



The Flow

14

Growing Marriages

Ephesians 5:31-33

Fostering Spiritual Growth in the Church

Paul J. Bucknell

Discovering
Love

1

LITTLE CHILDREN

Strong security
from His love



Establishing
Hope

2

YOUNG MEN

Great confidence
in His word



Strengthening
Faith

3

FATHERS

Deep intimacy
with God

Growing Marriages

- Marriages are designed to grow into full expressions of the commitment between Christ and the church.
- The three stages of Christian growth highlight the different growth that is possible at each stage.
- Marriage binds us in a life covenant to the other “until death do us part” (Rom 7:1-3), and therefore enables us to more deeply refine ourselves and our relationship with our spouse.
- As we grow in our understanding of God’s commitment to bless our marriage, we further deepen our commitment to our spouse and love him/her as God loves us.

A Biblical Picture of Marriage (Eph 5:31-33)

31: Marriage is directive:
God's statement on the essence of marriage. $1 + 1 = 1$

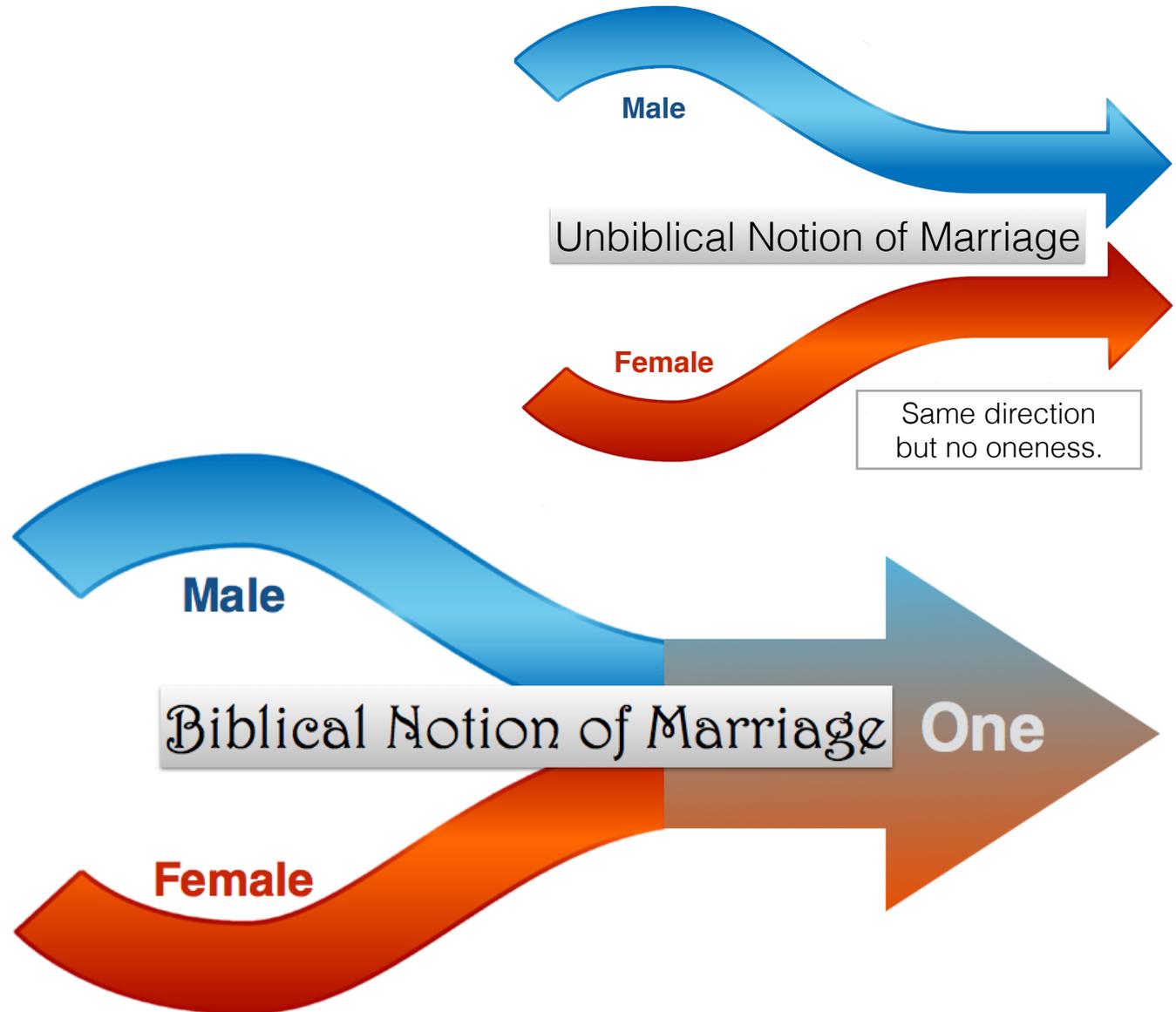
32: Marriage is a **design:**
Marriage's design reflects the eternal pattern between God and His people.

33: Marriage is **doable:**
The concepts of marriage must be translated to our earthly lives.

“31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband” (Eph 5:31-33).

A Framework for Marriage

God's design and framework of marriage lead to the beauty of intimacy, the two become one flesh, physically and in one's soul and purpose.



The Makings of a Great Marriage - illustration

- Marriage is this ongoing refining experience offering great rewards, something like making a great meal !
- Chosen ingredients
- A blend is best; two become one
- Cooking requires heat
- Closeness (can't escape) creates that friction/heat/trouble
- Negatively (the losing) or positively (the gaining and refining).



Level 1 - Newly Marriage: Honeymooners Commitment and Openness

- Vision: I **MUST** be with him/her!
- Think of the financial costs, pressures, changes of roles, living locations that occur when a couple gets married, and yet they **still** want to be married!



Level 1 - Honeymooners

Characteristics

- Committed
- Desirous
- Big expectations.

Challenges

- Unstable
- Hopes dashed
- Hopes regained (make-up)

Level 1 - Honeymooners

Christlike Responses

- Excitement
- Commitment
- Learning spirit

Summary

The early stage of marriage can often be seen as an expression of 'eros' love. Although this fatuous love is committal in nature, the commitment tends to be based upon on one's expectations and dreams (what one receives). When the expectations do not pan out, then great ups and downs shatter the dreams but provide opportunity to deepen one's commitment.

Level 2 – Young Married Couple

The Challenged Marriage

- Vision: **PURSUE** God's goals of marriage despite temporary setbacks
- The hopes of marriage are charged by a deep commitment to God's hopes that He gives in His Word.
- Discouragement comes from regressing from the oneness obtained and stepping back to one's own desires.



Level 2 - Young Married Couple

Characteristics

- Love: I do love being married, but...
- Lost temper: I get really upset with my spouse
- Lose vision: Is this all there is to marriage?

Challenges

- **Compromise:** Willingness to put my ambitions first
- Devious: Fake genuine love to get what I want
- Adulterous: Entertain thoughts of other relationships as better

Level 2 - Young Married Couple

Christlike Responses:

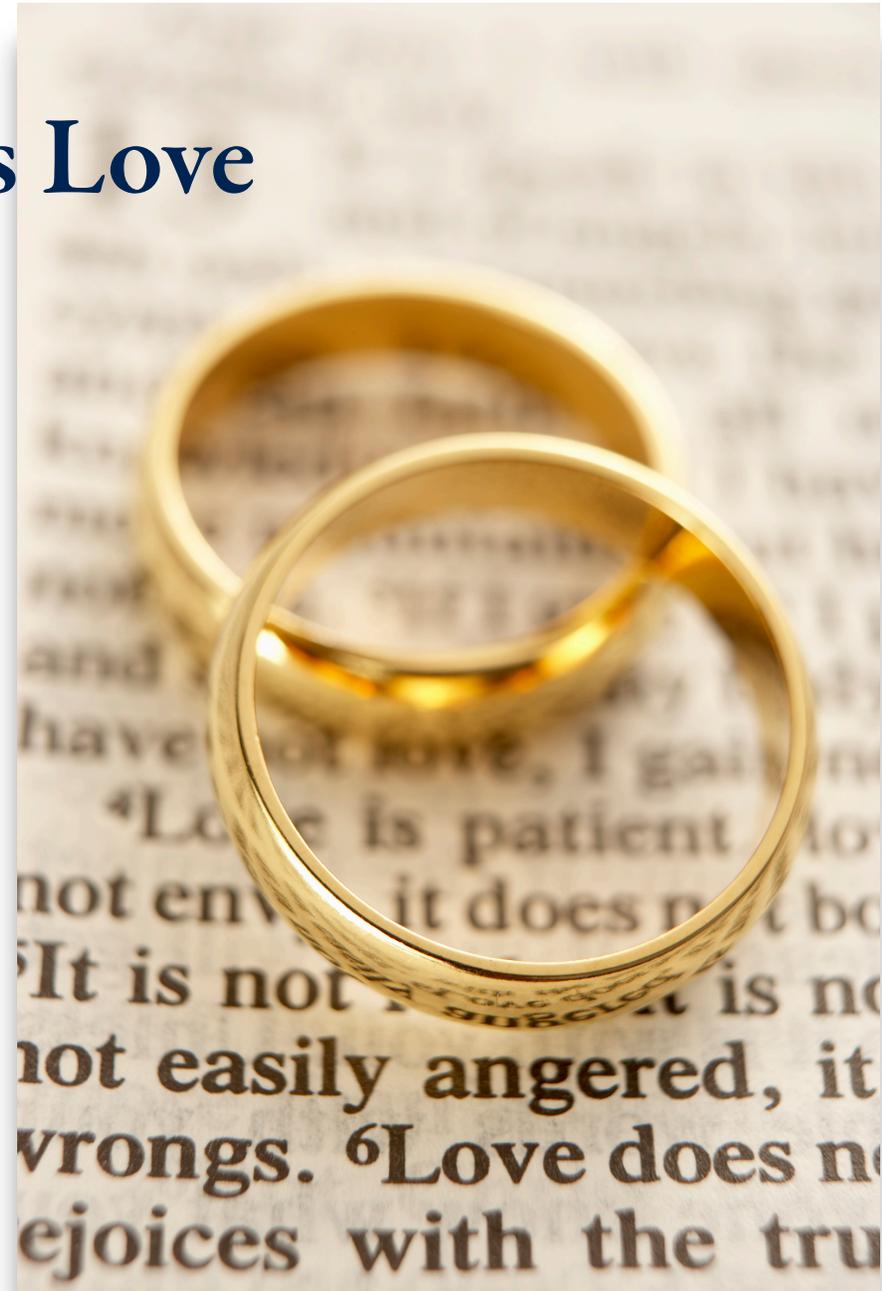
- Allow God's Word to retain that vision and commitment
- Prayerfully work through difficulties and impasses
- Persistently forgive one another
- Trust God to meet one's deepest needs

Summary

God's Word radiates hope and direction for the troubled couple. Marriage works when one allows God to work through the misunderstandings and make-up times. The young married couple typically lives out a worldly '*phileo*' love, "As you treat me, I will treat you."

Level 3 - Mature Couple: Responses from God's Love

- **Vision:** A steady growing devotion towards one's spouse
- Christ's love is a maturing love that refines our attitudes, words, and touches thus enabling us to increasingly love our spouse despite how differences normally cause insecurity in our marriages.



Level 3 - Mature Couple

Characteristics

- Consistent Love
- Make sacrifices
- When wronged can usually quickly forgive
- Willing not to get my way
- God teaches through one's spouse
- Discovering the needs of my spouse so that I can delight him/her.

Challenges

- Increased age and pain
- Decreased function
Death of loved ones
- Complacency
- Depression
- Troubled family members

Level 3 - Mature Couple

Christlike Responses:

- Able to work through misunderstandings, disappointments, and different expectations
- Increasingly intimate times with one's mate are not based on beauty but devotion
- Treasure heart oneness more than physical intimacy
- A deeper relationship with God unfolds deeper insights into God's love, enabling a further refinement of one's love
- Content with one's own spouse despite imperfections.

Summary

Level 3 - Mature Couple

An enriching ‘agape’ love enables the mature believer to avoid selfish binges and demands, and instead focuses on building up one’s mate through consistent kind acts and words, delighting in the resulting oneness of heart and mind bringing peace, joy, and love.

The Flow

Discussion Questions

1. Think of a troubled marriage and point out how personal/spiritual problems affect their marriage.
2. Have you ever seen a great marriage? What characteristics have you seen of these good marriages?
3. Identify one or more personal qualities in your life to love people better.



Striving for Moral Purity

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:1-2, NASB).

#1 Our Thinking

Brings truth: What does God say anyway?

Understanding God's commands helps us understand His special design for us.

#2 Our Clean-up

Brings light: Why do I regularly fall?

Exposing our impure roots shows us how serious we need to fight.

#3 Our Foundation

Brings confidence: How does theology help me?

Stepping out of failure enables us to conquer the enemy of defeat.

#4 Our Training

Brings wisdom: What do I need to do to overcome?

By learning how to get around Satan's temptations, our faith becomes strong.

#5 Our Questions

Brings boldness: How does God want to use me?

Learning to properly discern and respond to attacks on our godly pursuits.



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