1-12**). And the NT shows several references to loving your spouse, which isn’t really mentioned under the OC. Because love is an *internal* emotion which, by definition, an *external* covenant cannot govern.

In the OC, there were no commands not to be “*unequally yoked with unbelievers*” (**2 Corinthians 6:14**); in fact, laws were specifically given to govern marriages with captured Gentiles (**Deuteronomy 21:10-14**). But in the NT, there are laws forbidding being unequally yoked with spiritual Gentiles because God expects more from a NC marriage. God expects it to be more harmonious and more fulfilling than the OC, and that’s why in the NT polygamy was forbidden for elders, who were to be the examples to the rest of the congregation (**Titus 1:6, 1 Timothy 3:2**, etc.).

An arranged marriage could serve the purposes of the OC just fine; when society backed up the marriage and made it difficult to get out, when the people understood the terms and were willing to work with what they had to make a relationship work on the best terms they could, a “loveless” marriage could do the job pretty well.

But in the NC, true Christians are going to have a very difficult path to walk; much harder than the OC ever had. This is hard enough to walk alone; it’s far worse to walk with a spouse you can barely stand to be in the same room with. Even worse when society on every side encourages you to leave your spouse and offers you no-fault divorces.

On the other hand, with the right spouse that you can relate to, work with, and support each other, the road becomes a lot easier. Or so I imagine, never having actually witnessed that; still, in the ideal, it must work that way. The point is, a NC marriage is a much more spiritual affair than the OC, and it is important that there is more binding your marriage together than the physical and the convenient.

"IT IS NOT GOOD TO MARRY"

After Jesus talked about divorce briefly, the disciples told Him, "*If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry*" (**Matthew 19:10**). But in **verses 11-12** Jesus went on to say, to paraphrase, "all men cannot stay single", though He did imply it was better to be single if you can. But He also implied you either *were* able to or you *weren't*, which makes it a moot point.

In **1 Corinthians 7**, Paul discourages marriage pretty heavily – but clearly adds that it is his OPINION he is offering, not the commandment of the Lord – see **1 Corinthians 7:25-40**. In the first and last verses of that passage, Paul does the same thing I do when I say [opinion alert!] in my writings; calling attention to things I THINK are good advice, but on which I do not have any "word from the Lord".

Paul made it clear that marrying is *not* a sin; it just complicates life, which anyone who has watched TV can see. But my own opinion [opinion alert!] is that, while single life is simpler because there are less challenges to overcome, it also doesn't give you the same opportunities to learn how to be a child of God that a family does. Paul himself told us this in **1 Timothy 3:5**.

Ruling your own house well proves that you can rule God's house well. Staying single to be more righteous, while easier, **makes your righteousness proportionately less valuable** precisely because it was easier to achieve and was not tested against the same opposition a married person faced.

Rather like the difference in satisfaction you get from beating a game on level 2, and beating it on level 5. Level 2 was easier; more people can successfully do it. But level 5 means a lot more, precisely because it was harder to achieve and fewer people succeed.

Bottom line, if you don't find someone compatible with whom you can have a NC marriage, it's a moot point anyway. This is why I'm still single – though some would say it's only one of many, many reasons.

DATING OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

Most churches either ignore the issue or make strict rules about dating outside the church. Both are wrong. There is nothing wrong with dating outside the church. It can be fun, educational and – more importantly – you might just spread the truth to someone who didn't have it before.

And you never know – God might use you to call your girl/boyfriend and then you would no longer be unequally yoked (you can hope, but don't count on that because God won't *make* them make good choices – only present them with options).

But *marrying* someone outside the church is foolish, because they live by different rules than you do and always will. It is impossible to have a NC marriage with them, and difficult even to have an OC marriage – more than likely, you'll have a failed marriage after a few years. I know several people who tried. It's one thing to get married, THEN learn the truth and be baptized and THEN make the best out of being married to an unbeliever. It's quite another to dive into a pit of vipers and hope for the best.

DIVORCE

The first place to get the mood for the subject is in **Malachi 2:14-16**, where God says He hates "putting away" (divorce). Why was divorce invented? **Matthew 19:3-9**. What were the original rules?

Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Did Jesus in the NC support this law? **Matthew 5:31-32.** Were Levites types of the NC church? **1 Peter 2:5.** Were Levites allowed to marry divorced women? **Leviticus 21:7, 10-15.**

So for a divorce to be allowed, there had to be some “uncleanness” in the woman, according to **Deuteronomy 24:1.** The details of that we aren’t told. But clearly, it wasn’t “for every reason” like the Pharisees suggested to Jesus. Once divorced, she was free to remarry in the OC, but could under no circumstances return to her original husband after that.

In the NC however, Jesus said even this was not permitted; He said divorce caused her and her future husband to commit adultery. Because under the NC, we are a type of priest, and priests were not permitted to divorce or to marry divorcees. (Clearly this does not apply to sins of ignorance – including divorces – before baptism, because at baptism you become a “new man”.) God expects more from NC people; He gave the OC people divorces “*because of the hardness of their hearts*”. For us in the NC, the whole POINT is that the hearts not BE hard! (**Hebrews 3:7-15**).

But there *are* some exceptions that make divorce acceptable today in *some* cases. One is the environment we live in. What is the penalty for adultery in the Bible? **Leviticus 20:10.** That doesn’t happen today. Yet in God’s eyes the adulterer and adulteress are worthy of death. We do not have the right to enforce that judgment today because we are not ourselves without sin; BUT!

Had they committed a sin worthy of death under the OC, **divorce would have been a moot point because “till death do us part” would be fulfilled by their execution!** So while *divorce* is wrong, if the other person committed adultery, *they are dead to you and God anyway so it’s a moot point. You can’t divorce a (spiritually) dead person!* So since in God’s eyes they are dead and you are no longer married, you are free to seek a divorce according to the law of the land.

The only other Biblical excuse for divorce that I can find is gross negligence (**Exodus 21:9-11**). And even that is debatable under the NC, since there should be some recourse through the church via **Matthew 18**, which should either solve the problem or put him out of the church, spiritually killing him (**1 Corinthians 5:5**) and once more, making divorce a moot point in God’s eyes.

Spouses are not bound to stay married to adulterers, murderers, kidnappers, worshipers of false gods, **or any other sin that is CLEARLY a death penalty offense in the OC.** Because in a proper society, those things would be dealt with by the judge of the land; if he doesn’t do his job, a divorce accomplishes the same result as far as you are concerned and is justified by the principles of the Bible.

On the other hand, getting divorced for anything less than a death-penalty offense causes the divorcee to commit adultery, since God doesn’t recognize divorce for anything less than that in a NC marriage – which is defined as marriage vows made by at least one true Christian after baptism.

PRE-BAPTISM DIVORCES

This is pretty self-evident, but as many of the semi-Christian churches out there have it badly wrong, I need to briefly touch on it again. If you were married, or divorced, when God called you **that doesn’t matter.** When you are baptized, ALL debts, ALL vows, ALL mistakes are washed away. There is no power that can reach beyond the grave to seek retribution for your mistakes. EVERYTHING is gone.

Remember what the world quotes all the time, “*what God has joined together, let not man put asunder*” (**Matthew 19:6**). But what the world’s false churches “join together” God doesn’t join together. God expects you to honor your vows, whatever they were; but if you don’t, that just becomes one more in a long list of sins tallied against you which are washed away at baptism.

Before baptism you should seek to right whatever wrongs you can and “get your house in order”, to “show fruits worthy of repentance”, and so if you divorced someone for selfish reasons and it was in fact you who was at fault – even partly – you should go to them and seek to repair it; especially if there are children involved. That is what a true Christian would do.

But if you cannot fix it, particularly if one or both of you has been remarried (**Deuteronomy 24:3-4**), then you must accept that you made a foolish vow, committed countless sins which ultimately led to breaking that vow, and accept that your death is well-earned and seek to live in newness of life.

JESUS' DIVORCE

God lives by the same rules He expects us to live by. Did God marry Israel? **Isaiah 54:5**. Did God divorce her? Why? **Jeremiah 3:8**. Did God marry Judah? **Verse 14**. God married, and divorced, the nations of Israel. But that was an OC marriage! And before He could enter into a monogamous NC marriage, **He had to be free of all the bonds of the OC marriages! And to do that He had to die!**

Was John the “best man” of Jesus? **John 3:29**. Did Paul act as a “father of the bride”? **2 Corinthians 11:2**. Remember, the church is the bride; the church is composed of the called-out ones; Paul considered himself their father; preparing them to marry Christ; thus, Paul was father of the bride. When will Jesus marry His bride? **Revelation 19:7-9**.

What did the bride have to do to prepare for this wedding? **Revelation 7:14**. What did Jesus have to do to pay for His bride? **Hebrews 13:12**. Who was sanctified with that blood? **Revelation 1:5**. And that leads us back to the beginning, with **Ephesians 5**.

Paul said in **verse 32** that this was “a great mystery”, that these words concealed great understanding of a much deeper nature than simple family relations.

CHRIST COURTING THE CHURCH

Who is responsible for the marriage of Jesus? **Matthew 22:2**. Who calls people to Christ? **John 6:44-45**. What is the purpose for calling them to Christ? **John 17:11, 21-23**. After they're brought to Christ, what does He do? **Ephesians 5:27**. And what must the future bride do? **Revelation 19:7**. What was John's job? **Luke 1:17**.

Remember the story of Rebecca and Isaac in **Genesis 24**; there is a strong parallel here, where the Father (Abraham) sends a servant (angel) to a far country to choose a bride for His Son; the servant gives her jewels (**Isaiah 61:10**) and tokens of the covenant (**Exodus 12:13, 13:16**); **then she must choose if she will follow the servant to Jesus**. When she does, she returns to the Son (Isaac) and becomes His bride.

The Father is responsible for finding potential brides for His son; Jesus' goal is that the church becomes one with Him – in other words, that “*they shall become one flesh*”! (**Ephesians 5:31**). But in order for this to happen, **the bride must make HERSELF ready**. Ready for what? **Matthew 25:10**. How? **2 Timothy 2:19-21**.

Does Jesus want to be married to a bride that doesn't think like Him? **Proverbs 21:9, 19, Proverbs 17:1, Proverbs 12:4**. These proverbs tell us that Jesus will not marry an argumentative woman – a church that isn't completely in harmony with Him. Can you force a contentious woman to be peaceful? **Proverbs 27:15-16**. So Jesus must know BEFORE His eternal marriage whether or not His bride is going to be a source of strife, or “the crown of her husband”!

His goal is for us to be ONE with Him; so that we act and think as He does. Right now, we are NOT in perfect harmony with Him. If the church were married to Jesus as it was, it would be a contentious woman

and make His eternity miserable! But if we are not in harmony, who must change? **James 4:8**. Is Jesus likely to change? **Hebrews 13:8**.

So Jesus will not be changing. If we are not in harmony, then we have to change ourselves to match Him – or else marry someone else. And we may prefer that! A woman trapped in a vow to obey a man whom she doesn't trust, cannot respect, and will not love is just as bad off as a man married to an incompatible wife. Don't marry Jesus for His money!

We are not married to Christ. That will happen after the resurrection, at the wedding supper. But we are "espoused" to Christ; you might say we have an *option* on marriage, contingent upon our actions. It is our job today, as the bride making herself ready, to get to know our future Husband; and decide whether or not we CAN obey Him; and if we can, then it is time to learn to do so, and PROVE to Him that we are worthy.

We are to become one flesh with Him; a part of His metaphorical body. And in any body, there can only be ONE SPIRIT running things! (**Ephesians 4:4, 1 Corinthians 6:17**). If we try to bring our spirit into His body, and compete with His for dominance, well, we will be to Him as a "*continual dripping on a rainy day*" (**Proverbs 27:15**). So our spirit must learn to be SUBJECT to His; to let His spirit RULE over ours. To accept His judgment in matters we don't yet understand. **Any other relationship will not work.**

So Jesus has given us His spirit today; in a sense, we are "dating" Him. That spirit lives in us, and we are given a chance to get to know how it acts, and what it thinks. Most people find that spirit meddlesome and irritating, and quickly "dump" their suitor. But some few find in that spirit something noble and greater than themselves, something worth sacrificing their independence and autonomy.

Those people find in that character the promise of a better life; the possibility to become a better person through becoming more like that great Man. The idea of becoming one with Him is so appealing that it no longer seems like such a big deal to sacrifice your own lusts and carnal goals.

Every time that spirit in us is troubled by something we did and we repent and follow it, we are becoming a little more fit to be the bride of Christ. A little more fit to be with Him where He is (**John 14:3**). Until one day we agree on every key point and have fully humbled our will under His; on that day we will be worthy to be one with Him, and to receive the divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**).

This is the mystery Paul did not think the Ephesians capable of understanding. And in turn, this mystery helps to explain in more detail what those who would be married should consider about each other. Can you "obey your husband, as you would obey the Lord"? You don't have to – no one is forcing you to make that vow. But if you make it, you MUST keep it. So can you? Is he enough of a man to be worthy of you?

To the men, does your girlfriend disagree with you about everything you say? Is every suggestion met with defiance and rebellion? **Marriage will not change that.** It will only make it worse. You are entrusted by God with the responsibility to rule your house. You must first be FIT to rule your house; but once fit, you must only add to your house those who are willing to abide by your rule.

God will look to you for payment for their sins whether they are rebellious against you or not **because He left you in charge.** So it's your job to make sure that you don't become master of more than you can handle (**James 3:1**). And if you can't do that, then follow Paul's advice and stay single; better to dwell in a tent in the desert than with an angry, bitter woman you aren't man enough to manage (**Proverbs 21:19**).

Most women today would not submit themselves to you; no surprise, for they won't submit themselves to God Himself (**Romans 10:3**). On the other hand, most men today, not having submitted themselves to the Lord, are not worthy of a woman's trust and obedience. That's why God has to be involved in this process for it to have any hope of working (**Proverbs 18:22**).

HOW TO OBEY

One of the more severe problems in most marriages is that the woman thinks she knows better than her husband what is right and wrong. And perhaps she does. Certainly much of the time she is right. **But it isn't her decision to make.** He will be the one who has to answer to God for his failures, not her; she is gleefully free of responsibility *if she does her job right*.

If her husband makes a foolish decision, she should certainly tell him so; but if he hears her objection and disagrees, it is his prerogative to make that decision anyway. And her job to help him make it work out. Cheerfully. If she does that, she is blameless in the sight of God and man. On the other hand, if she thinks it's a bad idea and won't work – and does everything she can to see to it that it *doesn't* work – she is not blameless, or a good wife.

It's hard for anyone to humble themselves under someone else's rule. Even under God's rule. So it is hard for women to humble themselves, even if their husbands happen to be right most of the time. But that is why you should date. And talk. And understand the rules before marriage. If you can't obey your husband whom you can see, how can you obey God whom you cannot see? (inspired by **1 John 4:20**).

But this isn't just about women. The same goes for being a plumber's helper or a vice-president or a first officer on a ship or a second-born son. A long list of scriptures come to mind, all of which you probably know – like **James 4:10, Job 22:29, Matthew 23:12, 1 Peter 5:5-6**, and so on. The point is, take good care of the authority God has given you; be obedient to those in authority over you; and God will put you in authority over more people and give your enemies to be your servants (**Mark 12:36, Revelation 3:9**, etc.).

The best single example of how to be under authority, and a fitting example to close this lesson, is how Jesus showed obedience to His Father in **John 5:30** and **John 6:38**. Jesus was not here to do His own will. He had opinions! He had ideas of His own! And they were not always the same as His Father's opinions, as you can see in **Matthew 26:39-43**.

But He set those opinions aside and sought His FATHER'S will instead of His own! He expressed His opinions to His Father, **but then set them aside to obey His Father's judgment!** Whether as a wife, a son, a servant, a citizen, or an employee, **this is how you honor those in authority over you.**

This is how you fulfill your role and become a GOOD wife, a GOOD employee, a GOOD son; you seek not your own will, but the will of the person who sent you. As always you cannot do this if his will is do to evil; no authority derived from God can order you contrary to God; so you cannot follow a husband into unrighteousness any more than you can follow a preacher into unrighteousness.

But when you can obey them without harming others, you should obey them as if your husband/master/king/elder/father were... whom? **Colossians 3:18-25**. Even if that person isn't righteous or kind to you? **1 Peter 2:18**. Even to husbands who aren't in the church? **1 Peter 3:1-6**.

Both Adam and Eve ate the fruit, and BOTH of their eyes were opened to decide good and evil for themselves. Both must satisfy their own consciences, and no man has the authority to order you contrary to your conscience. But a husband's authority DOES cover matters like where to live, who should work, and at what; what needs to be bought and done around the house; and so on.

If your husband is a brute, then God is able either to make him more sensitive (**Proverbs 16:7**), or if he's truly a beast, God is able to make him have an "accident" (**1 Samuel 25:3-42**). That whole story is educational, particularly to women who want to know how they can be righteous when saddled with an evil husband. God extracted her from this unpleasant situation honorably because she obeyed Him in spite of her wicked husband. And yet honored her vows to her husband at the same time.

On the other hand, in **Acts 5:1-11**, Ananias and Sapphira were BOTH killed. Why? **Verse 9**. Sapphira agreed with her husband to lie about the money, and thus she was equally culpable with him and shared his fate! She should have refused to follow his sinful idea, and then she would have been blameless.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

All authority comes from the same source. Your husband was given authority over you by God Himself. **Rebelling against that authority is rebelling against God!** Obeying it, but only half-heartedly while grumbling about it is obeying God half-heartedly and grumbling at Him! When Israel complained about Moses, they were really complaining at God (**Exodus 16:2, 7-9**). And God hears!

Are all of us are under some authority; servants and masters alike? **Colossians 4:1**. And are we all tasked to obey our rulers? **Hebrews 13:17**. And is our job not only to *obey*, but to actively to *seek to please* our masters, whomever they may be? **Titus 2:9, 1 Timothy 6:1-2**. Who disagrees with this idea? **Verses 3-5**.

As always, where people will govern themselves, no government is necessary. Even when they won't, it should never be necessary to be heavy-handed with authority (**Ephesians 6:8-9**). But evil, or unconverted, or simply inexperienced rulers will do the job badly. But that fact does not take away their authority. Satan himself still has authority, despite his rebellion (**Jude 1:8-10**).

But to those of you employed by, married to, or citizens of wicked rulers... you have recourse. Does God hear the cries of abused servants? **James 5:4**. Do those wicked masters have a higher authority that will be angry over their abuse of His authority? **Ecclesiastes 5:8**. On the other hand, if you take it upon yourself to rebel, then God will not need to deliver you (**1 Peter 2:17-23**).

I continually refer to all types of authority/obedience because as you learned in the last several lessons, there is no difference between any type of authority. It all follows the same rules, the same patterns, whether it's a home, a church, a nation, a land baron, or an office. There is no difference.

Understand how to be an employee, and you will know how to be a good wife. Understand how to be a husband, and you will understand how to be a king. Understand how to be a son, and you will be a great employee.

Paul said, "*so ought men to love their wives as **their own bodies**. He that loveth his wife **loveth himself**. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church*" (**Ephesians 5:28**).

A proper husband understands his wife's position, and sympathizes with her needs, because he himself is a part of the bride of Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:3**). And so it is easy for him to treat her as he would like to be treated, based on the underlying principle of the entire Bible... "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: **for this is the law and the prophets***" (**Matthew 7:12**).

When you truly understand it, all of reality, every law of God, every principle, every judgment – it all is explained in those few words.

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

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Nathaniel Burson
10758 Hwy 155 South
Big Sandy, TX 75755

Questions@TheSimpleAnswers.com

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