

What does Christ Community affirm about... Marriage?

Overview and Introduction

Marriage is a God-designed and good gift, which we may seek and enjoy. CCC affirms that God intends marriage between a man and a woman as a lifelong covenant to model his glorious love for the church and also to function as the baseline social fabric of community in the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

This pamphlet will explain our understanding of marriage as derived from the Biblical witness and instruction.

Theology of Marriage

The Bible consistently affirms the goodness of marriage and the parameters for what marriage looks like. Marriage is not unique to the church, but a grace-gift available to all humans, part of God's creation mandate given to Adam and Eve, and limited only by gender and monogamy. Those who are walking with Christ have additional boundaries, such as whether their prospective spouse is also a believer and whether God is calling them to marriage.

While far from comprehensive, the following passages provide a helpful outline to understanding marriage.

An Old Testament Overview:

Genesis 1-2 provides the foundation for the marriage relationship. Here we see that God establishes marriage at the beginning of human history. As a pair, Adam and Eve were given purpose together, namely, authority and responsibility over the earth: "*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion*" (Gen 1:28). God saw the man and the woman together and proclaimed it "*very good*" (Gen 1:31), because God had designed man and woman *for* one another in every respect (Gen 2:24).

The key concept for the Bible's understanding of marriage is covenant. Covenant was an Ancient Near Eastern way of establishing binding relationships between peoples. As such, God uses it as a framework for both his relationship with his people and for a marital relationship.

In so doing, He affirms the unconditional love, provision, and care that should be evident in a marriage. **Hosea** provides a stirring example of this metaphor, as God called the prophet to marry a prostitute to demonstrate both His own unrelenting love and the sting of adultery.

Importantly, the Biblical stories about marriage are not often prescriptive or standard-bearing. More frequently, the marriages in the Bible are simply descriptive, faithfully and

boldly recording what actually occurred. For instance, prior to receiving God's Law, the Patriarchs follow more cultural than God-driven standards for marriage (see Abraham, Sarah and Hagar; or Jacob, Rachel, and Leah). Even having the Law, we also read of kings following *their* cultural expectations – and often suffering the consequences (see David's family troubles or Solomon's idolatry in 1 Kings 11).

Summary: Simply put, God established marriage as a covenant relationship and values its purpose.

A New Testament Overview:

Jesus reaffirms the creation's account of marriage in **Matthew 19:1-12** as a union between a man and a woman for a lifetime commitment. He also says, "*What God has joined together, let not man separate*" (Matt 19:6). We also see in this passage that marriage is not "given" to everyone. Whether from natural causes or a Kingdom calling, some choose singleness and chastity, which is a good option and has Kingdom value (Matt 19:11-12, cf. 1 Cor 7:1).

Marriage is a beautiful and challenging metaphor in **Ephesians 5:22-33**. Specifically, husbands and wives are to love one another with the same richness and depth that Christ loves the Church – and in so doing, depict that very relationship. Paul ties this oneness and self-sacrifice back to Genesis 2:24 (Eph 5:31).

Finally, the writer of Hebrews gives a broad endorsement of marriage and the intended purity within marriage with his statement: "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral (Heb. 13:4). Marriage is the right and sole place for the fulfillment of sexual desire (cf. 1 Cor 7:2-6, 9).

Summary: The New Testament gives a sacred honor and responsibility to marriage in its cultural and theological value, and urges the most faithful practice of God's standards.

Conclusions

CCC loves and values marriages because God loves and values marriages. We believe that a man and woman who are called into marriage are entering into a most solemn covenant: one that glorifies God as the couple works together to trust Him; one that points others to Christ and His Bride, the Church; one that helps establish the Kingdom dynamics on earth.

Therefore, Christ Community pastors will gladly officiate weddings between a believing man and woman who have received pre-marital counseling, understand God's perspective for marriage, and enter into the marriage covenant thoughtfully and faithfully. We reserve the right to counsel some couples to wait until certain issues are addressed.

For an explanation of our understanding of singleness, or divorce and remarriage, please read the pamphlets entitled, "*Singleness and the Kingdom*," or *What does Christ Community affirm about Divorce and Remarriage*"?