

Designed in Heaven, Built on Earth: Marriage Vows, Ows, and Wows
Crossroads Christian Fellowship Marriage Retreat
Mark Odell, PhD, & Kelye Odell, MEd
Friday, September 20, and Saturday, September 21, 2019

Introduction

This workshop will examine God's design and intent for marriage, how we as His people can cooperate with and participate in His mercy and grace through the great gift and crucible of marriage, and develop practical ways to grow in intimacy with our one-flesh partners.

This is a risky workshop in that honesty is required to gain anything of value, but honesty will be risky and painful at times. We need to be honest with ourselves, and we need to be honest with our spouses. If you do NOT feel like you can be truly transparent with your spouse, we suggest you take what you can of value from our weekend, and consider getting some help.

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Part 1 Designed in Heaven: God's Design for Marriage

How does God see marriage (since He designed it)?

- the first human institution God created
- an improvement over even His own perfect relationship with the individual
- the term "one flesh" is introduced at the outset as how God wants marriage to be understood; this is covenantal language

1) A covenantal relationship unlike any other human bond

What's a covenant? a solemn and powerful binding pledge between two parties, with the emphasis being for the benefit the other

A bond which is ongoing and an indissoluble tie that requires a mutual intertwining or organizing of each person's life around the other

Covenants between people:

- equal participants who agree *voluntarily to a bilateral* relationship
- confer mutual obligations and interdependent roles that could not necessarily exist independently
- creates a unique and separate third entity that is larger than the sum total of the two participants individually
- creates all its attached elements
- both proscriptive and prescriptive, things that are prohibited and things that are required
- biblical covenants were not voided trivially; they included severe, even fatal penalties

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2) God's purposes for marriage:

- subduing and populating the earth with children raised to seek and serve the Lord

- performing a God-honoring vocation in complementary roles within and outside of the family—pursuing, seeking, building the Kingdom of God

- the development of holiness and Christ-like character through sacrificial ministry to one's spouse first, children second, and then the larger community

- communication to the world of the Lord's Trinitarian unity, His relationship with His people, and His personal pursuit of us as individuals among His people

- a perfecting of human companionship with devoted intimacy and passion

Conclusion:

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Part 2 Built on Earth

Before the Fall...

Limerance

But then....it goes sideways: Sin is the central problem of creation

Specifically, with marriage:

The Fall and the Curse (Gen. 3)

Curse produces power struggles between husband and wife; the default setting and it continues to wreak its havoc today

Question: To what degree has American Culture colored our view of normal and healthy? Do our beliefs and expectations about marriage, family, and life in general reflect more of a Biblical perspective or a cultural, worldly perspective?

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What do we know about Christian marriages?

Cultural contrast—a view fully formed directly and indirectly out of the curse:

- personal freedom, pleasure, and fulfillment the goal of life, and it rejects sexual constraints

- marriage is increasingly malleable and usually unnecessary

- a personal, private, customizable, contractual arrangement intended to produce feelings of emotional satisfaction

- little attention is paid to our own “candidacy” as a relationship participant

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Part 3 Vows, Ows and Wows

A) Vows

Marriage is not primarily a private relationship or arrangement, supposed to involve more than just the two people....because they NEED it, just as they are needed by the witnesses, etc.

Goes back to the goal: One fleshness

What are we committing to when we marry?

Marriage is an exceptionally opportune context for sanctification to be accomplished—do we “die” to ourselves with regularity to bless and honor our spouses?

B) Ows and Wows

- the two possible outcomes of our responses to the one-flesh covenants we've entered into

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Critical elements that lead to one or the other:

1) Friendship

2) Conflict Management that is not destructive (striving against the curse)

Success leads to "Blissful Unself-Consciousness"

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Husbands' Roles and Responsibilities—The Servant Leader

Two passages: Eph. 5: 23-30, I Pet. 3:7

Contrast: Lording Leader vs. Servant Leader

1) Decision-making

2) Understanding wife's needs

3) Conflict

4) Strengths and weaknesses

5) Power

6) Household chores

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Woman's Real Needs

1) Companionship

2) Security

3) Significance

Wives' Roles and Responsibilities—The Responder Helper

Titus 2:1-5

1) train

2) love their husbands

Areas of Responsibility to Love Husbands Well

1) Identity

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2) Insecurity

3) Performance

How to love your husband

1) Admiration

2) Support

work

public

emotional/relational side

3) Companionship

4) Physical responsiveness

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C) Turning Ows into Wows—Creating Blissful Unself-Consciousness

1) Living out Biblical roles and responsibilities

2) Godly and Effective Communication

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3) Building Good Relational Habits: Creating an Emotionally Positive Context

4) Doing Conflict Well (meaning Not Destructively)