

Part 2 Marriage: Help Meet

Marriage Vows: Accepting Your Helpmeet
Genesis 2:18

This is part 2 of the covenant message and we will be looking at the words we say during the marriage ceremony and what we actually agree to when we say them.

These words are referred to as vows although in essence they are actually covenants.

The term means “a solemn promise, especially one made to God.”

When we choose to marry, we have in mind the type of person that would be fit us.

We look at several characteristics of the individual, spiritual, physical and emotional normally rank at the top of the list.

We have a list of things the person should be able to do as well as a list of things that we do not want that person to be doing.

All of these things are our attempt to find a suitable partner.

Webster’s dictionary defines partner as “one who joins in an activity with another or others.”

So when we repeat the marriage covenants, we are agreeing to take the other person as our partner, a full participating partner.

Some of you who work in business may be familiar with partnerships.

Some business partnerships are equal partners while some are not.

Some partnership may have a silent partner, one, which does not have say in the everyday actions of the business.

This is not what God meant for a marriage, although some people believe that the wife is a silent partner.

Before we look at what God’s intention is for marriage, I want to first walk quickly through the traditional Christian marriage vows – just to refresh your memory.

I. Traditional Christian Marriage Vows

The traditional marriage ceremony that we see in our times is different from the marriage ceremony of ancient times.

During those times, most marriages were by agreement between two families.

Once the agreement had been met, the woman left her family & went to live with her husband.

During the Roman Empire, there were many common law or free marriages.

The father would deliver the bride to the groom.

The Romans who were wealthy would often sign documents consisting of listings of property rights and letting all know that they wanted this union to be legalized and not to be thought of as a common law marriage.

This was the beginning of the official recording of marriages.

The Church did not get involved with marriages until the ninth century.

English weddings in the thirteenth century among the upper class became religious events.

In 1563 the Council of Trent required that Catholic marriages be celebrated at a Catholic church by a priest and before two witnesses.

By the eighteenth century the wedding was a religious event in all countries in Europe.

In Colonial times in North America, the customs of the old countries were followed.

There were some that only wanted a civil ceremony and not a religious ceremony and the Colonists who wanted civil marriages passed laws to this affect.

Civil and common law marriages are very common today.

With this background information, you see that the traditional marriage ceremony is only a few hundred years old.

Now lets examine the actual marriage vows and the meaning behind the words.

In a traditional Christian wedding, the opening sets the stage for all those in attendance.

One thing that stands out is the reference to God and His blessings for the marriage relationship.

It also reviews why God instituted marriage.

As each person listens to the introduction, they have time to reflect on what they are about to do in entering into this covenant relationship.

The next part starts the actual statements of commitment.

Again, the statements of commitment are asked in question to ascertain that the person fully knows and understands what they are doing.

“Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of God to witness the joining together of this man and this woman in holy matrimony. The sacred relationship of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned marriage by His presence and first miracle at the wedding of Cana of Galilee. The apostle Paul chose marriage to symbolize the union between Christ and His Church, and Holy

Scripture commends marriage to be honored among all people. The union of man and wife in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given to one another in prosperity and adversity; and when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but soberly, deliberately and in reverent fear before God. Into this holy union, Groom and Bride now come to be joined."

At this point the first set of vows have been agreed to.

Next there is generally a confirmation question to the audience and the question to the individual chosen to give the bride away.

Giving the bride away is important because again, the bride now must leave her family and go and start a new family with her husband.

The daughter was considered to be the property of her father and only the father (or his substitute) could give the daughter away.

In our culture today it symbolizes that the father now relinquishes his daughter to this man to be cared for as he cared for her.

Declaration of Consent: Both Groom/Bride:

"Will you have this woman/man to be your wife/husband, to live together in the holy covenant of marriage?

Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honor and keep her/him, in sickness and in health and forsaking all others, be faithful to her/him so long as you both shall live?"

The second set of vows is traditionally known as the actual **marriage vows**.

The difference here is that the vows are not in the form of questions, but in a statement form that must be repeated.

It is assumed at this point based on how the other questions were answered that each party would willingly agree to and repeat what they were told.

Marriage Vow: "I, Groom/Bride, take you _____ to be my wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death; as God is my witness, I give you my promise."

After both have repeated these vows, there is an **exchange of rings**.

The exchange of rings is a confirmation that each party has been committed to someone else.

They are taken off the market so to speak.

But it also symbolizes a chosen acceptance of a commitment to another individual.

Exchange of Rings: "Bless, O Lord, this ring to be a sign of the vows by which this man and woman have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Each Person Repeats: "I give you this ring, as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you; in the name of the father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once everything is done, there is the **pronouncement of the marriage**. For the first time, the two individuals will be known as husband and wife.

Pronouncement of Marriage: "Now that Groom/Bride have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, before us and before God as witness, and have shown their affection and trust by the giving and receiving of a ring (rings) and by joining hands, I pronounce that they are husband and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. Amen.

You may kiss the bride. Now let me introduce for the first time, Mr. & Mrs. _____."

These are the vows of a traditional Christian marriage ceremony.

If you do not understand God's purpose for marriage, then these words can lose their meaning. The covenant relationship can be little more than two individuals choosing to live together for a while.

II. Lets look at what God said in Genesis before we actually look at the marriage vows.

The Helpmeet

(Gen 2:18) - "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper, suitable for him.'"

(1 Cor 11:9,11) - "...for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but the woman for the man's sake....however, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman."

In these two Scriptures, we find a reference to why God created woman and the rationale for their existence.

Years ago in America, women did not have the all of the rights and privileges that men had and

today in some Churches all over America, women still do not have the same rights as men. From the pulpit we preach submissiveness, roles for the man and the woman, yet with all of that, we are not witnessing the birth of happy marriages.

In America, 55-60% of all marriages will end in divorce, in Christian and non-Christian marriage.

That is not an encouraging sign, especially when we understand God's purpose for marriage.

In Genesis 2:18, God said that it was not good that Adam should be alone.

In other words, although Adam was busy naming the animals and doing his job, God realized that he needed a helpmeet, someone to help him do what God had commissioned him to do.

God decided to make a woman – someone who would complete Adam.

When Adam first saw Eve, he knew that she was made for him and understood that she had come from him and was to be his partner.

Adam's first utterance that she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh and called her woman is sometimes referred to as the first "marriage vows", him accepting Eve from God.

God had made him a helpmeet – a suitable partner.

Now jump over to the reference we read in 1 Corinthians 11.

Here the reason was given again for the creation of woman – for the sake of man.

When someone use the term, for his/her "sake" it means for his or her behalf or good.

In other words, Eve was made for the benefit or good of Adam.

Adam became better because of Eve, he could do more because he had someone to help him.

Notice that God did not make Adam a slave or servant.

A slave or servant does not have all of the rights of the master, only those rights that the master gives them.

But a partner, a helpmeet has all of the rights of the other – they fulfill one another.

A helpmeet can meet the needs of their partner like no one else can – because they know them in ways that no one else can.

I want to make sure you understand that **although in society we have different roles for men and women, God sees us as one when we come together in marriage.**

That is what Paul was referencing in verse 11 about neither being independent of the other.

When two people come together, they must learn how to be one in God's eyes.

It not all about the physical union, but the total package.

You must work hard to merge two lifestyles into one. Let me demonstrate.

Conduct demonstration. - (Have one couple come down and sit in two chairs. Have each person separately stand up and move around to demonstrate how while we are single we can do whatever we want without consideration of a partner. The next step have them to take a string and tie it around both their arms – each using on one hand. This was to demonstrate how the two had to come together. Finally, after the string is tied, ask one of them to stand up and move to show that now their partner had to move with them.)

From the demonstration you saw when each was single they could move without consideration of the other.

Once they got engaged, they began having discussions that started them on the road to becoming one.

Then all of a sudden they were married and now were one – on paper.

Still, they were separate individuals emotionally and spiritually.

When I had them tie their arms together using only one hand, could you see the struggle of coordinating with each using only one hand.

Finally they could no longer move freely of each other – and this is what happens when we go through the marriage vows and say I do.

We become one with another person and we must start learning how to live and act as one.

This is a simple demonstration of Genesis 2:24 "...and they shall become one flesh."

A helpmeet is someone who is there to help you, when you need it and when you do not need it.

They are your partners.

When you are weak, they are strong. When you hurt they are there to help ease the pain.

When you are happy they are there to share in the joy.

When there is work to be done, they are there to pitch in and get it done.

They are your partners.

In all partnerships, there are strengths and weaknesses – and the goal of a partner is to balance you in the areas you need it most.

A helpmeet is a gift from God because only He knows fully what you are in need of and only He can choose an appropriate helpmeet for you.