

The Mystery in Marriage
Pastor Gary Post - February 2, 2025

I. God's View of Marriage as Mystery (Ephesians 5:15-33)

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."

II. The Discouraging View of Marriage in Today's Culture

A. 81% of Silent Gen married 53% for GenX, 44% Millennials

B. Messages on Marriage in Our Culture: Brad Wilcox

"The problem is, there is zero advantage to marriage in the Western world for a man," said Tate. There is zero statistical advantage. If you use your mind, if you use your head instead of your heart, and you look at the advantages to getting married, there are absolutely none." Andrew Tate.

"[Enjoys] a lifestyle and financial freedoms that come with being a single, child-free woman," including splitting her time between high-end properties in New York City and the Jersey Shore and taking "frequent travel for pleasure as well as work." Bloomberg Journalist Molly Smith

"The message the article conveys to women is clear and surprisingly congruent with Andrew Tate's message to men (minus the misogyny): work, money, freedom, and the unencumbered life are the recipe for a meaningful and happy life." Brad Wilcox, Get Married, p. 7.

C. Cultural Perception versus Reality Regarding Marriage

"One recent poll found that only 32 percent of young adults ages eighteen through forty think that marriage is essential to living a fulfilling life, compared to 64 percent who think education and 75 percent who think making a good living is crucial to fulfillment." Brad Wilcox, Get Married

- **Money:** In 2020, married mothers ages 18 to 55 had a median family income of \$108,000, compared to \$41,000 for childless single women"
- **Retirement:** Married mothers in their fifties have \$322,000 in median assets, compared to \$100,000 for their single, childless peers.
- **Men in retirement?** Stably married men at retirement have ten times more assets than their divorced or never-married male peers."
- **Happiness:** 60 percent of married mothers ages 18-55 reported that their lives were meaningful "most" or "all of" the time. Only 36 percent of single, childless women said their lives were that meaningful."
- **Satisfied:** 75 percent of married mothers 18-55 reported in 2022 that they were either "completely" or "somewhat" satisfied with their lives, compared to only 54 percent of single, childless women. Men were twice as likely to be happy as their unmarried peers.

D. Wilcox's conclusion based on social science research

"For adults, the data tell us that living for ourselves or our jobs (our own happiness and success) is not very likely to bring us to a destination filled with meaning and happiness—whether we are men or women. But giving ourselves to others—especially spouses and families—is the path most likely to lead to a meaningful and generally happy life for most of us." Brad Wilcox, Get Married, p. 9

III. God Performs the First Marriage Ceremony at Creation

A. Marriage was God's design before the beginning of time

B. At creation, God first noticed that Adam needed a partner:

"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for (suitable, corresponding to) him." (Genesis 2:18)

C. Three lessons from God's diagnosis about Adam's lonely state

1. God has wired men and women for relationship
2. God designed men and women to complement each other
3. Marriage for men and women. No other options.

D. God created woman & conducted the first wedding (Gen 2:20-25)

E. God's Design for Marriage points ahead to Christ and his Church

1. Paul quotes Genesis 2:18 and links it to the "mystery"

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." Eph. 5:31-32

2. Paul challenges us as husbands to love like Christ did

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

3. Husbands and wives are to meet the needs of our partner

"However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." Ephesians 5:33 ESV

IV. Why is Marriage So Difficult Sometimes?

A. Bad News: You married a sinner. So did your spouse.

"Here is the point: you both bring something into your marriage that is destructive to what a marriage needs and must do. That thing is called sin. Most of the troubles we face in marriage are not intentional or personal. In most marriage situations, you do not face difficulty because your spouse intentionally did something to make your life difficult. Yes, in moments of anger that may happen. But most often, what is really happening is that your life is being affected by the sin, weakness, and failure of the person you are living with."

Paul Tripp, Marriage, p. 24

B. Then, there are Attitudes, Expectations and Behaviors

C. Especially destructive behavior: Pornography

"While the twenty-first century Church faces many threats to its spiritual strength and purity, one of the most damaging dangers is the proliferation of pornography, the magnitude of the reach never before recorded in human history." Sam Black, The Healing Church, p. 7.

V. Marriage as a Reflection of Christ's Love, Grace, and Forgiveness

A. Happiness or Holiness? Marriage as Spiritual Transformation

"What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?"

Gary Thomas, Sacred Marriage

B. Becoming God's Instrument for Transformation in Your Marriage

"If you minimize the heart struggle that both of you have carried into your marriage, here's what will happen: you will tend to turn moments of ministry into moments of anger. When your ears hear and your eyes see the sin, weakness, or failure of your husband or wife, it is never an accident; it is always grace. God loves your spouse, and he is committed to transforming him or her by his grace, and he has chosen you to be one of his regular tools of change. So, he will cause you to see, hear, and experience your spouse's need for change so that you can be an agent of his rescue."

Paul Tripp, Marriage, p. 24

C. Our Christlikeness in Our Marriage and in the World

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Colossians 3:12-14

D. Six Commitments to Make Our Marriages Reflect Christ's Love, Grace, and Forgiveness (from Paul Tripp in Marriage)

1. We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness.

- Keep short accounts and deal with issues as they arise.
- When we have wronged our partner, we quickly confess it and ask forgiveness.
- When we are wronged, we lovingly confront our partner with grace and forgiveness.

2. We will make growth and change our daily agenda.

- Success in marriage is not automatic-requires work
 - Effective marriages require learning new skills
 - We will plan to grow and learn together
3. We will work together to build a sturdy bond of trust.
 - “Trust is being so convinced that you can rely on the integrity, strength, character, and faithfulness of another that you are willing to place yourself in his or her care.” Paul Tripp, Marriage,
 - We plan together and then we do what we say we will do.
 4. We will commit to building a relationship of love.
 - We recognize that our loving and valuing words and actions are vital to feeling loved in our relationship.
 - We will be deliberate to speak and act in ways that make our partner feel loved and valued in our marriage
 5. We will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace.
 - We recognize that God wired us each uniquely and differently to accomplish his purposes in our marriage.
 - We appreciate the strengths each of us brings to marriage
 6. We will work to protect our marriage.
 - We recognize that our friendship is at the core of our marriage, and we will spend time to cultivate it.
 - We spend regular time in conversation each day and set aside time every week or two for extended time together.
 - We establish mutually agreed upon boundaries for what we look at, where we go, how we relate to friends and co-workers of the opposite gender.
 - “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23 NIV

Recommended Reading

- Marriage: Six Gospel Commitments Every Couple Needs to Make - Paul Tripp
- Get Married: Why Americans Must Defy the Elites, Forge Strong Families, and Save Civilization by Brad Wilcox
- Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages by Shaunti Feldhahn
- The Healing Church: What Churches Get Wrong About Pornography & How to Fix It by Sam Black
- Treating Pornography Addiction by Kevin Skinner
- Hope After Betrayal by Meg Wilson
- Clean: A Proven Plan for Men Committed to Sexual Integrity
- Treating Trauma from Sexual Betrayal by Kevin Skinner
- No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Addiction by Marnie Ferree
- Good Pictures Bad Pictures (for parents) by Kristen Jenson