

Marriage: Designed for Discovery

by Alan & Marti Wibbels

Marriage was God's idea. Genesis 2:16 says, "Now the LORD God said, 'It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] suitable and complementary for him'" (Amplified). When God designed marriage, He created two unique people to fellowship with Him and do meaningful work, while experiencing joy and companionship with one another.

Tim and Kathy Keller describe marriage as "a lifelong, monogamous relationship between a man and a woman. According to the Bible, God devised marriage to reflect the saving love for us in Christ, to refine our character, to create stable human community for the birth and nurture of children, and to accomplish all this by bringing the complementary sexes into an enduring whole life union.

When over the years someone has seen you at your worst, and knows you with all your strengths and flaws, yet commits him—or herself—to you wholly, it is a consummate experience. To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us" (Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*).

Discovering & Serving

1. Be rightly related to God before sharing your thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Make sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life and that the Holy Spirit is controlling what you say and do.

Confess your sin: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9-10, NKJV).

Claim the Holy Spirit's control: *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18, NIV).

2. Maintain an attitude of love and respect for one another.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Ephesians 5:21-33, NIV).

3. Be open and honest. Keep each other's interests and needs in mind.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4, NIV).

4. Listen carefully to each other when speaking, watching for nonverbal cues to help you understand not only the words but the heart of what is being said. Do not think about your response while the other person is talking.

Understand [this], my beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear [a ready listener], slow to speak, slow to take offense and to get angry. For man's anger does not promote the righteousness God [wishes and requires] (James 1:19-20, Amplified).

5. Focus on building each other up in the Lord.

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works (Hebrews 10:24, NLT).

6. Believe God's best for and about your mate.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:29-32, NIV).

7. "Don't look at your spouse as your savior," writes Keller, explaining that "the Christian principle that needs to be at work is Spirit-generated selflessness—not thinking less of yourself or more of yourself but thinking of yourself less. It means taking your mind off yourself and realizing that in Christ your needs are going to be met."



Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:12-17, NKJV



This week, make time to talk with someone about the seven points above. If you're married, talk with your spouse. If you're single, talk with a trusted family member or friend, discussing how to apply these seven healthy choices today to prepare for a healthy marriage in the future.

Ask God to show you how to live in His plans, enjoying His good purposes for your life. Consider ways you can discover God's design instead of blindly accepting the world's flawed and unfulfilling options.

The miracle of marriage occurs when two flawed people determine to trust in God, believing not only that He will meet their daily needs, but that He will pour His perfect love through each of them. Their imperfections become irrelevant as God's perfection is demonstrated through daily choices allowing God to transform their lives (Alan and Marti Wibbels).

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