

Scripture Passages on Marriage and Family Life

The bible is rich with references to marriage and family life – from the origin and purpose, to the meaning that God gave it to Christ’s teaching on marriage and children. Listed below are several passages that are ideal for personal enrichment, or group reflection and discussion on marriage and the richness of family life.

Origins of marriage:

- Genesis 1: 26–31 Creation of man and woman

Genesis 1 reminds us where we came from and where we are going. Our beginning and end is in the loving power and care of Our Creator, God. God loves us so much he made human beings the high point of his creation. He saved the best for last, just like the best wine at the wedding feast at Cana. But more than just being the high point of creation, we see the reason for our dignity and worth as human beings, we are created in the image and likeness of God!

We are like God? How can this be? God in his goodness and mercy created man and woman to reflect his image to the world. Individually and even more so together, man and woman compliment one another and show the world what God is like. God is loving, faithful, fruitful – the same attributes we find in married love. God made us out of his Love and so we are made to be loved and to give love.

- Genesis 2: 4–25 Second creation account of man and woman
- Genesis 2: 18 It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him
- Genesis 2: 24 Man leaves his father and mother; he and his wife become one flesh

Genesis 2 reveals all the more God’s love for his creation. God even reveals to the man his need for another to complete him. After realizing this and realizing there is nothing in creation that will not make him complete, God makes woman. In seeing her, the man realizes that he has been given what he needs to move closer to fulfillment, a fulfillment that can only be fully realized in God. The woman compliments the man in a way that is unique and life-giving to both of them. Together they live out this complementarity physically, psychologically and emotionally as they strive to become more united in their love for one another and God. God provides for our needs and our deepest longings will be fulfilled by him.

Teachings on marriage:

- Matthew 19: 3–12 Jesus on marriage and divorce
- Mark 10: 2–12 What God has joined, let not man separate

In answering the Pharisees about divorce, Jesus refers to the plan for marriage “in the beginning.” This plan was laid out in Genesis and is part of the natural order of creation, but God’s people moved away from his plan for them and for marriage. Jesus restores the original plan for marriage. Marriage is a permanent, loving union between a man and a woman. This love is to last a lifetime and to bring life to those who become one flesh. Jesus showed that marriage was not just a man-made creation but also had a deeper reality that literally joined two people together. No court order could dissolve this reality. In our heart of hearts we all want love to be lasting and permanent so that we can be free to be ourselves with another and know that we are loved. While humans will fall short of this perfect love, God never does.

- Ephesians 4: 31–32 Put aside all anger, forgive one another

Since we do not love perfectly as God does, we need to continually ask for and grant forgiveness to one another. Marriage affords the opportunity to perfect our love by asking forgiveness when we hurt the one we love. We strive to live a life of kindness and compassion, but we know we will fall short and need to forgive as well. Forgiveness is not easy; it is not simply a mental change. It is not forgetting the harm done, but it is looking honestly at what happened and granting the same forgiveness we need to another. God always forgives us when we honestly seek forgiveness. No fault, no sin, no action is beyond his ability to forgive – seek his forgiveness and find freedom.

- Ephesians 5: 25–33 Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church ... this is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife...

How much did Christ love the Church? Have you ever asked yourself this question? He loved the Church so much that he gave his whole self away to be beaten, bruised and to die for his beloved bride (the church). Husbands, are you willing to die for your bride? Brides would you do the same for him? Christ calls us to love one another in such a way that we would be willing to die for them...this is most especially true in marriage. We are to love, cherish and nurture our spouse so as to help our beloved get to heaven. Our goal in marriage is not merely an earthly goal, it is eternal. Your marriage has eternal ramifications – to help someone else (or more if kids come along) get to heaven. In marriage, the man and the woman become one flesh, as spouses we nurture this relationship by giving of ourselves to our spouse and children. Overcoming our selfish tendencies is not easy or natural but with God's grace we can do this.

Narratives and poetry about marriage and marital love:

- Proverbs 10: 12 Hatred stirs up strife but love covers sins

If you are tempted to resent your spouse, work hard to overcome this...resentment only breeds hatred. When you notice signs of building anger or resentment, talk to your spouse about what is bothering you. If you find you are having trouble communicating, get the help you need from a trusted counselor who supports your faith or take a program to help you learn to communicate better. All marriages hit some hard times; the key is to work through them and become the stronger because of them.

- Proverbs 18: 22 He who finds a wife finds happiness: it is a favor from the Lord

Our spouse is a blessing from God. It was the Lord who brought the two of you together and he has a wonderful plan for your lives. That plan may include tough times as well as joyful times, but as married couples we love one another in good times and bad, in sickness and in health and for richer or for poorer.

- Song of Songs 8: 6–7 Love poetry; human love mirrors God's love

If you never have had the chance to read the Song of Songs, get ready ... it is unlike any other book of the bible because it is love poetry from our God to us. It is a way of revealing to us that God loves us so completely, so faithfully, so perfectly that his love in our lives will bear great fruit. Allow God's love to penetrate you life.

- Ruth and Tobit Witness to the ideas of marriage

The books of Ruth and Tobit share another image of marital love. These biblical stories draw the reader into the lives of two women and reveals how God guides them through adversity and hardship. These difficulties become blessings in time.

- Hosea 3 God's faithfulness to his people (his bride)

Even though we sin and are not faithful to God, he is always faithful to us. Hosea shows us the abundant love of God for his people; a people he will never abandon. God loves each of us and is willing to take us back if only we turn to him. In the end, love will triumph.

- John 2: 1–11 Wedding feast at Cana

Imagine if you are the wedding couple in this gospel – your wine is about to run out and you will be embarrassed and ashamed. Even in this seemingly trivial matter, Jesus intervenes and gives the couple the best wine. Isn't this true for our marriages as well? When we are about to head for trials, God is there with us. He is in our midst and ready to help us. The help we receive may not always be exactly what we want, but it is what we need. Turn to Jesus in your trials and he will be there for you.

- Revelation 19: 7–9 Wedding feast of the Lamb


Just as Scripture began with Creation and marriage, it now concludes with the heavenly banquet with the Lamb of God. This wedding feast is not unlike a marriage reception. The bride and the groom are united in love, just as we hope to be united with God in His love eternally in heaven. Our beginning was in God and so too, will be our end. God desires to draw all people unto himself. The book of Revelation, although full of imagery, clearly reveals God’s desire that we be with him. Marriage is the path that many people have chosen to journey toward heaven.

Children:

- Matthew 19: 13–15 Let the children come unto me
- Mark 10: 13–16 Let the children come to me

“Children are the supreme gift of marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves” (*Gaudium et spes*, 50). Jesus allows the children to come to him so he can pick them up and hold them close to his Sacred Heart. As loving parents, we imitate Jesus and in many cases we are the loving arms of the Lord for his children. A loving father and mother create the best homes for children, domestic churches, where our children learn to be loved and to love. Our society does not value children as the supreme gift of marriage, but what more could two people do than unite their love for one another and in that love create another eternal soul? We share in God’s creative love and your love is made eternal in your child.

These passages were compiled by the Archdiocese of Washington’s Department of Evangelization and Family Life.

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