

SESSION 5

Honor Marriage



QUESTION 1:

Whose marriage have you always admired?

THE POINT

Physical intimacy is reserved for one man and woman within the covenant of marriage.

THE PASSAGES

Exodus 20:14; 2 Samuel 11:1-5

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Weddings these days come in all sizes and shapes. For many, a wedding is a quiet, simple ceremony, while others spare no expense to create an experience their friends and family will long remember. Regardless of the trappings, weddings share one thing in common: union. Two additional words can be used to describe a solid marriage.

1. **Discontinuity.** When a man and woman get married, they break the ties with those who constituted their dominant family prior to the wedding.
2. **Continuity.** The couple continues a magnificent institution called family. It's not the same as the one they are disconnecting from, but it continues the same principle of family.

God calls this union a covenant. Because the nature of a covenant is spiritually binding, honoring the marriage relationship is especially important. Unfortunately, our world and culture has been playing fast and loose with this covenant, and people are trying to redefine what a marriage is and what that commitment entails. God made His standard clear in the Ten Commandments. Obedience to God's commandment carries God's blessing, but as we see in the life of David, failing to honor God's standard of marriage brings devastating consequences.

Exodus 20:14

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

The commandment against adultery in marriage is a critical one. We are to watch over our marriages—and the marriages of others—with all diligence. Adultery breaks trust and divides the oneness God desires us to have and has designed us to experience.

QUESTION 2:

How would you summarize our culture's view of adultery?

Within the uniquely physical marriage union, God has given us chemical bonds of romance that serve a greater purpose than mere pleasure. God has designed us in such a way that these chemical bonds create and seal ties of commitment, attraction, and protection based on various hormones.

Yet unfortunately when these experiences occur outside the union of marriage—such as in a romantic or physical affair (i.e., adultery)—they damage the marital attachments. Then the married couple is required to rebuild what it lost to restore relational harmony. Not only that, the affair creates new chemical bonds outside of the covenant of marriage. These new bonds leave lasting scars, cravings, and even symptoms of withdrawal for months or even years when ultimately broken.

Adultery—physical or emotional—does far more damage than simply breaking trust through betrayal in a marriage. It effectively transfers the marital bond in one partner to someone else. Measurable scientific data has shown us that the withdrawal effects from a temporary love interest are as severe, if not even more severe, as those from any drug.¹

Science confirms this, but God told us something very similar in His Word. When Paul wrote, “What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body?” (1 Cor 6:16), he used the Greek word *kollao*, which literally means “to glue together, cement.” Sexual intimacy releases chemicals designed to bond; these brain-imprinting hormones essentially glue two individuals together.

When a person then ends an illicit relationship, powerful physiological reactions occur in the brain, very similar to what happens when one stops taking drugs, drinking alcohol or doing other addictive behaviors. Anytime a person stops an addictive behavior without addressing it emotionally and spiritually through repentance, forgiveness, healing, and the empowerment of Christ, that person has a higher chance of returning to it or a similar behavior at a later time. That is why Scripture counsels us, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

We guard our hearts because it is in the heart that sin first takes root. Jesus connected the command not to commit adultery with the heart. “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28). Adultery is deeper than the physical act because it is rooted in a spiritual source. While the commandment focused on the act, Jesus zeroed in on the heart that motivated the act.

QUESTION 3:

What are the benefits for a society following God’s standards for purity and faithfulness in marriage?

2 Samuel 11:1-3a

1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

3a And David sent and enquired after the woman.

David is a prime example of what happens when we do not let faithfulness and purity guard our thoughts. Faithfulness and purity begins in our minds. As soon as David chose to send someone to inquire about the woman he saw bathing on the rooftop, he had already begun the process of pursuit. In that situation, guarding his mind would have meant turning away from what he saw at the moment he first saw her. But instead, David chose to pursue her, which ultimately led to the devastation of many lives.

If we do not guard ourselves, we share knowledge—intimate knowledge—about ourselves that only one person—our spouse—was meant to know. That knowledge is significant. The first mention of sexual intimacy is in Genesis 4:1: “Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain.” The original term translated *knew* is the Hebrew word *yada*, which refers to knowing or revealing something. While the word itself does not refer to sexual intimacy, the context points to an intimate knowledge. It is clear that sexual intimacy is about so much more than physical activity and pleasure. The word *yada* is the idea of plummeting into the reality of another person to know deeply and be deeply known.

The word is also used in reference to knowing God. It captures the personal interaction we can have with Him:

- ▶ “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will *shew them* his covenant” (Ps. 25:14, emphasis added).
- ▶ “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may *know* and believe me, and understand that I am he” (Isa. 43:10, emphasis added).
- ▶ “I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest *know* that I, the LORD, ... am the God of Israel” (Isa. 45:3, emphasis added).

God desires intimacy in our relationship with Him. Because marriage is a reflection of the union we are to have with Christ (Eph. 5:22-32), the same level of purity and faithfulness we show in our relationship with Christ is to be seen in one’s relationship to a spouse. David understood such commitment: “I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name” (Ps. 61:4-5). Yet, as he stood on his roof and saw Bathsheba, he ceased to let that same faithfulness and purity guard his thoughts.

QUESTION 4:

What are some practical ways we can follow God’s command to be faithful and pure?

2 Samuel 11:3b-5

3b And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

David not only set aside faithfulness in his own life, he also failed to honor the marriage relationship of Bathsheba. The servant reminded David of Bathsheba's own marriage. The servant tried to intervene by helping David see the danger of continuing his pursuit. He reminded David that Bathsheba was someone's daughter and someone's wife. But David pursued her anyhow; he chose to satisfy his physical desires regardless of the consequences.

It could be argued that David was not in love with Bathsheba; his was only a physical attraction.

1. If David truly loved Bathsheba, he would never have sought to have her violate her own marriage vows and union. Love is not selfish or self-seeking (1 Cor. 13:5).
2. We saw earlier that sexual union in marriage is to carry a knowledge—an intimate knowledge that seeks to know deeply and to be deeply known. That is expressed in the Hebrew word for *know*: *yada*. But that word is not used in verse 4. Instead, it is the Hebrew word *shakab*, which bluntly translated is: “he lay with her.”

While these two Hebrew terms can be used in the context of sexuality, *shakab* does not include the sacred nature of the act. Instead, the individuals involved have removed one of the main purposes and intentions of sexuality: the exclusive bonding that allows for knowing and being known. Anytime the word is used in the Old Testament for sexual relations, it refers to wrong behavior.

- ▶ Lot's daughters slept with their father (Gen. 19:32-35).
- ▶ Shechem defiled Dinah (Gen. 34:2-7).
- ▶ Reuben slept with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22).
- ▶ Amnon raped Tamar (2 Sam. 13:11-14).

Unfortunately, this can even happen within a marriage if the couple does not bond emotionally and spiritually through a loving, giving, and honoring relationship. We see the term *shakab* used for sexual relations between Jacob and Leah, the wife he did not

love (Gen. 30:16). The marriage between Jacob and Leah may have produced seven children, but it also produced pain and conflict.

When sex becomes nothing more than an activity to perform for its own end, it brings with it heartbreak, jealousy, regret, and a host of emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences. Guarding marriage from adultery starts by creating a true connection of love, honor, and romance between both spouses and cultivating the love relationship. It is only in guarding the hearts in the home that the home can be preserved.

By failing to guard his heart or seek the best for Bathsheba, David invited great calamity into his family. He brought tragedy to Bathsheba as well through the subsequent murder of her husband (2 Sam. 11:14-26). His sins against Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 11) unleashed a whole series of consequences on his family. When Nathan the prophet told David a story to highlight David's sins, David himself said the offender should pay back the debt fourfold (12:1-7). Sadly, David, the true offender, had declared his own sentence: he did pay fourfold, as four of his own children would die.

1. The baby David conceived with Bathsheba died (v. 18).
2. David's son Absalom killed his brother Amnon after Amnon raped Tamar, Absalom's sister and Amnon's half-sister (13:28-29).
3. Absalom rebelled against his father David and was slain by Joab (18:9-15).
4. Years later, David's son Solomon had his older brother, Adonijah, struck down and killed because he had tried to usurp him as king (1 Kings 2:22-25).

David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba wasn't just a one-night stand. It was a lifetime wipeout, leaving a legacy of destruction among the members of his own family. David's sins carried grave ramifications for his own children.

Jesus spoke frankly as to how we are to treat the sin of adultery:

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy

members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matt. 5:29-30).

Jesus understood the slippery slope of adultery as well as the deceptive nature of the human heart (Jer. 17:9). But when we honor the union between a husband and wife, we live lives that are pleasing to God and bring us the greatest satisfaction and joy.

QUESTION 5:

What are some ways our group can encourage and support couples in their marriage relationship?

ENGAGE

From the following phrases relating to marriage, circle the three you think are most important:

Companionship Having children Sharing resources
Sharing experiences Sexual intimacy
Someone who loves you Communication Growing old together

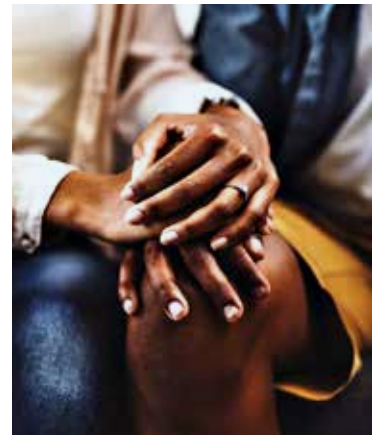
Write a sentence containing one of your chosen phrases to express how believers might honor God in this way:

Offer a prayer of gratitude for God’s blessing of godly marriages.

LIVE IT OUT

How will you seek to preserve and honor marriage, whether it is yours or the marriage of others?

- ▶ **Examine your heart.** Honor for your marriage and for the relationships of others begins in the heart and mind. Turn from any involvement with lust, pornography, or inappropriate feelings toward others.
- ▶ **Examine your actions.** If you are guilty of the sin of adultery (either emotionally or physically) in the past or present, repent fully before God and turn your heart away from this sin and toward obedience to Christ. If you have not committed sin in this regard, thank God and ask Him to guide you in a life that continually honors marriage.
- ▶ **Honor.** Seek ways to honor marriage—both your own and the marriages of others. (This applies to all regardless of their marital status.) Identify specific things you can do this week to show honor to yourself, your spouse (if you are married), and God. Identify ways you can honor others for their faithfulness in marriage.



END NOTES

¹ Helen Fisher, "The Brain in Love," *TED2008*, Filmed February 2008, www.ted.com/talks/helen_fisher_studies_the_brain_in_love.



WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

BY DANIEL HEDGEPEETH

My wife and I were so glad to see our old friends from seminary. We had great respect for this pastor and his wife. They had faithfully served two congregations more than 39 years and have always been the model of a happy, well-balanced family.

The conversation over dinner turned to catching up on our children. I noticed my friend's expression change from a light-hearted smile to a look of concern. He quickly switched the subject of our conversation away from children to old memories and funny stories.

Later he pulled me to the corner of the restaurant parking lot and quietly said, "I don't talk about this much, but you will probably

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hear the news from somebody. Our middle son came home from college this summer and told us he was in a relationship with another young man. To make matters worse, he wants to bring him home for Christmas!”

I didn’t know what to say. I gave my friend a strong handshake and weakly said, “I’m praying for you.” We went our separate ways.

My friend’s dilemma with his son is being repeated in thousands of homes across America. Several surveys estimate that same-sex relationships presently exist in 4.5 percent of the United States adult population. Churches are not immune to the growth of adults who are entering same-sex relationships.

Many families are sitting in our pews, hurting because a child or grandchild has made the decision to live in opposition to biblical teaching about

marriage and relationships. They are torn between the love for their children and the biblical truths they hold dear. How can we as Christ-followers minister to these families?

Intentionally reach out to these families.

People in our churches who have children and grandchildren in same-sex relationships often feel ashamed and blame themselves for a child or grandchild’s behavior. These families express feeling isolated and alone. Sometimes they leave the church. Reach out to these families, and let them know you are still their friend.

Avoid easy answers.

Many well-intentioned Christians give advice based on their opinion or own experience. The parents and grandparents of these children are dealing with complicated issues concerning how to love their children or

grandchildren without loving the sin. Offer to listen when these friends need a sounding board. Pray, and then speak.

Remind these families that their adult children or grandchildren are responsible for their own actions.

It is true that bad parental choices can make a negative impact on children. It is also true that some people will make bad life choices no matter how great their home environment. We

that it affected their ministry and their relationship with their other children. Eventually, they sought a Christian counselor who helped them. Later he told me, “I had to release my child into the hands of my Father. We could not carry the guilt and burden ourselves. He can carry what I can’t.” That is simple theology but an important truth for parents and grandparents of those involved in unbiblical relationships.

We believe, as Paul, that the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ can lead any person to genuine repentance and new life.

cannot punish godly parents and grandparents who have children living in disobedience. Parents and grandparents of children in same-sex relationships cannot continually punish themselves for the actions of their children. God’s marvelous grace extends to them.

Fifteen years ago, I had another close friend whose oldest child had entered a same-sex relationship. He and his wife were so grief-stricken over their daughter’s actions

Point these families to the truth that God’s power and love can reach those in a same-sex relationship.

Based on Romans 8:38-39, these families do not have to give up on their children and grandchildren: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”



Love these parents and grandparents who have children and grandchildren in same-sex relationships.

We, as the church, should not give up on these people either. We believe, as Paul, that the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ can lead any person to genuine repentance and new life.

Love these parents and grandparents who have children and grandchildren in same-sex

relationships. Encourage them to find hope in their relationship with Christ. Let these families know there is also support for them in faithful, compassionate friends in their local church.

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