

Service to God through honoring marriage (Hebrews 13:4)

It is part of the believer's acceptable worship of God (Hebrews 12:28–29) to hold marriage in honor, as something of exceptional value. Its ultimate importance does not lie in our happiness, but in its relation to God.

I. *God is Creator.*

1. God's design for marriage, as cited from Genesis 1 & 2 by Jesus in Matthew 19:4–6, has a number of important elements to guide in honoring marriage.
 - a. God's design for marriage is one male and one female, which at creation was followed with the command to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:26–27).
 - b. In God's design for marriage, a new household comes into existence, the man and the woman who marry leave their parents and unite together, a covenant or promised commitment to one another (Malachi 2:14).
 - c. In God's design for marriage, the man and the woman become one flesh, a result of the sexual union (1 Corinthians 6:16).
 - d. In God's design for marriage, marriage is one man and one woman for life.
2. You honor marriage and worship God, when you submit to God's design for marriage and dishonor it when you depart from His design.
 - a. Other than a one man and one woman union for life dishonors marriage.
 - b. Failing to truly leave home dishonors marriage, and a "partnership" without marriage is dishonoring to God (cf. Malachi 2:14).
 - c. Sexual intimacy outside of marriage dishonors marriage and sexual intimacy within marriage is pure.

II. *God is the holy Judge.*

1. Hebrews explains the importance of living holy lives: it warns against a lack of holiness (12:29, 14; 10:26–27) but declares that true believers have been made holy (10:10, 22; 13:12). True believers have a righteous standing before God and should be growing in practical holiness.
2. Because God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterer, those terms must be correctly understood.
 - a. Adultery is sexual unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant, physical or mental (Matthew 5:28; cf. Job 31:1; Proverbs 5; 7; especially 5:8).
 - b. Sexual immorality broadly covers any wrongful sexual behavior as illustrated in detail in Deuteronomy 22:13–30 and Leviticus 18. Like adultery it is also a heart issue (Mark 7:21; Matthew 15:19). Actions which arouse sexual desire that cannot be legitimately satisfied outside of marriage as also wrong (1 Thessalonians 4:1–8).
3. It is imperative to honor marriage, because God judges those who don't.
 - a. Though a neglected message and a scary message, our own weaknesses should increase compassion for others.
 - b. With the bad news is also good news, that true believers can leave sinful practices behind, and be washed, sanctified, and justified in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9–11). God the Father will discipline His children, but the penalty of sin, which is death, was paid for every believer on the cross of Jesus Christ.

III. *God is the loving Savior.*

1. Ephesians 5:31–32 reveals that marriage was a God-intended model of the relationship between Christ and the church (cf. Eph 3:4–5 for "mystery").
2. From Ephesians 5:25–30 we learn about Christ's sacrifice, His care for the church, and the church's submission to Him. This is what a marriage should model, to accurately present a model of Christ and the church.

The sexual relation is intended for marriage and it is intended for marriage alone. Worship God by honoring marriage, keeping it holy.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- How can parents better prepare their children to withstand the cultural pressures to dishonor marriage? Parents, are you preparing your children? How?
- How can believers better show compassion for those who dishonor marriage without compromising the truth?
- If you are challenged with "hate speech" for honoring marriage, how will you respond?
- What steps can be taken to guard against thoughts which dishonor marriage?