

Many, if not most, of the people in our churches are married and many of those (plus single parents) have children. So a large part of our pastoral care for them is going to be teaching and counseling what God's word has to say about those significant parts of their lives. This section of the site is designed to provide materials to help local pastors provide that teaching and care. Over time we will post book recommendations, articles and locally developed courses to equip our pastors to equip the saints in this calling. I'm starting by posting the material we use for our marriage weekenders at Crossway. Please feel free to use anything you think would be helpful in your ministry to couples.

Tim Keller said "Unless you're able to look at marriage through the lens of Scripture instead of through your own fears or romanticism, through your particular experience, or through your culture's narrow perspectives, you won't be able to make intelligent decisions about your own marital future." This first session - **A BIBLICAL HISTORY OF MARRIAGE** – explores God's original intention and provision for marriage; the defiling effect of sin; and, the redemptive effect of the gospel. The redemptive effect that gives every couple hope that - "our marriage can reflect the relationship between Jesus and His church" – no matter where we find ourselves at any one moment.

Scripture paints a picture of an ideal marriage. Loving servant leadership by a husband and respectful, submissive helping by a wife. When each spouse fulfills those God ordained roles with those God ordained attitudes marriage works like a well-oiled machine. But because of sin that ideal can quickly become an ordeal in a marriage. This second session - **THE MODEL AND MOTIVES FOR MARRIAGE** – explains how roles in marriage work and warns about ways that sin can ruin that model. Finally, it looks at the one motive for marriage that will most help you to stay on track as you strive to follow the Lord's plan for you in your marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:28 (NIV) Yet those who marry will face many troubles in this life. Given that reality, it seems clear that marriages are better served by staying out of trouble than by getting out of trouble. But how do you do that? This third session – **STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE** – looks at some everyday things you can do to keep your marriage on track and to avoid some of the troubles that commonly affect even the best of marriages. No one ever drifts into a happy, God-glorifying marriage; couples will only approach that goal through a purposeful commitment to Biblical wisdom and practice. (Note – because of the length of this session it may be wise to use it in two parts.)

R.C. Sproul wisely said "Even the best marriages have problems. Often the difference between a healthy marriage and a defective one is not the number and severity of problems encountered, but in the way problems are dealt with." In this fourth session – **MOVING ON** – we look at how grace, mercy and forgiveness, motivated by and modeled after the way God treats us will help any couple both prevent and move on from normal marital conflicts. And it will help couples whose marriages are in deep trouble find the way, in time, to move on to the happy, God-glorifying marriage that they so desperately desire.