



# Potomac Hills

## Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.  
1 Corinthians 7:1-16

November 5, 2017  
English Standard Version

---

### *“Cross Words: Marry”*

The 10<sup>th</sup> Sermon in a series on The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians

#### **1 Corinthians 7:1-16**

*“Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”<sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.<sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.<sup>4</sup> For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.<sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.<sup>6</sup> Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.<sup>7</sup> I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.<sup>8</sup> To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.<sup>9</sup> But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

*<sup>10</sup> To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband<sup>11</sup> (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.*

*<sup>12</sup> To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.<sup>13</sup> If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.<sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.<sup>15</sup> But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not*

*enslaved. God has called you to peace. <sup>16</sup> For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?"*

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. We need to be reminded of what makes the greatness of the Gospel, the Power of the Cross, and the Glory of Christ! We need to know the sufficiency of Your Word for all the problems of our lives. We need to know that whatever we struggle with as individuals – even in this area of sex and sexuality, in marriage and singleness – that the answer to those issues are found in Christ. Thank You that **1st Corinthians** is a love letter to unlovely people, pointing us to our Redeemer. We need the redemption He offers. Bring us to the Cross, Bring us the grace of repentance, Soften our hard hearts, Have mercy upon us. And so we pray, by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, in His name we pray, amen.*

### **INTRODUCTION: “It’s a Promotion!”<sup>1</sup>**

Before I start, let me say how much I appreciate the Christian satire site, The Babylon Bee, going over our sermon series in advance and writing articles that I can use as sermon illustrations. **Obviously**, knowing that I was going to preach on the subject of marriage, they published one such article on Thursday, with the title, “*Woman In Singles Ministry Gets Married, Promoted To Real Christian.*”

It reads, “Judy Birch has been a proud member of Flying Solo, the Singles Ministry at First Church, for twelve years, but was finally promoted to **a real Christian** after getting married this weekend. “We’d like to welcome Judy to real Christianity and the real church now,” Pastor Judd said at a special welcome luncheon. “After years of **pretending** to be a Christian in our singles ministry, she’s ready to join the big leagues.”

“Way to go Judy!” he added as the crowd cheered.

The church presents each member who graduates the singles ministry and joins the church’s real ministries with a gift Bible, a devotional, and a commemorative plaque, with church leaders confirming that of their 150+ singles each year, only a few are able to escape **the purgatory** of singles’ ministry and make it into the Kingdom of God. “Judy’s our first convert to **the real faith** this year, so we’re excited to see if we see an uptick in conversions from singles ministry members to Christian converts,” the pastor said. As part of her induction into the faith, Judy will be expected to host a small group, contribute to the bake sale, and pump out at least five kids to support the church’s aggressive growth strategy, sources confirmed.”

**Again, that’s a SATIRE!** Or at least it’s supposed to be. However, the sad reality (without the five kids part) is that singles have told me **for years** that they often feel that the church pretty much treats them **just like that**. And that’s just flat wrong. And while the church is pro-marriage, it should also be pro-single.

Just because we say that one thing, being married, is good, shouldn’t mean that another thing, being single, is bad. It’s easy to forget that not only was the Apostle Paul single, so was our Lord Jesus. And in our passage today, Paul makes it clear that while the Biblical pattern may be for people to be married, those who are called to singleness are actually **better off**. And yet, while there’s advantages and disadvantages to both, and while there’s **beauty** and **difficulty** in

---

<sup>1</sup> Introduction taken from the SATIRE article “*Woman In Singles Ministry Gets Married, Promoted To Real Christian*” by The Babylon Bee, 11/2/17, [www.babylonbee.com](http://www.babylonbee.com)

both, there's little doubt that **both are hard**. There's no easy out here. **It's hard** to be married. **It's hard** to be single. And the Gospel brings **HOPE** to what's hard.

So, with that said, let's turn to our passage today, **1 Corinthians 7:1-16**. I'm going to tackle this passage a little differently today. My intention is to look at the whole passage from three different angles. Normally I try to break it down into teachable units, but today we're going to look at the whole from three different perspectives. So let's get started. And first, we're going to look at ...

### **THE HARD AND BEAUTIFUL** <sup>2</sup>

The Corinthian culture was essentially **hedonistic**, which means that they were self-indulgent seekers of pleasure. Paul has already addressed the topic of sexual immorality in the context of the local church. Some members of the community were visiting prostitutes because prostitution was socially acceptable and was more the norm than an exception. The Corinthian culture believed that marriage was **not** the place where one could experience sexual fulfillment.

Therefore, some Christians in Corinth reacted to this by being **ascetic**. **An ascetic** was someone who practiced **self-denial** as a spiritual discipline. It was right to react to the hedonism of the culture, especially in light of the fact that it was creeping into the church, but they **overreacted**. According to verse 1, some were saying, "*It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.*"

And, if you stop and think about it, there are similar issues in our day. The broader culture is extremely hedonistic in its approach to sexuality. And Christians have often been criticized of being **way too ascetic**, though no one would use that term, they'll just say that we're too prudish, straitlaced, or narrow-minded.

Against these two extremes Paul gives us a balanced and humanizing view of sexuality. Hedonism says, "It just doesn't matter. The body is morally neutral. As long as they're consenting adults, there are no moral implications." Which tells us that **consent**, while needed and necessary is, in and of itself, not enough. You can give **consent** to a lot of harmful and unbiblical practices and just having **consent** doesn't redeem them, it merely allows them. And, sadly, this view ultimately **dehumanizes** the participants by removing the soul from the picture of sexuality. Asceticism, on the other hand, says, "Don't have sex with anyone ... ever! The body is morally evil." Even within the context of marriage, sexuality is viewed as a **weakness** at best and potentially **sinful** at worst. This view ultimately **dehumanizes** individuals by rejecting an essential part of their humanity — the body. Asceticism over spiritualizes human beings. So, hedonism downplays the soul, while asceticism downplays the body, and the Corinthians were understandably confused. They didn't know what to do.

And so the Apostle Paul teaches them a **beautiful, humanizing** view of sexuality. He wants them to know that Biblical sexuality promotes a **one man, one woman, covenant relationship** within the context of marriage. It declares that the body is both **good and**

---

**2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God by Timothy & Kathy Keller, pages 77-109, 219-229; Preaching the Word: 1 Corinthians by Dr. Stephen Um, preached at CityLife Presbyterian Church (PCA), Boston, MA, pages 121-132. **And the sermons, "Marriage, Divorce, & Singleness"** by Dr. Timothy Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 4/22/90, The Tim Keller Sermon Archive, Logos Bible Software 7.10; and "Sexual Sanity" by Dr. David Strain, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, 6/25/17, [www.fpcjackson.org](http://www.fpcjackson.org).**

**beautiful.** God has given us bodies for His glory and our good. I spoke about that last week. Sexuality is healthy when it's expressed in the context for which God designed it. But not only is **the body** good and **beautiful**, the **one man, one woman, covenant relationship** also demonstrates the value of **the soul**. The co-mingling of souls is what gives meaning to human sexuality. It ultimately **humanizes** individuals by affirming both **the body** and **the soul**. Biblical sexuality is the only view of sexuality that can properly account for the body **and** the soul.

Now, our text does not explicitly teach the idea of **oneness**, but it implicitly assumes it. Paul's view of marriage is dependent upon the teaching of Jesus, which has its foundation in the Genesis account of creation. **Mark 10:6–9** says, "*But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'*"<sup>7</sup> "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,*"<sup>8</sup> **and the two shall become one flesh.**"<sup>9</sup> *So they are no longer two but one flesh.*"<sup>9</sup> *What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*

Marriage is a one-flesh union and is intended to be a literal melding of identities, as I said, a co-mingling of souls. All other aspects of our identity take a backseat to the **oneness** we now share with our spouse. This is **the beautiful relationship** that forms all other relationships. Relationships to one's family, friends, even yourself ... change. The Bible views sexuality within the context of marriage as the primary picture of **the beauty of oneness**. We see this in Paul's description of the relationship of a husband and wife in **verse 4**, "*For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*" In a healthy marriage there's a **beautiful giving up** of one's autonomy to the other. Ultimately the **oneness** of a couple is intended to be drawn from and point to **their mutual relationship to the Lord**. So ... How is **the beauty of oneness** maintained over time? And that question gives us two answers, the first of which is ...

- **Service**

The general witness of Scripture is that a **beautiful marriage** is maintained when a husband and wife put each other's needs before his or her own and this is expressed through selfless service. Paul says in **Philippians 2** that we should put the other person's interests before our own. In **1 Corinthians 7** the discussion of self-giving service is in the context of sexuality. Husband and wife are to **complement** one another, to **serve** the other in his or her weaknesses. Here the discussion of self-giving service revolves around **the prevention** of sexual immorality, which Paul addressed in the last chapter. **Verses 2–4** say, "*But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*"

Notice **the beautiful balance** on display in this other-serving relationship. In a patriarchal society where male dominance was part and parcel of maintaining one's status and position, where the needs and desires of women were **rarely** considered, Paul's teaching was **radically** counter-cultural. Paul is claiming that women and men have equal rights in the bedroom. Paul envisions sexuality as a means of serving one's spouse. Ascetics who claim that the Bible's perspective on sex is limited to procreation aren't reading this text. Paul acknowledges that human beings have passions, and he envisions a healthy marriage in which

these passions are exercised regularly. To the ascetic who views marital activity as less than holy, Paul's counterargument is that couples do this **in order to remain holy**.

The reason married individuals are married, ultimately, is to please God, which points to the goal of **selfless service**. Ultimately, **selfless service** in marriage is intended to spur both partners on in their devotion to the Lord. The greater end of a marriage relationship is to live a life pleasing to God. This is the aim of marriage – not merely happiness, **but holiness**. God calls us to be kind and gracious **sanctifying agents** in the lives of our spouses. The Bible shows that sexuality is a beautiful gift given to us by God as a blessing to be enjoyed within the context of a faithful marriage relationship between a husband and a wife.

That's the first answer to the question, How is this oneness maintained over time? Through **self-giving service**. But secondly, oneness is maintained over time simply through ...

- **Commitment**

**Verses 10–16** contain Paul's instructions on how Christians ought to approach the great **difficulties** of marriage. Is divorce ever permissible? How should someone who comes to know Christ respond when his or her spouse is decidedly not a Christian? Though these verses are dealing with **difficult** cases, the underlying teaching is in regard to **the beautiful commitment** that lies at the heart of marriage. The Bible's seemingly **strict views on divorce** are derived from its **even higher view of marriage**. The marriage commitment is **an objective reality** that should not be altered. Paul makes it clear in **verses 10-11**, "*To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.*"

Simply put, marriage is not to be interrupted by separation or terminated by divorce. The marriage commitment **subjectively works itself out** in steadfast love ... that's not determined or altered by emotions or changes in you or your spouse. Now some singles might quickly make a false connection at this point. Some might say, "There must be some principle that is going to allow me as a Christian single woman to marry this non-Christian man who's willing to come to church." The Bible is clear. If a Christian is to marry, she needs to marry "**in the Lord**." We see that at the end of the chapter, **1 Corinthians 7:39**, "*A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, **only in the Lord**.*" But in a culture where marriage can be incredibly difficult, we have to confront ...

### **THE HARD AND DIFFICULT** <sup>3</sup>

Culturally, marriage is at an all-time low. For all the cultural debate about marriage, the numbers show that marriage has seen better days. This has led some to give up on marriage altogether. Even those who haven't given up, can often observe the **difficulties** of marriage. Others know the **difficulties** from firsthand experience. Some have personally experienced the pain of divorce. Others are married, but have had a **difficult** experience up to this point. There is no shortage of the **brokenness** of marriage on display to the watching world.

For others, this section of Paul's letter is difficult to read because, despite deep longings, many are not married. The next section of **chapter 7** will deal more directly with the issue of singleness, and hopefully it will answer some of those concerns more directly. But this

---

**3 Much of this section comes from the Keller's book on marriage.** A small part is taken from the articles, "*The Happy Marriage Is the 'Me' Marriage*" by Tara Parker-Pope, 12/31/10, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) and "*The Mirage and Marriage*" by Collin Hanson, 1/27/13, [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org).

particular passage does address those who are single, and Paul highlights a few things. Singleness is an **ideal**, **verse 6**, “*Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.*” Alongside marriage, Paul views singleness as a **gift**, **verse 7**, “*I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.*” For some, perhaps even many, singleness is a **calling**. Those who are currently single are **called** to be single, at least for now. In this particular season, **the call** is to live a holy life in anticipation of God’s provision. At the same time Paul knows that singleness can affect anyone at the deepest level — often there are passions that burn deep inside of us, whether emotional or relational, and when they’re unmet it can be tormenting. This is part of the **difficulty** of marriage. Sin has so twisted marriage that for many unmarried people it seems impossible to live without it. On the other hand, sin has so twisted marriage that for many married people it seems impossible to live with it. Why? Well, first of all, many people haven’t bought into **the beauty of oneness**, and so, they lead **divided lives**.

Practically speaking, many married couples are living **separate lives**. It’s possible to be **objectively** one (there’s a marriage license), but to live **subjectively** as two (as in the case of separate beds or separate bank accounts). There isn’t a shared vision for life. There are two people in the marriage, but they have never really understood what it means to be one. And nothing in their life demonstrates **oneness**. Everything is his or hers ... there’s precious little **that’s ours**. And divided lives often get expressed through **selfishness**. **Selfishness** through **ascetic withholding** of one from the other, either emotionally or physically, or both. Paul is speaking to Christians who were withholding themselves, or something about themselves, from their spouses. Something like this happens regularly in modern marriages – keeping oneself from one’s spouse to get what one wants or to get the upper hand – and it can become quite manipulative. And pretty soon their relationship looks like a commercial business deal.

**Divided lives** can also be manifested through hedonism. Elsewhere in Corinthians we’ve encountered individuals who were letting their sexuality get them into all kinds of immoral situations. Modern marriages are victim to such hedonistic exploration too. There is adultery and pornography along with other anonymous, quick, easy, culturally acceptable ways to get satisfaction from someone besides your spouse. The source of the division in our marriages is **selfishness**. Instead of **self-giving service**, we’re simply **Self-Serving**.

Our approach to marriage is self-serving rather than selfless other-serving. Tara Parker-Pope wrote a *New York Times* article entitled “The Happy Marriage is the ‘Me’ Marriage.” She writes, “...in modern relationships people are looking for partners who make their lives more interesting, who help each of them attain their respective value goals. So marriage is supposed to be about “us,” but in our modern culture it has become about “me.” It’s all about me.”

And so people think, “I need a perfect, compatible soul mate ... who will fulfill me,” but inevitably, this will become a problem. This is different from people who think, “I want to have a friend I can have deep friendship with.” Tim Keller summarizes it this way ... There are two key factors for this so-called new idealism. The first is **physical attractiveness**. In other words, the other person has to be **really** physically attractive. Secondly, **compatibility**, which means “they wanted someone who has the willingness to take you in as you are and not try to change you.” Often there’s resentment when one person wants to change the other. Men want a woman who fits into their lives, who will be truly compatible with them, and who will not try to change

them. And if that's what people want in a relationship, they'll remain single for a long time. A deeply devoted loyal relationship requires a surrendering of one's independence.

People seem to think that the traditional approach to marriage — being committed, loyal, faithful, monogamous, and self-giving — is oppressive and that the progressive view toward marriage is liberating. The irony is that it is the exact opposite because the progressive view that there's a perfect person out there who is going to be able to fulfill every need you have is utterly enslaving. Reality shows us that this is an unrealistic set of expectations placed on the other person.

I'm amazed that people think that real marriage requires two completely well-adjusted individuals, with little in the way of emotional needs, and without any character flaws that need a whole lot of work. That's what everyone wants, a perfectly compatible soul mate who is well adjusted, is not emotionally needy, but is full of emotional wealth, and is very attractive. But even if that person — who doesn't actually exist — was found and pursued until a relationship started, it's still not going to work, it's immediately broken because the person pursuing the relationship brings with him all sorts of issues and problems.

If marriages begin with a **self-serving** purpose, then when a spouse can't meet certain expectations, that **self-serving** posture gets amplified. This **self-serving** approach twists and distorts life within marriage. Sexuality, within the context of marriage, ceases to be what it was meant to be when it just becomes about the other person meeting your needs. When those **who are one** start acting **like they're two**, and when those who are called to serve one another are more interested in serving themselves, it leads to massive **difficulties**.

So how is it possible to cultivate the beauty of marriage and not kill it? The **beauty** of marriage begins to overcome the **difficulty** of marriage when marriage **ceases** to be the most important relationship in your life. Let me say that again ... The beauty of marriage begins to overcome the difficulty of marriage when marriage **ceases** to be the most important relationship in your life. Which means that marriage needs to follow ...

### **THE MARRIAGE MODEL OF CHRIST**

What Paul is trying to say is, "Your marriage is meant to follow the pattern of the model marriage." The **model** marriage is Jesus' relationship with His bride. Jesus is the bridegroom. He's the husband, and He has a relationship with His bride, the church. Though marriage is a blessing, a gift, a calling, and a place where Christians can find deep satisfaction, it is **not designed** to be the source of ultimate satisfaction. Expecting marriage to satisfy your longing, or meet your needs, or bring you happiness can **smother** the other person, creating resentment. On the other hand, this view can also stir resentment toward the other person for their **inability** to satisfy your expectations.

All of this is a result of asking marriage to do something it was never intended to do. Ultimately, marriage isn't about the two individuals. Marriage is meant to **model** the marriage of Christ and the church. The New Testament tells us that this **model** is the marriage between Christ and His church, **Ephesians 5:31-32**, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*" <sup>32</sup> *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to **Christ and the church.***"

Christian marriages are fulfilling their purpose when they display the "**profound ... mystery**" of Christ's love for His bride. How do the **beauties** of marriage begin to break through and overshadow the **difficulties**? If marriage is about modeling a **greater marriage**, then it's

vital to get the instructions for how that **greater marriage works**. It's the profound mystery of Christ, the only perfect person, who lays down his life through His sacrificial life and death. When He sacrifices all that He has, when He gives up His rights and doesn't try to take advantage of them, He empties Himself in order to meet the needs of a sinful bride.

So let's stop and look at the marriage of Christ and the church. Christ committed Himself to the church as His bride. This commitment came when believers were at their **sinful worst**. As in the story of Hosea and Gomer, the love of God pursues an adulteress wife to the very end. **There were no requirements** attached to His commitment. **There was no behavior** that had to be maintained attached to His commitment. This is unbelievable! **God has covenantally committed Himself to an adulterous wife** — and that adulterous wife is the church! God's **covenantal commitment** to His people is steadfast and unshakable. The radical grace of God is the source we need to be radically gracious to our spouse. When one person in the marriage is content to see it break down, the other can remain **steadfastly committed** because of **God's steadfast commitment** to the church. This is what lies behind Paul's command that a believer who comes to faith after having been married ought to stay in the marriage (**verses 12-13**). Marriage is not about **the benefits received**, but the commitment made. It's possible to remain faithful to one's **commitment** because of the ultimate **commitment** that Christ has made to the church.

How does Christ display **His covenantal commitment** to the church? He seals it by giving Himself away. He's not **self-serving but self-giving**. He places the needs of His spouse above His own. He is completely other-focused. He keeps no record of wrongs. In fact, He sacrifices His own life to erase the record of wrongs. He doesn't even hang on to His record of rights, but gives them over to the church so that she's spotless, clothed in His righteousness. Being the beneficiary of Christ's **death-defeating, selfless service** helps us to no longer keep a record of wrongs. Christians can now stop standing in judgment over their spouses because Christ absorbed the judgment they deserved. And they can **selflessly serve** their spouses because Jesus **selflessly served** His bride, the church.

Christ has mended and re sewn the torn fabric of the believer's relationship with God. The Old Testament actually describes the rift between God and Israel as a divorce. The sins of Israel were piled so high that God finally sent His adulteress wife away with "**a decree of divorce**" (**Jeremiah 3:8**). Israel was exiled in Assyria **because of her adultery**, but Jesus was exiled on the cross **because of our adultery**. Jesus experienced **division from the Father** in order to secure our oneness with Him. Because of our union with Christ, the one who experienced the divorce of the cross, we never have to fear being divorced from the love of God. Christ's vows to his bride are eternally unbreakable because they are sealed with His blood. In the church's marriage to Christ, it is not "until death do us part"; it is "my death ensures that we will never be apart." This is **the foundation for oneness** in a marriage of divided lives. The union Christ has with the church is the foundation for the union between a husband and wife. Marriage is **beautiful**, and it's meant to model the profound mystery of Christ and the church. His **commitment**, His **selfless service**, and His union-securing death turn **difficulties** into **beauty**. That's the profound mystery of the gospel.

Once this profound mystery is understood, anyone can look across and see **the perfectly wrong person** who is her husband, **the perfectly wrong person** who is his wife, and be able to say, "This marriage is **not about me**. It's about us. It's about meeting her needs. It's about

meeting his needs.” Here’s **the beauty**: when an individual is pursuing his spouse’s happiness and holiness, the spouse is going to get her happiness, and that husband’s happiness will increase. But when individuals pursue their own happiness, they get neither their own nor their spouse’s. And perhaps those people will repeatedly wonder why they always seem to be stuck, why there are more **difficulties** than beauties, why they can’t seem to make it work? It’s because they’re stuck **in self-service**.

The only way someone can look at the wrong person in his or her marriage and for that person to become the right person is to know that the perfectly right person has come for the wrong person — for you and me, for all of us. This means we must say to ourselves something like this ... “When Jesus looked down from the cross, He didn’t think, ‘I am giving Myself to you because you are so attractive.’ No, He was in agony, and He looked down at us — denying Him, abandoning Him, betraying Him — and in the greatest act of love in history, **HE STAYED**. He said, ‘Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.’ He loved us, not because we were lovely, **but to make us lovely**. **That** ... is why I am going to love my spouse.” Speak to your heart like that, and then fulfill the promises you made on your wedding day

The world doesn’t understand the Biblical view of marriage because the world doesn’t understand **the commitment of Christ**. The world doesn’t understand that God cares deeply about sexuality and marriage. I want to repeat something I said earlier in this series, in fact, I think I’ve said it multiple times over many years. Because I think it’s at the heart of God’s design for marriage. Biblical marriage is a commitment which involves the whole person – body and soul. You can’t give just one part of you away – just the body – without also giving away your soul. It’s a package deal, and God says it’s so **volatile**, and at the same time so **fragile**, that there’s only one safe place for it – **marriage**.

We’ve touched on some sensitive issues over the last few weeks. But those points that hurt, those areas that hurt, those areas that need work and need attention: let Jesus be the Master there. Let Him lead you there. Let Him guide you there. Let Him teach you there. Let Him uphold you there so that we might build marriages that are strong and lasting and honoring to God.

The world will try to convince you that Christian views on sexuality are too narrow and outdated for today’s world. “I don’t like what Christianity has to say about this area of my life.” But if a doctor prescribes an unpleasant tasting medicine, what do you do? If you’re truly sick, you take it! And it’s just a wrong-headed to **taste-test Christianity** as it is to **taste-test medicine**. Christianity will not allow itself to be evaluated solely on its sexual ethics. And that’s because the real question is ... **“Is Jesus Christ really the Son of God?”**

Is He who He said He is? Is He the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Has He really died for you because you’re a sinner? If He **is** and **has**, than who cares what He asks you to do or not to do? You should do it! In a sense, the gospel doesn’t let you talk about anything else first. It says, “I won’t talk to you about marriage or sexuality or gender roles or suffering or anything else until you determine **what you will do with Him**. **Who He is determines everything else.**”

But they object, “Christianity has such a low view of sex.” **Really?** The Christian view of sex is enormously lofty. The Bible says that sex points to the ultimate closure we will have with Christ in heaven. The Bible tells us that God made sex for marriage because it is capable of bringing so much glory and so much joy into your life that only two people **fully committed to**

one another for a lifetime can receive it. No higher view is possible! It's not by coincidence that His chosen imagery to characterize His relationship with His people is the covenant of marriage. And hopefully, you've learned that the best marriages are marriages **that put Jesus first.** Perhaps we should pray that we do just that.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Our Father in heaven, these are solemn issues that we've dealt with in these past few weeks. You know our hearts; you know our marriages. You know the marriages that are broken; you know the marriages that are in trouble. You know the husbands and wives who are not speaking to each other. You know the husbands and wives who are not relating to each other as husband and wife.*

*So look for us as a church, we pray, in mercy. Forgive us and work in these weeks and months ahead of us through **1st Corinthians** — teach us who we really are in Jesus and to strengthen us as we seek to live it out for your glory and honor and praise. And as we begin to be changed by the Gospel, grant that we may live like people **called** to be saints, **united** in fellowship, **discerning** spiritual truths, **building** on Christ, **pursuing** holiness, looking for **cleansing**, knowing that **we belong to You** ... and so we ask all these things, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*

This message has been lightly edited and formatted for the web page. No attempt has been made to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template. There may be slight differences with the audio version. Should there be any questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should presume any error to be with the original speaker and should contact him directly. For full copyright, reproduction and permissions information, please visit the PHPC Copyright statement at [www.PotomacHills.org](http://www.PotomacHills.org).

### **Revelation 19:6b-9 #CrossWords**

*“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”*