

BIBLICAL *Marriage* ENRICHMENT CLASS

1 | it's not about marriage, it's about God

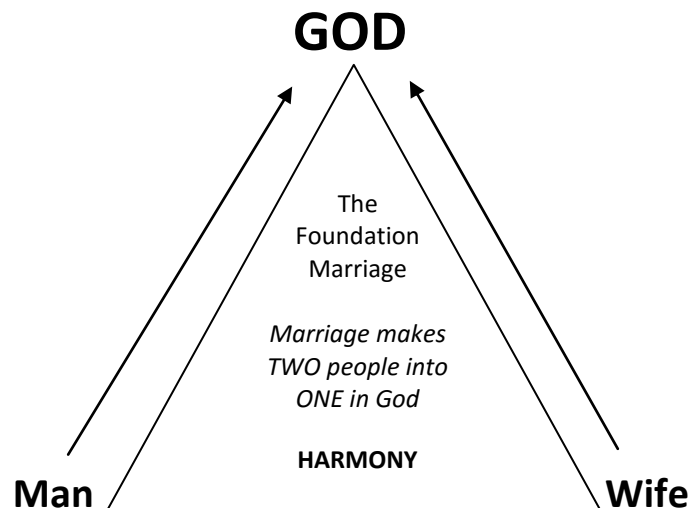
But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be ministered unto you.

MATTHEW 6:33, 1599 GENEVA BIBLE

What you believe about God will be demonstrated in your family and in your community. If a culture rejects God, very soon the institutions that He has ordered will disintegrate, and the order of society will crumble. This is occurring at this time in our day. Two parent families comprise only 27% of the population of families in the United States. How many couples do you know that are growing old together?

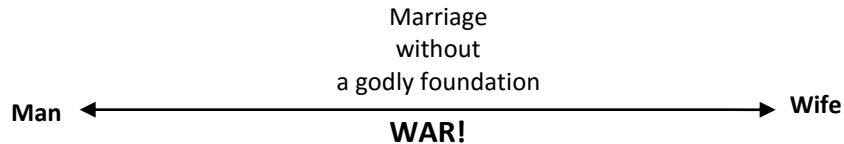
Marriage is often seen as a competition. It is often viewed as a *contract*. In today's culture the expectation of married people is that each would do his or her part. It's a 50% / 50% arrangement. But this is an immature view of marriage. This view of marriage is a recipe for battle.

Marriage without God is just asking for a tug of war with an emphasis on the WAR! Only as husband and wife are looking to God can they have the same vision for life and arrive at the unity and harmony God intended. Consider the following helpful illustration.



Take Your Eyes Off Your Marriage

Only as both husband and wife get their eyes off each other and focus on their Creator and His purpose for their lives can they actually live in harmony. Without God at the center of our lives, all we can expect is a battle of our own wills (as this illustration demonstrates).



None of us was made to be independent, fighting for our own way. That turns everything toxic and makes life difficult for ourselves and others. God created us to live in harmony with Him. Without that life of harmony with Him we cannot even be truly happy and satisfied in our inner lives, and so it makes it impossible to live in harmony with others, especially in a marriage relationship.

Marriage is a Covenant

Marriage is actually not a contract that is 50-50, but a covenant with God. Your Savior is Jesus. Jesus says in Matthew 19:6, "Therefore what God has joined, let no man separate." is a **covenant**, not a **contract**.

Marriage is designed to help grow us into selfless people. Without a daily walk with our Creator through His Son Jesus Christ, we become very selfish people. God created us not to rule our own lives and make our own decisions, but to be His servants and to carry out His will.

Marriage is a Picture of the Greatest Love Story

In fact, God has designed marriage to be a picture of His love for you and me. Marriage is a picture of the greatest love story ever told. There are two books in the Bible that illustrate this story for us.

The **Song of Solomon** is a true love story about King Solomon and how he pursues his wife, a poor farm girl. In this romantic poem, this rich king pursuing this poverty stricken maiden is a beautiful picture of how God the Father sends his Son to pursue a Bride. Jesus loves His poor, sinful Bride. He takes us in as His Bride, and gives us His riches.

In the **Old Testament book of Hosea**, we find another breathtaking illustration of God's love for us. Hosea is a prophet, and he is told to marry a girl (named Gomer) who would become unfaithful. She becomes so immoral that she ends up in the ancient "slave market" where human slaves are bought and sold. By this time she's all used up, but Hosea buys her back, not to be his slave, but to be his wife. So it is with our Lord Jesus Christ. He purchases us with His own blood.

From these love stories we see that God is generous. God is selfless. God is kind. God is good. God loves. God sacrifices. So a husband should sacrifice and lay down his life for his wife, as a reflection of God's love. Consider two very well known verses.

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

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

Jesus put it another way. He said, “But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be ministered unto you” (Matthew 6:33). As we minister and sacrifice of ourselves for God’s Kingdom, He takes care of the rest. In other words, the very best way to work on our most important relationships is by getting our eyes off each other and on to our relationship with God.

Marriage: Good Idea or God’s Idea?¹

Many who think about marriage and family wonder if the idea came from the jungle story, “Me Tarzan, you Jane; come with me to live in my tree house.” Others may think about “The Flintstones” and imagine a man and a woman from a communal group in a cave deciding to move to their own cave together. They came up with a good idea, called it marriage and when children came along, called it family.

Genesis, written about 3500 years ago, makes it very clear to us that marriage was God’s good idea, however. God designed and defined marriage when He brought Eve to Adam (Gen 2:24). We see this model in a traditional church wedding where the bride is escorted down the aisle of a church by her father and brought to her groom. That wedding is made legal by our government through a marriage license, but the union is from God.

It was God’s design that a married man and woman become “one flesh” and through sexual intimacy to fulfill God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” (Gen 1:27-28). Adam and Eve’s obedience led to the births of Cain, Abel, Seth and many other sons and daughters (Genesis 4:1-2;5:1-5). This marriage union resulted in a combination of parents (one father and one mother) and their children that God called a family.

If a married couple hopes to find the joy and happiness that God intended, each must apply the Scriptural principles God gave to fulfill His design for unity and intimacy. When Jesus talked about family He described the wise man as the one who built his house upon the Rock. This wise man was the one who took the truths of the Bible and obeyed them. When the principles of the Word of God guide the marriage, families are blessed because they have chosen a solid foundation to build upon. When the winds and floods of life come against them they successfully stand together (Mt 7:24-25).

There is a plethora of opinions in our world today about how to build a happy marriage. Some redefine marriage far from God’s original design. God made it very clear that unless we let Him do the building, we labor in vain to build a family on man’s ideas (Ps 127). In today’s world with about 50% of marriages ending in divorce, we need to know God’s blueprint and let Him be the master builder to have a happy marriage committed to a covenant of companionship.

A commitment is what a man and a woman say as they exchange their vows before God and witnesses in the wedding ceremony, “for as long as we both shall live” (1Cor 7:39). They vow “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health.” This is a permanent relationship no matter what may come. They are committed to leave their parents, to hold fast to

¹ The rest of this chapter is taken from Dr. Ron Allchin’s article “Marriage: a Good Idea or God’s Idea?” <http://www.biblicalcounselingcenter.org/marriage-gods-good-idea/>

each other and to become one unit. Marriage is the only place where one plus one equals one (Gen 2:23-25).

The covenant of marriage in Scripture is a legal, binding agreement that cannot be broken. Traditional wedding vows bind a man and a woman to mutual obligations that each must fulfill, even in the face of difficulty. Covenant is the same word that describes God's contract with His people, the most comprehensive concept to define one's relationship with God. He made this promise, "I will be their God, and they will be my people (Jer. 31:33). Just as God keeps His covenant promises to His people, He expects the husband and wife to keep their covenant promise to each other (Pro. 2:17; Mal. 2:14). He gave specific roles in this covenant relationship, commanding the husband to love his wife and the wife to respect her husband (Eph. 5:33).

Marriage is a commitment to a covenant of companionship. God's reason for forming Eve was so that Adam wouldn't be alone; he needed a companion (Gen. 2: 20-22). As Adam and Eve spent time together they grew in companionship both vertically with God and horizontally with each other, growing in many exciting spheres as a model for us to follow for meaningful and lasting companionship in marriage. As they interacted intimately with each other they grew in spiritual, social, intellectual, emotional and physical companionship (Gen. 1-3).

When one or more of these primary spheres of companionship is neglected, problems arise in a marriage. The good news is that a couple can find a solution in God's Word for every issue that creates conflict (1 Cor. 10:13). Whether communication problems, financial struggles, sexual discord, parental disagreements or any other differences a couple may have, solutions can be found in God's Word to build the harmony and oneness that God desires in marriage.²


QUESTIONS

1. Which diagram more describes your marriage?
2. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to renew your covenant of marriage with God and with your spouse?
3. Are you committed to following Jesus Christ personally and in your marriage?

HOMEWORK

1. Read chapter 2, "How to Know You Belong to God." Write down two or three questions that came to mind while you were reading chapter
2. Be ready to discuss chapter 2 in class next week and why regeneration is the most important thing in marriage.
3. If you are able, come ready with a 1 or 2 minute testimony of how knowing the Lord changes everything in marriage.

² From "Good Idea or God's Idea?" by Dr Ronald Allchin of the Biblical Counseling Center of Arlington Heights.



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2 | how to know you belong to God

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

EPHESIANS 2:10

Christians are God's workmanship, literally His masterpiece. God's fingerprints are all over His children. One of the most important books in the Bible defending the need for every Christian to display a life transformed by God's touch is the book of First John.

This is a letter written by the Apostle John to churches who were confused about what makes a person a Christian, or "born again." John's encouragement in the book is that people can know during their lives that they truly are God's child and that they will be accepted by Him on the day when we see Him face to face.

The Family Identity

Just as a mother and father share their identity and likeness with their children, so God's children reflect His likeness. Many people say that they are truly God's children, but if a person is born into God's family, he or she will display more than words, but a likeness and transformation of life.

St. John writes the letter of 1 John to demonstrate that there is an amazing transformation that occurs in the life of all of God's precious children. He tells us we can know that we are God's children through at least eleven of these marks or "fingerprints" of God in every believer's life (1 Jn. 5:13).



God's Fingerprints on His Children

(All verses from the ESV)

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

Fingerprint 1: **Fellowship with God**

A Christian finds deep joy in the intimate fellowship of the Lord.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 1:3b-4: “...indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.”

Fingerprint 2: **Carefulness toward sin**

A Christian has a *hatred* for sin.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 1:6, “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”

Fingerprint 3: **Obedience from the Heart**

A Christian practices righteousness as a lifestyle.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 2:3, “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.”

Fingerprint 4: **Separation from the World**

The Christian is at war with this present world. He is not at home on this earth.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Fingerprint 5: **Boldness for Christ**

A Christian openly confesses the Person and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 2:23, “No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”

Fingerprint 6: **Eagerness for Christ's Return**

A Christian eagerly awaits Christ's return.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 3:2, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is".

Fingerprint 7: **Rejection by the World**

Every Christian should expect that his new pattern of life will be rejected in some way by the world.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 3:13, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you."

Fingerprint 8: **A Deep Love for Other Christians**

A Christian has a deep affection for other saints, and loves to fellowship in the local church.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."

Fingerprint 9: **Prayerfulness**

A Christian experiences answered prayer.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 3:22, "...whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him".

Fingerprint 10: **Discernment**

A Christian has the spiritual insight to discern between truth and error.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 4:6, "We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

Fingerprint 11: **Assurance by the Holy Spirit**

A Christian experiences the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse to Memorize:

1 John 4:13, "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit".

These Fingerprints Don't Save Us

These marks of God in our life do not make us God's children, they show that we are God's children.

The children of a mom and dad did nothing to gain the family likeness. Being "born" is a gift. And being "born again" into God's family is a gift from God.

St. Paul explains this in Titus 2:4-7, "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

He tells us in Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

What if I'm Not Sure?

Often in life we are on a sort of "hamster wheel" that is the same thing every day with very little purpose. One day our we will have no more energy left, and the hamster wheel will come to an end. As you know, none of us were meant to live merely for the "hamster wheel." We were made for more than this. If we are asleep to this greater purpose, we need to be awakened.

Again, St. Paul tells us how this happens in Ephesians 2:1-7, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

How does one who is "dead in sins" become "alive in Christ"? How does one who has strayed from the Lord come back to Him or become a member of His family?

Remember, Salvation is a Love Story

Before you and your spouse can have love to give to one another, you need to first receive the fullness of God's love. God's love is a gift that you need to receive. Jesus told us that in order to receive His gift of salvation, we need to "repent" of ignoring God in our sins and "believe" that God sent His Son to die for our sins (Mark 1:15).

Christ Died For You

“God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8), but this does not mean He lowers His standard of perfect holiness. God has provided a way to satisfy His holy nature and His righteous wrath against our sin. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). Jesus Christ, God’s perfect Son, was crucified in your place and paid the penalty of eternal hell for you, if you will believe. Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6).

Jesus Gives Us His Perfect Record

God “made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). When you believe that Jesus died for your sins and in your place, Jesus exchanges your record of sin with His perfect record of righteousness. You would then have a perfect record for the Day of Judgment.

God Will Make You New!

When you believe in Christ, God also promises to transform you! He says, “...from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes” (Eze. 36:25-27). All who are part of God’s kingdom have been born again. Jesus said, “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3).

How to Repent

Repenting to God does not mean we have to punish ourselves for our sin. To repent literally means “to have a new perspective.” If you are broken because of your sin and turn to Jesus for mercy, and He will save you. Repent and turn to Him. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (Jms. 4:9-10). Say to God, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...” (Psa. 51:4). “Jesus says, “I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

Trust in Christ

Jesus says: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.” (Jn. 3:36). “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16).

Believe that Jesus gave His precious life’s blood *for you*. To all human beings, “the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...” (Heb. 3:7-8).

St. John says: “But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn. 1:12-13). “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so

that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). “And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price” (Rev. 22:17).

QUESTIONS

1. Based on the “fingerprints” of God listed in the book of 1 John, where are you in your relationship with Jesus?

- Is God calling you?
- Have you been listening to Him?
- Are you ready commit your life to Jesus?

HOMEWORK

2. If you’ve already written out your testimony, read it once this week. If you have not written your testimony, write it out or ask one of the pastors or elders to help you.