

Glorifying God in Your Marriage

Mission Bible Fellowship - Marriage Conference
(May 31 - June 1, 2019) Pastor Larry Nelson

SESSION 1 — *“The Biblical Theology of Marriage”*

Introduction:

1. I trust that you enjoyed the slides depicting: — *“Why Women Live Longer than Men!”*
 - a. And in point of fact — lots of us guys look at those pictures — and respond:
 - b. *“Why did I never think of that?”* — or
 - c. *“What’s wrong with that?”* — or if you are like me:
 - d. *“I’ve done a lot of those things — so what’s the big deal?”*

2. Funny as these pictures may seem — they point to a very basic truth — namely that men and women are different!
 - a. A wife says to her husband —
 - i. *“I had a dream about us last night.”*
 - ii. *“We were having a picnic — eating sandwiches — in a beautiful forest glen — when all of the sudden a huge bear jumped out and attacked us!”*
 - iii. *“Then you sprang into action — and fought him off with your bare hands — and swept me into your arms — and carried me away to safety!”*
 - iv. *“Isn’t that romantic?”*
 - v. To which her husband answers — *“I suppose so — but what kind of sandwiches were we eating?”*

 - b. Or perhaps you can identify with the husband who sees his wife crying in front of the mirror and asks:
 - i. *“What’s the matter Honey?”*
 - ii. *“I hate my body!”*
 - iii. *“What’s wrong with your body?”*
 - iv. *“I’m shaped like a GOURD!!”*
 - v. *“Sweetheart — the famous painter — Rubens — would have considered you perfect — the classic female shape!”*

- vi. Now she is smiling sweetly at her husband — So he's encouraged to continue:
 - vii. *"Cheer up sweetheart — you were just born in the wrong century!"*
 - viii. Now she is crying again — and in utter bewilderment he responds:
 - ix. *"Now what's the matter — did I say something wrong?"*
3. Marian and I have been counseling couples for over 40 years — and although I am always saddened by their painful stories — I am no longer surprised by anything I hear.
- a. It is not uncommon for couples to report things like — they got into an argument on their honeymoon 10 — 20 — or even 30 years ago — and they never got over it.
 - b. Even among Christian couples — so many have lost all hope of ever loving their spouse again — and they have become strangers living in the same house — as the clouds of divorce loom larger by the day.
4. There are over 400 different philosophies — or as I call them "*FOOLosophies*" — of secular counseling — but in over 100 years — the one thing that they all have in common is the "*modernistic*" belief that man can solve all the problems of the world on his own — and that apart from any belief in — or help from — God.
- a. There is a recurring theme in Book of Proverbs — where King Solomon compares the wise man and the fool — the wise man and the fool.
 - b. And just about the time you think that there is no one worse than a fool — we come to *Proverbs 26:12*.
- Proverbs 26:12* *"Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him."*
- c. The repeated theme of the *Book of Judges* is found in:
- Judges 17:6* *"In those days there was no king in Israel;
every man did what was right in his own eyes."*
- d. And this is the dilemma that many professing Christians are in today.
 - e. For the last 50+ years — the church has been polluted by men and women who call themselves "*Christian Counselors*."
 - i. But the problem with 99% of them — is that they have their training and degrees in the godless psychological philosophies and methods of secular counseling.
 - ii. So maybe they add a prayer or a bible verse to the Freud — Rogers — Ellis — Jung — or any of the other 400 secular "*fool-osophies*" — and vua-la — you have "*Christian Counseling!*"

- iii. And to make matters worse — this model of so-called “*Christian Counseling*” is what is taught in almost every Christian college and seminary in North America.
 - iv. So by the time people come to me for help — they are often frustrated — disillusioned — hopeless — and angry.
5. I have not always been a pastor — I apprenticed 5 years as a carpenter.
- a. And so — as any good carpenter will tell you — the most important part of any building is the foundation.
 - b. When the foundation is square — level — strong — and oriented correctly on the building site — then everything from there up will go well.
 - c. But if there are defects — then everything from there up is going to be wrong.
 - d. And so it is in the Christian life.
 - e. Notice how the Apostle Paul lays out this foundational truth in:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

6. And the Apostle Peter declared in:

2 Peter 1:2-3

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

7. A summary of these two texts teaches us that because all scripture is God-breathed — it is profitable for teaching — reproof — correction — and training in righteousness — and this is what equips the Christian to live a life that glorifies God.
- a. In other words — since God has given us His indwelling Holy Spirit and His written Word — then each Christian possesses everything necessary for salvation and sanctification.
 - b. So if this is true — and it is — then we must not go clamoring after the crumbs of — so called — “wisdom” — that fall off the secular or Christian counselors’ tables.
 - c. Therefore — I make no apology for affirming the inerrancy — authority — and absolute sufficiency of scripture — for all matters pertaining to the non-organic problems of the soul.
 - i. By *non-organic* — I am referring to anything that does not pertain to the physical body.
 - ii. In other words — if a Christian comes to me with a broken arm — I am going to get him in to see a good doctor.

- iii. However — if he has a broken life of — sinful behaviors — anxiety — guilt — anger — frustration — damaged relationships — fear — depression — disappointment — and/or bitterness — all of these problems are to be diagnosed — addressed — and treated with the wisdom that is only found in the Word of God.
- iv. This is called “*Biblical Counseling*” or “*Nouthetic Counseling*.”
- v. Notice how Paul exhorts the entire church at Rome in:

Romans 15:14 “And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish <NOUTHETEO> one another.”

- vi. According to this passage — the credentials for one Christian to be able to counsel another are that we must be filled with Holy Spirit-empowered godliness — and a working knowledge of the Word of God — namely — how the Bible addresses all the problems of our soul.
- vii. ☺☺☺ So dear ones — if anyone ever asks you for your advice — and you give it — then you are a counselor.

(1) The only question is: — Are you a good one or a bad one!?

- viii. I tell all of those who come for counseling — that I would never ask anyone to walk across the street to hear my opinion — because my opinion has no more authority than anyone else’s. — However — I am going to ask you to go to great lengths to hear what the Word of God as to say about your problems — and then I will show you from the Bible how to address them.

8. To this end — I believe that there is one foundational Bible verse that summarizes the entire purpose of the Christian life — which is found in:

1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory <doxa> of God.”

- a. Let’s take just a moment to unpack this verse.
- b. “*Glory*” comes from the Greek word <doxa> — which means to honor — praise — and worship.
- c. Literally — <doxa> means — “*to magnify*” or “*to make large*.”
- d. When we look at the moon through a telescope — we are not making any physical changes to what we are seeing.
- e. The lenses of the telescope merely enlarge the image — so that we can see it more clearly.
- f. And this is exactly what it means for the Christian to “*glorify*” God in the eyes of others.
- g. Jesus commanded in:

Matthew 5:16 *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify — <dox-ad'-zo> — your Father who is in heaven."*

- h. Through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit — and the right understanding of the Word of God — every believer is called to make God large in the sight fellow Christians — and to an unbelieving world.
 - i. And nowhere is this to be seen more clearly — than in our marriages.
9. So in just in case you haven't figured out what I am doing yet — as a faithful carpenter — pastor and biblical counselor — I am laying out an all important foundation of theology — upon which everything else that I teach you over these next two days — will be built upon.

TRANS> With this in mind — I want to lay out some other foundational biblical teachings about marriage as they are found in the first book of the Bible — so please open to Genesis chapter 1 — where we will see:

I. The Origin of Marriage

Genesis 1:26-27

26 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

27 *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

- A. In these verses — the Bible gives us a summary of the creation of mankind — as being "male and female."
 - 1. Unlike all the animals — man was created in the image of God — to rule over the earth — and everything in it.
 - 2. Each kind of bird would instinctively build a certain kind of nest — but man would build cities.
 - 3. Each kind of bird had its limited songs — but man would be capable of inventing instruments — and writing symphonies — and singing for the glory of God.
 - 4. The animal kingdom lives and procreates by instinct — but only man was created with the ability to commune with God — to love and be loved.
- B. And then in Genesis 2 — we see God revealing more of the details of man's creation.
 - 1. Throughout the creation week — God declared that His work was "good!"
 - 2. But then in Chapter 2:18 we read:

Genesis 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.'"*

Genesis 2:20 *"The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him."*

Genesis 2:21-23

- 21 *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.*
 22 *The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.*
 23 *The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."*

3. Simply put — Adam went to sleep single — and he woke up married.
4. And when he woke up — he immediately understood what God had done to make him a helper — who was suitable for him.
5. If you will read between the lines in the white space — its pretty obvious that Adam's eyes were bugging out or his head — as he said — **"WOW!"**

TRANS> So much for the "Origin of Marriage" — now let's look at:

II. The Independence of Marriage

Genesis 2:24 *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."*

- A. This is a crucial and foundational doctrine of marriage — which we need to unpack.
 1. Many marriages start to have trouble — right from the beginning — because they fail to understand — and/or apply this foundational teaching.
 2. In all my pre-marital counseling — I make a special point of drilling down into this text.
 3. And lest anyone think that the Genesis record is just an allegory and not part of the historical record of God's creation — we need to point out that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself affirmed the factual historical nature of the Genesis record by quoting it in:

Mark 10:6-8

- 6 *But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE.*
 7 *FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER,*
 8 *AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

4. And the Apostle Paul did the same in:

Ephesians 5:31 *"FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."*

5. In all my weddings — I stress three words: — Leaving — Cleaving — and Weaving.

- a. And it is very important to point out here that these instructions did not originate in the New Testament.
- b. They were given in the context of the first married couple — as the foundational standard for all marriages to follow.
- c. As I said — most of the marriage conflicts and problems that couples experience today — originate in either an ignorance — or misinterpretation of the *Genesis 2:24* passage.
- d. **Leaving** — does not mean to abandon or forsake one's parents. It simply means that:
 - (1) We have done our best to biblically settle any past conflicts with our families.
 - (2) Leaving recognizes that the parent/child relationship is temporary — while the husband/wife relationship is permanent.
 - (3) Leaving means that the Husband assumes financial responsibility for his wife — and he will seek to meet her needs before all others.
 - (4) By leaving — we declare that the husband/wife relationship must take **priority** over all other human relationships.

TRANS> Now let's move on to **CLEAVING**.

- e. This is a very old word — which means to join or to weld.
 - (1) As we **leave** our parents and **cleave** to one another — we are making a **commitment** of ourselves to one another — for the rest of our natural lives.
 - (2) *Malachi 2:14* speaks of marriage as a “*Covenant of Companionship*.”
 - (3) This **commitment** is more important to the marriage bond than even love itself — because — when you are committed to Christ — and you are committed to each other — nothing can separate you but death.
 - (4) It is important to point out here that God declared Adam and Eve to be “*one flesh*” before they had sexual relations.
 - (5) So today — the moment the pastor pronounces a couple to be **Husband** and **Wife** — God declares them to be “*one flesh*.”
 - (6) This marks the beginning of their **Cleaving** to one another.
 - (7) And as God declares them to be “*one flesh*” — this is the beginning of a **NEW** and **DISTINCT** family unit — which is unique and preeminent over all other human relationships.
 - (a) You are not “*one flesh*” with your parents or with your children — only your spouse.

- (8) And as a Christian couple — we are to spend the rest of our lives together — working out — what God has established the moment we become Husband and Wife.

TRANS> So much for: **Leaving & Cleaving** – Now let’s consider the last word, **Weaving**.

- f. **Weaving** is the life-long adventure of building a Christ-honoring intimacy into our **“one-flesh”** relationship — as husband and wife.
- (1) God instituted marriage to defeat loneliness.
 - (2) Marriage enables us to function as a team — serving God more effectively **together** — than we could have ever done while single.
 - (3) In marriage — we are to share the same goals — as we grow in our desire to honor Christ **together**.
 - (4) Through marriage — God provides the opportunity for deep communication and communion — that both **ministers** to one another — and **honors** Him.
 - (5) Through marriage — we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of God — **together** — more and more — as the years go by.
 - (6) And it is marriage between a man and a woman — which provides the only avenue for sexual intimacy that God will bless.
 - (7) All of us live in a cursed world — and in cursed bodies — and yet — through the unique — life-long – **“one flesh”** relationship of marriage — we are presented with an intimacy of soul and body — which will grow **deeper** and **sweeter** through all the vicissitudes of life.
 - (8) In point of fact — Marian and I have been married for almost 50 years — and yet — we are still learning.

TRANS> So as we continue in our *Genesis 2* text — let’s consider:

III. The Transparency of Marriage

Genesis 2:25 “And the man and his wife were both naked — and were not ashamed.”

- A. Prior to the Fall — when sin entered into the world — Adam and Eve were able to experience a natural intimacy of body and soul — without any guilt or shame.
 1. And for a short time — they experienced perfect harmony with God — and with each other.
 2. God had previously instructed Adam in:

Genesis 2:16-17

16 *The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;*
 17 *but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."*

- B. We are all familiar with the historical record of *Genesis 3* — where Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit — they keeled over dead — and that was the end of the human race!
1. Just checking to see if you are listening.
 2. Obviously — they did not die on that day — so what was God's warning all about?
 - a. The sovereign God of the universe is not like some parents — who make idol threats — which they don't keep.
 - b. And God did not say that Adam's sin would eventually end in death — which didn't happen until 930 years later.
 - c. God's warning was clear — "... for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."
 - d. I believe that Adam and Eve were both created with the Holy Spirit of God living in them — and the moment that they sinned by eating the forbidden fruit — the Spirit of God left them — and they became spiritually dead.
 - e. According to *John 3* — and *Ephesians 2* — we are all born spiritually dead — and in need of the sovereign — saving grace of God to give us new life — where the Holy Spirit comes to be resident and president in our soul.
 - f. And just in case there are some of you here this evening — who are still lost in your sins and spiritual deadness — Mission Bible Fellowship has given all of you a copy of my "*How to Get to Heaven from Mission, BC*" Bible Study.
 - g. Dear ones — without the Holy Spirit living in you — what the Bible calls the new birth — none of the biblical teachings that I will be giving you this weekend — will make any sense.
- C. So back in our *Genesis 3* text — Adam and Eve's perfect harmony with God — and each other was very short-lived.
1. After they sinned — instead of taking personal responsibility for what they had done — they both started blaming others.
 2. Adam's accusation is especially telling of what was in his heart!

Genesis 3:12 *The man said, "The woman — whom You gave to be with me, — she gave me from the tree, and I ate."*

3. And following Adam's example — mankind has been blaming his sin on God and others to — this — very — day!

TRANS> So far this evening — we have looked at **The Origin of Marriage — The Independence of Marriage** — and **The Transparency of Marriage**. — But now I want us to spend a few minutes studying:

IV. The Causes of Conflict in Marriage

A. Once Adam and Eve were done making excuses for their sins — it was time for God to meet out His punishments.

1. And for sake of time — I am only going to focus on:

*Genesis 3:16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your **desire** will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."*

B. Although there are many foolish interpretations of this verse — allow me to share what I think is the worst — which goes like this.

1. *"In spite of increased pain in child-birth — all women will have a strong — passionate — sexual desire for their husbands — which will produce more pregnancies and more pain."*

2. Besides doing violence to the biblical text — let's remember that this is supposed to be a curse.

3. If all women had a strong — passionate — sexual desire — husbands would be singing the **"Hallelujah Chorus!"**

4. Since this obviously not the case — then "... *your desire will be for your husband ...*" must mean something else.

C. One of the first rules of Bible interpretation — is to study the context.

1. So let's see how this word "desire" is used in the next chapter.

2. Adam and Eve's first-born son was sulking around — because God had rejected him and his disobedient offering.

3. And so God appeals to him to repent — by saying in:

Genesis 4:6-7

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?

*7 If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its **desire** is for you, but you must master it."*

4. This word **"desire"** <tesh-oo-kaw> is the exact same word that is used back in *Genesis 3:16* — which begs the question: — Was sin wanting to have some kind of mutually satisfying relationship with Cain? — Obviously not!

5. God was saying: *"Cain — sin wants to be rule over you — but you must master it."*

- D. So now let's lay this simple meaning of "***desire***" over onto the *Genesis 3:16* passage.
1. "*Eve — from now on — you will desire to rule over your husband — but he-shall-rule-over-you.*"
 2. This is not speaking about a woman's equal standing before God — or the Bible's clear teaching about male leadership in the home.
 3. The point of this curse is that every woman in the world — to one degree or another — want's to be in charge.
 4. Now if you don't believe this — just look into any church nursery — and watch the little girls trying to herd the boys around — and the boys sometimes using physical force to stop them.
 5. And just so you know that this has nothing to do with culture or ethnicity — I have been given permission to share this example from one of my counseling cases.
 - a. Many years ago — a Chinese couple came to us for counseling.
 - b. He was a famous orthopedic surgeon from mainland China — who had retired to North America.
 - c. Dr. "*Bob*" — (*not his real name*) — and his wife were committed Christians — with a large family — but they had not shared a meal with their children in over 20 years.
 - d. Although these adult children loved their father — they wanted nothing to do with their mother — because of her constant meddling — to which they all finally said — "***Enough!***"
 - e. Dr. "*Bob*" lamented — "*I am a highly respected doctor in my country; — my wife is a nurse — but she treats me as though I know nothing about medicine — or anything else!*"
 - f. Early in the counseling — as I unpacked *Genesis 3:16* — this dear lady declared with great sincerity — "*I not trying to run my family's lives — I just know what is best for all of them!*"
 - g. But by the grace of God — He opened her eyes to a lifetime of trying to control her husband and children.
 - h. She sought God's forgiveness — and that of her husband — and that afternoon — she called all of her children in repentant tears — confessing what she had done.
 - i. Sometime after our counseling was completed — I received a call from Dr. "*Bob*" — who said — "*I am going to have my 90th birthday party — and my children are all coming home to celebrate. — Would you and Mrs. Nelson please come?*"

- j. We thought that this was going to be a big church celebration — but when we arrived — we realized that we were at his home.
 - k. They had a huge round dining room table — which had sat empty — as a silent rebuke for 20 years.
 - l. But now the chairs were all filled with their children — who had come home from 3 continents!
 - m. Then this stately old gentleman gestured to me and said — “*Pastor Nelson — you will sit here at my right hand!*”
6. Dear ones — never under-estimate the power of the Bible to forever change hearts and lives for the glory of God — and the good of His children!
- a. I have had counselees say to me — “*You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.*”
 - b. To which I say — “*Well — that may or may not be true — but you are not a dog — you are a Christian — the slave of Jesus Christ — created in the image of God — who is indwelt with the Holy Spirit of God — and therefore — for the glory of God — you can and must change!*”

Conclusion:

1. Although we love to do all types of biblical counseling — for Marian and me — pre-marital counseling is what we enjoy the most — because we are able to help young couples before they have had much time to hurt each other.
2. We meet together for at least two hours every week — for a minimum of 3 months — and it is all that I can do to get it done in such a short time!
3. But here we are with just a little more than 3 hours to spend together!
4. Tonight — I have tried to lay a biblical foundation for marriage — and tomorrow I want to build upon it — with as much practical help as I can possibly fit in.
5. One of the gifts that you have received as you registered tonight is the little booklet — “*Christ and Your Problems*” — which is in my personal — humble and unbiased opinion — one of the most practical expositions of *1 Corinthians 10:13* that I have ever read.
6. We started this evening with *1 Corinthians 10:31* — and now we are going to conclude with:

1 Corinthians 10:13 “*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*”
7. I buy these booklets by the box — to use in either the 1st or 2nd session with all my counselees.
8. Jay Adams has done a masterful job of unpacking this verse.

9. Many of those who come for biblical counseling are like the poor woman in *Mark 5* — who had experienced a hemorrhage for 12 years — and had suffered at the hands of many physicians — spending all her money — and was no better.
10. These dear folks often come in desperation — with little or no hope that things will ever change.
11. So one of my first responsibilities is to give them a bus-load of biblical hope — not in me — but in God — and His all-sufficient Word — and the power of the Holy Spirit.
12. And that is what “*Christ and Your Problems*” is all about.
13. It is my prayer that each of you learns how to have a Christ-honoring marriage — and that all of you will become effective biblical counselors to people who I will never meet this side of Heaven.
14. Most of us have experienced the frustration of needing to do a job — but we don’t have the right tool.
 - a. Or we have the right tool — but we don’t know how to use it.
 - b. As a pastor and biblical counselor — it has been my joy and privilege to put the right tools into the hands of husbands and wives for over 40 years — and then teach them how to use them for the glory of God and the good of others.
 - c. So besides putting the cookies down on the lower shelves — where we can all reach them during these sessions — I have brought many books — some of the tools that I use in biblical counseling — to assist you — and the ones that you will counsel in the future.
15. Now Pastor Brian has built some time into the schedule for question and answer — so fire away.