

“Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Hebrews 13:4

Picture Perfect

One Plus One Equals One – Hebrews 13:4 – God’s Picture

I feel bad for store photographers.

They have a hard job. They have to try and get a good picture of a child that is screaming and crying because they have to sit still and cannot play with all the photo props. There are brief seconds that the child will smile and the photographer has to be ready to click the button. Other times, it comes down to acting like a crazy person just to get the kid to laugh.

It’s a hard job and I am glad someone else is doing it.

Have you seen or experienced an unfortunate photography session of a child? How did it go?

Why do some experience something like this?

To put it plainly, the child does not want the picture; he or she wants something else. It is hard to fault the child, because they did not choose to get all dressed up and sit in a waiting room for an hour. During that wait, they could do nothing because it could mess up their clothes. Now they are sitting on a hard box with “toys” all around them that they cannot play with.

Poor kids. If only they knew that the photographer is trying to capture a good picture that will be cherished for many years. It would be a picture that is mailed to grandparents and sent off to friends. It would be pulled out at every bingo game and family get together.

So what is our excuse when it comes to marriage?

God has the perfect picture of marriage that He wants to share with us. He knows exactly how it should be and wants to help us understand it, but we, like the child, squirm and cry as we look around at all the other things that pull at our attention. We are not willing to see the blessings that come from God’s picture. Rather, we choose to give in to our own selfish desires and wants. We would rather reach for a career or hobby than to work at our marriage. If only we would sit still and look at God’s picture.

Why do we get anxious about working on the marriage relationship?

You may be wondering why I am so adamant about marriage. If you have worked through this series, you understand that the marriage the world portrays is nothing like the marriage that God pictures. Marriage is a serious relationship that takes work, and we are always more prone to take the easy road rather than the hard road.

There is a small verse in Hebrews that gives us some insight into the magnitude and majesty of the marriage as God pictures it.

"If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

1 Peter 1:17-19

"For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens."

Hebrews 7:26

Read Hebrews 13:4

The author of Hebrews has captured the picture that God intends for marriage. He states two things about marriage.

First, marriage is **precious**.

The word *timios* is translated as honorable and is used on a few other occasions in the New Testament. It is used of good reputation (Acts 5:34), of valuable stones, (1 Corinthians 3:12, Revelation 17:4, 18:12), of faith (1 Peter 1:7), and finally, of Christ's blood.

1 Peter 1:17-19 gives us an indication of the value placed on *timios*. Peter explains that we have not been redeemed through things like silver and gold, but through the precious blood of Christ. Christ's blood is precious to those who have been washed white as snow. It is through His shed blood that we are able to be called sons of God. You cannot buy salvation or work for it. The cost of salvation is too great for us to handle. That is why it is so precious and valuable.

Marriage is in the same boat. Peter explains that marriage is to be valued or honored by all. It should be considered priceless to the husband, the wife, the kids, the pastor, the neighbor, and everyone else. It is not like gold and silver which perishes. It is not like the things of this world that are here today and gone tomorrow. Marriage is a valuable, costly, honorable covenant.

God pictures marriage as valuable and honorable. It ranks up there with the precious blood of Christ.

How would you rate your value of marriage? What can you do to reach God's picture?

It starts with perspective. Begin now to elevate your marriage. Do not let it fall to the back burner, but see it as priceless.

Secondly, marriage is **pure**.

This is a word used only a few times, yet these few times help us to see the purity of marriage. James speaks of true religion that is undefiled and will minister to the orphans and the widows. Peter explains that our inheritance in heaven is incorruptible and pure. But the most telling passage is here in Hebrews. In 7:26, the author uses the word to describe our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Again, we are brought back to Christ. First, it was his precious blood and now it is the purity of His being. We have a High Priest that is free from the ravages of sin. He does not need to go daily to offer up a sacrifice for His own sins. He is pure and undefiled.

Marriage is raised to this same standard. It is to be pure and undefiled by the world. It is to be cleansed and kept clean.

How has the world infected your marriage?

It is hard to keep the marriage bed pure. It takes work, but it is the picture God has for marriage. It may mean changing your movie standards or television watching. It may mean spending more time with one couple and not as much

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”

Ephesians 5:23

with another. It may mean leaving a job to find one where temptation is not as strong. It may even mean having a conversation with your spouse and confessing sin. I wish I could tell you an easy fix to reach purity, but it is different for every couple.

What are some things that you can do to become undefiled in your marriage?

Remember, it may be something as simple as a weekly sitcom that eats away at your marriage, but it could also be something as serious as an unhealthy relationship. Take time to clean it up.

God's picture of marriage is one that is precious and pure. It is a beautiful picture, made even more beautiful because it is a picture of Christ and the church. We have looked into the passage in Ephesians 5:22-33. The marriage between a man and a woman under God is a picture of the relationship that Christ has with the church. Christ gave himself up for the church to present a church that is precious and pure.

What does that say to you when Paul compares marriage with Christ and the church?

This is the way marriage is intended to be. God created it to be a beautiful picture, a perfect picture. God desires us to see this picture and marvel at the marriage relationship. It is one plus one equals one.

A good painting will capture your attention and hold your mind. It will fix your eyes on details, yet keep you at a distance so you can see the entire picture. There is detail in each stroke or each facet. There is beauty in each little part, yet the entirety shows the grandeur and majesty of the pieces coming together as one to make the whole. A painting such as this is precious and pure.

How much more is marriage.

Your marriage can be that picture. I know that you doubt that. I know that you cannot imagine your marriage ever coming to the point of being a beautiful picture. You have experienced heartaches and pains and there may even have been separation or divorce. You see your marriage as a mess rather than a masterpiece.

Matthew 19:26 – “And looking at them Jesus said to them, ‘With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Marriage, along with life, is not about you or your spouse. It is about God. Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:20 that God is able to do far more beyond all that we ask or think. God wants to build your marriage into something that will continue to glorify Him.

Here are some suggestions to help:

Spend time each day in prayer for your marriage in specific ways.

Spend time in God's Word.

Revisit this study and continue to keep God's perspective before you.

*“For how do you know,
O wife, whether you
will save your husband?
Or how do you know,
O husband, whether
you will save your
wife?”*

1 Corinthians 7:16

Talk with your spouse about marriage. Go on dates – just the two of you.

Find two or three couples that you believe have a good marriage and spend time with them.

Attend marriage conferences and seminars.

Read books on marriage. You will never run out of books to read.

Stay away from things that degrade and downplay marriage (materials, media, music, people).

These are just a few things that you might consider.

Do you have other suggestions that might help?

There may be those who have an unbelieving spouse. Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 7:16 that you may be the very tool that God uses to bring your spouse to the cross. As you reach for God’s picture of marriage, your spouse will see something that is different than what the world has to offer.

Marriage is a beautiful relationship that calls a man and a woman to come together in worship to God as husband and wife. There is no other relationship like it on this planet. The world will try to convince you otherwise, but do not listen to the world. It is not about you – it is about God.

This relationship will take work. It will take a lot of work because we are not inclined to give up our rights, but in the economy of God, whoever tries to run their own life, loses it, but those who surrender gain it.

Micah 6:8 explains that God desires us to live in obedience through love with humility. In the end, marriage is a matter of obedience.

Obedience is a matter of the heart.

Is your heart surrendered?

Surrender is the best thing you can do. Your marriage and the rest of your life will thank you for it.

“Dear Father, I pray for surrender. I know that daily there are things that I take back or things that I cling to, but, Lord, help me to lay them down at your feet. Remind me that my marriage and my life is not about me, it’s about you. Glorify yourself through me. Thank you. Amen.”

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

By the way, if you remember, there was a little quiz in the beginning. These answers were talked about throughout the study, but for those who would like to check their answers, here they are.

1. When was marriage instituted?

Marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden.

2. Why was marriage instituted?

Marriage was instituted because it was not good that man should be alone – he needed a helper.

3. Who created and instituted marriage?

God instituted marriage.

4. Out of the Ten Commandments, two reference marriage. What are they?

Do not commit adultery and do not covet (your neighbors wife).

5. Scripture uses marriage as an analogy for what relationship in the Old Testament?

God and Israel.

6. Scripture uses marriage as an analogy for what relationship in the New Testament?

Christ and the Church.

7. What is one role of the husband?

Love his own wife.

8. What is the one role of the wife?

Help her own husband.

9. Why was sex created?

To glorify God.

10. Is there ever a point within marriage that it can never be restored?

No, with God all things are possible.

11. How does the present marriage of parents affect the future marriage of children?

Children build their ideas and perspective of marriage and family based on their personal experiences.

