

Model Marriage

Learn God's Pattern for Healthy Relationships

When looking at passages like Matt. 5:31-32, Matt. 19:1-9, or 1 Corinthians 7:11-12, why did God put the rules in place regarding adultery and divorce in the way he did? God created the institution of marriage from the beginning with Adam and Eve. He designed it in the most perfect way possible and said that it was good. Is there something about God's design for marriage and the associated rules for ending a marriage that go deeper than what we see on the surface?

Throughout the Old Testament, we learn that marriage is a model for God's relationship with us. God continually describes the relationship with Israel as a troubled bride steeped in infidelity (Jeremiah 3:6-8). Let's learn more about marriage, using God's relationship with Israel as a framework from the book of Hosea to understand better the ideal marriages we all should strive for.

The Big Idea: God wants a relationship with us based on faithfulness, love, and service.

Marriage Is About Faithfulness

The prophet Hosea represents God's troubled relationship with Israel. God remained faithful to an unfaithful nation (Hosea 1:2; 4:1-2). God has always wanted a monogamous relationship with His people! For us, that means He holds the first position of importance in our lives. He's the top — no earthly pursuit or relationship should ever take that place.

"But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Corinthians 7:2-4).

By extension, in our marriages, faithfulness is demanded. When we commit ourselves to our spouse, there is a bond that should last a lifetime. Because of this intimate connection and loyalty, we can see why God would use adultery as the only legitimate cause for divorce.

Marriage Is About Love

Hosea, like God, loved their spouse so profoundly, but they didn't return that love (Hosea 3:1; 6:4). Do you love God with everything you have? God extends His love to you as a faithful husband, but will you turn away to love materialism, earthly fame, and prestige, or your pleasure?

"In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:28-30).

Marriage is all about love. Not some kind of enamored state infatuation like most marriages begin with, but a conscious decision to nourish and cherish each other for the rest of our lives. If love is not a part of your marriage, are you reflecting the love that Christ has for you?

Marriage ☞ About Service

Hosea describes God as Israel's "helper" (Hosea 13:7-9), while Israel offers sacrifices and burnt offerings without the love and knowledge of God (Hosea 6:5-6). A relationship with God is all about service. God has extended His grace and mercy to us by removing our sinfulness, and in return, He demands that we serve Him in sincerity and truth. When we offer superficial sacrifices to Him, are we serving Him with everything we have?

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:22-25).

☞ In the same way that Christ loved the church and gave Himself, we as husbands are to give ourselves in service to our wives. Wives are also to submit themselves to the leadership of their husbands. As this becomes an ever-increasingly unpopular arrangement for marriage, we must continue to model our marriages after the pattern we have in God's word.

Conclusion

The comparison between marriage and God's relationship with His people is rich and meaningful. So often, all of the "scenarios" and half-baked arguments for how we deal with marriage would disappear if we would get back to the original pattern.

"This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:32-33).

Devote yourself to faithfulness, love, and service to God. And devote yourself in the same way to your spouse.