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Honor Marriage



QUESTION 1:

Whose marriage have you always admired?

THE POINT

Physical intimacy is reserved for one man and woman within the covenant of marriage.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Weddings these days come in all sizes and shapes. For many, a wedding is a quiet, simple ceremony, while others spare no expense to create an experience their friends and family will long remember. Regardless of the trappings, weddings share one thing in common: union. Two additional words can be used to describe a solid marriage.

► **Discontinuity.** When a man and woman get married, they break the ties with those who once constituted their dominant family prior to the wedding.

► **Continuity.** The couple continues a magnificent institution called family. It's not the same as the one they are disconnecting from, but it continues the same principle of family.

God calls this union a covenant. Because the nature of a covenant is spiritually binding, honoring marriage is especially important. Unfortunately, our culture has been playing fast and loose with this covenant, and people are trying to redefine what marriage is and what that commitment entails. God made His standard clear in the Ten Commandments.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

EXODUS 20:14

¹⁴ Do not commit adultery.

The commandment against adultery in marriage is a critical one. We are to watch over our marriages—and the marriages of others—with all diligence. Adultery breaks trust and divides the oneness God desires us to have and has designed us to experience.

QUESTION 2:

How would you summarize our culture's view of adultery?

Within the uniquely physical marriage union, God has given us chemical bonds of romance that serve a greater purpose than mere pleasure. God has designed us in such a way that these chemical bonds create and seal ties of commitment, attraction, and protection based on various hormones.

Yet unfortunately when these experiences occur outside the union of marriage—such as in a romantic and/or physical affair

(i.e., adultery)—they damage the marital attachments. Then the married couple is required to rebuild what it lost in order to restore relational harmony. Not only that, the affair creates new chemical bonds outside of the covenant of marriage. These new bonds leave lasting scars, cravings, and even symptoms of withdrawal for months or even years when ultimately broken.

Adultery—physical or emotional—does far more damage than simply breaking trust through betrayal in a marriage. It effectively transfers the marital bond in one partner to someone else. Measurable scientific data has shown us that the withdrawal effects from a temporary love interest are as severe, if not even more severe, as those from any drug.¹ Science confirms this, but God told us something very similar in His Word. When Paul wrote, “Don’t you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her?” (1 Cor. 6:16), he used the Greek word *kollaō*, which literally means “to glue together, cement.”

Sexual intimacy releases chemicals designed to bond; these brain-imprinting hormones essentially glue two individuals together.

The Bible tells us to guard our hearts because it is in the heart that sin first takes root. Jesus connected the command not to commit adultery with the heart. “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:27-28). Adultery is deeper

than the physical act because it is rooted in a spiritual source. While the commandment focused on the act, Jesus zeroed in on the heart that motivated the act.

QUESTION 3:

What are the benefits for a society following God's standards for purity and faithfulness in marriage?

2 SAMUEL 11:1-3A

¹ In the spring when kings march out to war, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah, but David remained in Jerusalem. ² One evening David got up from his bed and strolled around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing—a very beautiful woman. ^{3a} So David sent someone to inquire about her.

David's life is a prime example of what happens when we don't allow faithfulness and purity to guard our thoughts. Faithfulness and purity begins in our minds. As soon as David chose to send someone to inquire about the woman he saw bathing on the rooftop, he had already begun the process of pursuit. In that situation, guarding his mind would have meant turning away from what he saw at the moment he first saw her. Instead, David chose to pursue her, which led to devastation.

If we don't guard ourselves, we share knowledge—intimate knowledge—about ourselves that only one person—our

spouse—was meant to know. That knowledge is significant. The first mention of sexual intimacy is in Genesis 4:1: “The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.” The original term translated “was intimate” is the Hebrew word *yada*, which refers to knowing or revealing something. While the word itself doesn't refer to sexual intimacy, the context points to an intimate knowledge. It's clear that sexual intimacy is about so much more than physical activity and pleasure. The word *yada* is the idea of plummeting into the reality of another person in order to know deeply and be deeply known.

HONORING MARRIAGE

From the following words relating to marriage, circle the three you think are most important:

Companionship Having Children Sharing Resources

Sharing Experiences Sexual Intimacy

Having Someone Love You Communication Growing Old Together

Write a sentence containing one of your chosen words to express
how believers might honor God in this way:

Offer a prayer of gratitude for God's blessing of godly marriages.



"Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body."

1 CORINTHIANS 6:18

The word is also used in reference to knowing God. It captures the personal interaction we can have with Him:

- ▶ “The secret counsel of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he *reveals* his covenant to them” (Ps. 25:14, emphasis added).
- ▶ “You are my witnesses”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may *know* and believe me and understand that I am he” (Isa. 43:10, emphasis added).
- ▶ “I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches from secret places, so that you may *know* that I am the LORD” (Isa. 45:3, emphasis added).

God desires intimacy in our relationship with Him. Because marriage is a reflection of the

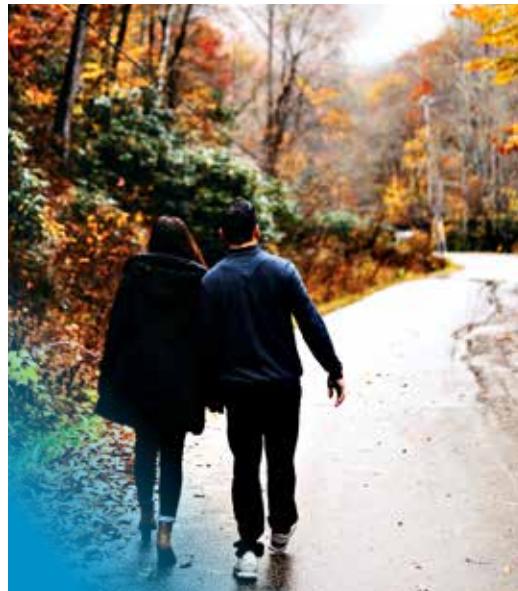
union we are to have with Christ (Eph. 5:22-32), the same level of purity and faithfulness we show in our relationship with Christ is to be seen in one’s relationship to a spouse. David understood such commitment: “I will dwell in your tent forever and take refuge under the shelter of your wings. God, you have heard my vows; you have given a heritage to those who fear your name” (Ps. 61:4-5). Yet, as he stood on his roof and saw Bathsheba, he ceased to let that same faithfulness and purity guard his thoughts.

QUESTION 4:

What are some practical ways we can follow God’s command to be faithful and pure?

2 SAMUEL 11:3B-5

^{3b} And he said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah the Hethite?” ⁴ David sent messengers to get her, and when she came to him, he slept with her. Now she had just been purifying herself from her uncleanness. Afterward, she returned home. ⁵ The woman conceived and sent word to inform David: “I am pregnant.”



David not only set aside faithfulness in his own life, he also failed to honor the marriage relationship of Bathsheba. The servant reminded David of Bathsheba's own marriage. The servant tried to intervene by helping David see the danger of continuing his pursuit. He reminded David that Bathsheba was someone's daughter and someone's wife. But David pursued her anyhow; he chose to satisfy his physical desires regardless of the consequences.

It could be argued that David was not in love with Bathsheba; his was only a physical attraction. David had removed one of the main purposes and intentions of sexuality: the exclusive bonding that allows for knowing and being known.

Unfortunately, this can even happen within a marriage if the couple does not bond emotionally and spiritually through a loving, giving, and honoring relationship. We see this occur between Jacob and Leah, the wife he did not love (Gen. 30:16). The marriage between Jacob and Leah may have produced seven children, but it also produced pain.

When sex becomes nothing more than an activity to perform for its own end, it brings with it heartbreak, jealousy, regret, and a host of emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences. Guarding marriage from adultery starts by creating a true connection of love, honor, and romance between both spouses and cultivating the love-relationship. It's only in guarding the hearts in the home that the home can be preserved. By failing to guard his heart or seek the best for Bathsheba, David invited great calamity into his family and hers.

Jesus understood the slippery slope of adultery as well as the deceptive nature of the human heart (Jer. 17:9). But when we honor the union between a husband and wife, we live lives that are pleasing to God and bring us the greatest satisfaction and joy.

QUESTION 5:

What are some ways our group can encourage and support couples in their marriage relationship?



LIVE IT OUT

How will you seek to preserve and honor marriage, whether it is yours or the marriage of others? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Examine your heart.** Honor for your marriage and for the relationships of others begins in the heart and mind. Turn from any involvement with lust, pornography, or inappropriate feelings toward others.
- ▶ **Examine your actions.** If you are guilty of the sin of adultery (either emotionally or physically) in the past or present, repent fully before God and turn your heart away from this sin and toward obedience to Christ. If you have not committed sin in this regard, thank God and ask Him to guide you in a life that continually honors marriage.
- ▶ **Honor.** Seek ways to honor marriage—both your own and the marriages of others. (This applies to all regardless of their marital status.) Identify specific things you can do this week to show honor to yourself, your spouse (if you are married), and God. Identify ways you can honor others for their faithfulness in marriage.

Our culture puts much emphasis on weddings, but more focus should be put on marriage itself. And of course, regardless of our marital status, our hearts must be pure.

1 Helen Fisher, "The Brain in Love," *TED2008*, Filmed February 2008, www.ted.com/talks/helen_fisher_studies_the_brain_in_love.