

ARTICLE 7: SINGLENES & MARRIAGE

Summary

Marriage is designed by God to be one man and one woman for life.

Detail

Not all persons are called to be married; singleness is a vocation of dignity, value, and worth with its own ways to serve the kingdom of God and contribute to the life of the world. In many ways, singleness can be a preferable calling in God's Kingdom.

Marriage is an institution of creation. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other, as male and female, in a "one flesh" union with both a *unitive* dimension (the ability to unite two bodies as one), and a *procreative* dimension (the vehicle through which children are brought into the world).² Marriage is thus the foundation for family, the sacred building block of society that builds up humanity, and designed to image God in a covenant of faithful love. Jesus affirms the "one flesh" union of male and female as the normative pattern for sex and marriage and highlights the sacred indissolubility of the bond.

Marriage is also an image of salvation, designed to display Christ and his Bride, in faithful love, mutual service, and an unbreakable union that brings life to the world. God ordains that spouses assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church: the husband taking initiative to love, care for, and serve his wife, while she lovingly and willfully follows his leadership as they partner to shape the culture of their home.

God intends sex to be only practiced within marriage and prohibits any sexual activity outside of this one-man and one-woman covenant (such as, pornography, adultery, pre-marital sex, same-sex sexual activity). As followers of Jesus, we give our bodies to God, pursuing sexual fidelity as an avenue of faithfulness.

Key Points:

1. Marriage is an image of the gospel.
2. Sex of any kind is to be practiced only within the covenant of marriage.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How does rooting marriage in creation, rather than in societal norms, change our perspective?
2. How does seeing sex as an aspect of creation challenge both religious and secular assumptions?

Scriptures:

- Matthew 19:4-6 / Jesus answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.
- Ephesians 5:31-32 / "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.
- 1 Corinthians 7:6-9 / Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry.

² "One flesh" is used in the Bible to describe the union of a couple, with the related language of "flesh and bone" used to describe the kinship bonds of children and descendants who arise from that union (cf. Gen. 29:14; Jdgs 9:2; 2 Sam 19:12)