

# Till Death Do Us Part What You Need to Know to Make Marriage Last

Genesis 2; Mark 10

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## PATH

Is a lifetime commitment to a spouse even *reasonable*? Does permanence have to become a goal if it means a couple just has to grin and bear it? What if a marriage hinders one's personal growth and self-fulfillment? Pastor Skip makes a case not just for *getting* married but also for *staying* married. He goes back to the divine architect's original prototype to understand what He had in mind when coming up with this idea of marriage:

I. Understand What Marriage *Is*  
(Genesis 2:24)

II. Understand What Marriage *Does*  
(Genesis 2:25)

III. Understand What Marriage *Needs*  
(Mark 10:9)

## POINTS

### Understand What Marriage *Is*

- Why is it people begin a relationship with good intentions but so many marriages end miserably? Maybe we don't take our vows seriously: "Until death do us part... so long as you both shall live."
- The failure rate of marriage is high: one divorce every thirty-six seconds; 2,400 divorces per day; 16,800 every week. The average marriage that ends in divorce lasts eight years.<sup>i</sup> A *Washington Post* article explored whether it's more natural for people to cheat than be monogamous.<sup>ii</sup> Furthermore, a Pew Research article said people think marriage is "obsolete."<sup>iii</sup>
- What makes marriage work? Two determined people before God.
- Think of this: Marriage is the only game where both people can win.
- We need to understand what marriage is. In a poetic couplet in Genesis 2, Adam stated in rhythmic lines that he is one with his wife. It's like he was saying, "Wow! This is one who corresponds to me, who fulfills and completes me!"
- John Calvin said Adam reflected on Eve as his "suitable companion...in whom I behold...another self." In Eve, Adam saw his perfect counterpart, something he lacked.
- Three things are important for marriage: leaving, cleaving, and weaving (see Genesis 2:24):
  - Leaving: One must leave family, severing one relationship to solidify another. *Leaving* does not mean abandon; it means to cut the cord of dependence. A marriage's first loyalty is between husband and wife.
  - Cleaving: A man and a woman are joined together. *Joined* is a deep and determined level of permanence. That's what *cleaving* means—to *cling to*, to *be stuck to*. Marriage is an indissoluble union. But some people have added the back door that God never intended:

divorce. Know this: a separation in marriage will always produce damage.

- Weaving: "And they shall become one flesh." *Become* means a process that cultivates unity. The basic level is a physical union, producing a child. There is also a spiritual union. And there is a material union, partnership in every area of life. Wayne Mack said, "There are no locked doors or secret hiding places." One translation even calls *weaving* "welding together," making the bond inseparable. Marriage is not held together by chains but tiny threads, woven together over a lifetime.

### Understand What Marriage *Does*

- Marriage leads to intimacy: Adam and Eve were "naked...and were not ashamed." *Naked* means to *lay bare*, pointing to a deep connection, an emotion, spiritual, and physical union.
- What we really long for is an unguarded relationship, a transparent sharing of our lives.
- Marriage is infinitely rewarding at its best or unspeakably repressive at its worst.
- In Genesis 3, marriage goes from the pinnacle to the pit because of sin. We must protect our marriages.

### Understand What Marriage *Needs*

- The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with a question about divorce. He answered that Moses permitted divorce because of the people's hardheartedness, not because God thought it was acceptable. Jesus reminded them that "from the beginning of creation, God 'made them male and female'... They are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:6, 8-9).
- Marriage is more than a piece of paper. In Mark 10, Jesus linked this human experience with a divine covenant. The covenant works on two levels: between

man and woman, and between the couple and God. God takes that human commitment and brings the relationship to a higher level: a covenant.

- A covenant is a holy agreement before God, committing two or more parties to perform certain actions.
- To honor the marriage covenant, Jesus said that marriage must first be regarded as holy. In other words, marriage is a sacred covenant before God and human witnesses. It's as the Common Book of Prayer states, "Holy matrimony...in the sight of God."
- Marriage needs to be guarded. Jesus said not to let anyone separate the marriage union. Don't let parents, children, friends, work, or hobbies bring a division in marriage. Marriage reprioritizes everything, and it divorces us from our own self-love, challenging each spouse to love the other like Jesus loves the church.
- Pastor Skip offered an acronym to help husband and wife make their marriage LAST:
  - **Laughter.** Don't forget to bring fun into the relationship. Couples who laugh are couples who last.
  - **Absolve.** Learn to forgive, and then forgive repeatedly. Marriage is a union of two sinners and should therefore be a union of two forgivers.
  - **Study.** Discover each other. Observe and learn about the other person. Be the expert on how to best love your spouse. Your job is not to change your spouse, but to adjust. Peter said, "Dwell with [your wife] with understanding" (1 Peter 3:7).
  - **Time.** Spend time with each other. Keep regular date nights. Cultivate common interests. Find something you can do together, whether a hobby or ministry.
- Marriage may be hard, but the better comes after the worse. Hang in there, and stay the course.

## PRACTICE

**Connect Up:** Why do you think God invented marriage? As Pastor Skip noted, there is a physical, spiritual, and material union. Can you think of other reasons (a picture of love, etc.)? How does a good and godly marriage reflect the Lord?

**Connect In:** As Pastor Skip said, marriage within the church is attacked, with people and evil wanting to tear it apart. Share stories of how you pursue the four areas in the acronym LAST: laughter, absolve, study, and time.

**Connect Out:** What advice would you give someone whose marriage is falling apart? Furthermore, what advice would you give to someone whose parents, children, family, or hobbies are tearing a marriage apart? Though each area needs a specific answer, is there one unifying answer? To put it in Skip's words, what is at the heart of what is tearing you apart?

<sup>i</sup> Hampton Roads Legal Services, "What Are The Statistics On Divorce In America?" <https://www.hamptonroadslegal.com/faqs/facts-on-divorce-in-america.cfm>, accessed 9/9/18.

<sup>ii</sup> Rachel Feltman, "Is cheating more 'natural' for humans than staying monogamous? It's complicated." August 20, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2015/08/20/is-cheating-more-natural-for-humans-than-staying-monogamous-its-complicated/?utm\\_term=.b48f93363a2b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2015/08/20/is-cheating-more-natural-for-humans-than-staying-monogamous-its-complicated/?utm_term=.b48f93363a2b), accessed 9/10/18.

<sup>iii</sup> Russell Heimlich, "Marriage Is Obsolete," January 6, 2011, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2011/01/06/marriage-is-obsolete>, accessed 9/9/18.