

How Marriage Works in Three Words

I'm proud to say that my wife will never love me as much as Him. Bizarre but true. He would go with us on dates. He would be there with us as we were getting to know one another. I know that on our wedding day when we married, He was there with us as we exchanged our vows. He was watching and He was involved. I know when she promised to love and respect me, she did so with me understanding that she loved and respected Him more. Even now, all these years later, I know that when she has a decision to make, she cares more about pleasing Him than me. She still consults what He wants before she considers what I want. She talks to Him more than she talks to me. She depends on Him more than me. When something goes wrong in our lives, she turns to Him before she turns to me. She loves Him more. The really bizarre thing is that I love Him more than I love her. I talk to Him a lot also. He's so good, so perfect, so trustworthy, that I cannot get enough of Him either. She loves Him. I love Him. And He loves both of us.

Of course I'm speaking of our God.

In this short series of posts, I want to explain how marriage is supposed to work. In this first post, marriage can be summed up in three words: "she, me, and he." God is involved in our marriage. He winces at the little squabbles. He's beaming when there is love. He's proud when children are born and sad when children are hurt. He cheers on our intimacy and steps in when there is a fight. He is a constant presence in our lives. He's ready to give advice and directions when our marriages come to crossroads. He is the constant in ours and every marriage that is built properly.

Often I hear the passage in **Ecclesiastes** used to describe this "three-way" relationship. *"And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken"* (Eccl 4.12).

In describing friendship and its value, the Preacher says that "two are better than one" because they are beneficial to one another (cf. **Eccl 4.9-12**). He uses several example scenarios to prove his point: when one falls, the other can lift him up, when two people lie together, they provide one another warmth. Then in this verse, when a man is fighting alone, he will be overcome but when he fights with a partner against an enemy, they are more likely to overpower the enemy and defeat him. In each example, it is a description of two people who together are better than one person. Then the analogy of the rope is thrown in the mix. *"A threefold cord is not quickly broken."* This is often explained to be talking about two friends and their God. The problem with this explanation is that this is not a necessary inference. Rather, it could just be a well-known proverb, an illustration of a braided cord instead of a single strand. It could be the threefold cords were common and there was no such thing as a twofold cord (how could you braid a twofold cord?).

Another problem is this: this statement is often loosely applied, but the context here in **Ecclesiastes** is one of friendship, not one of marriage. I agree that marriage should involve the closest of friendships so I think the application can work, but not as pointedly at other passages. There is another passage found in the Gospels that speaks more directly and

MARRIAGE THROUGH THE AGES

powerfully to the marriage relationship that should be examined in light of our three-word description of marriage.

He answered, *"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate"* (Matthew 19.4-6).

This threefold relationship is described here in the words of Jesus. He says that God designed marriage in the beginning. Man leaves, cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. Once God has joined a man and a woman together, no man should now interfere with that relationship. That relationship is designed by God. That relationship is made permanent by God. That relationship is also held together by God.

God is Himself involved in our relationships. He is the glue that holds the marriage together. He is the solder that binds two pieces together. He is part of the marriage, the third in a two-person relationship.

Any marriage that is built without God is a marriage that is doomed to have unnecessary trouble. Some marriages can make it without God, as we all have seen, but no marriage is complete without God. Marriage was designed to be built with God in the middle. As two people draw closer to one another, they draw closer to God. Or we can flip that. As two people draw closer to God, they draw closer to one another. God is the middle piece that holds the marriage together.

In every failed marriage, it is because one or both of the man and woman were drawing away from God. God hates divorce (**Malachi 2.16**). If we build our marriages with God in the middle, it will be impossible to seek divorce while also seeking God. God intends for marriage to work and He stays involved in the marriage as a source of wisdom, comfort, and togetherness. He is not a third party interference but a source of unity. Any marriage built with God in the middle will be a fulfilling and wonderful marriage. Any marriage built without God loses the greatest unifier that marriage can have. He is more important than attraction. He is greater than felt love. He is love, the greatest expression of sacrifice and service, respect and redemption. He is the One who ties a man and woman together in life-long marriage.

How does marriage work? Every man needs to get God between himself and his wife. Every wife needs to be more devoted to her God than her man. And when this happens, the man and woman will experience a stronger marriage than they ever thought possible. Marriage does not work if the man puts the woman above all else, or vice versa. Marriage works best when God becomes the most important person in a marriage. Man cannot separate what God has joined together and God cannot be separated from what He has joined together.

So God gives us the answer to why marriage works in only three words: "She - Me - He."

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