

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts March 2019

Honoring Marriage

by Dr. Harry Reeder



Hebrews 11:4 says, “Let marriage be held in honor among all.” The task seems daunting given the landscape of today’s culture, which has intentionally embraced marital and familial anarchy in efforts to redefine marriage. But, the God-given definition of marriage—first encountered in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”—is unmistakably communicated throughout Scripture.

Marriage is a covenantal, heterosexual, monogamous, and conjugal relationship. In shorthand, marriage is one man united to one woman for life. So, why would the inspired author command Christians

to honor marriage among themselves and promote it as honorable throughout society?

Two Foundational Reasons

First, marriage is not simply a church ordinance. Marriage is a creation mandate. It is a divine decree foundational and necessary for human flourishing. Loving God means keeping His commandments, and loving our neighbors means being an instrument of redeeming grace, which in this case means promoting marriage as a divine blessing of public policy for humanity.

Foundationally, marriage is a blessing to humanity, and its primary purpose is to reveal God’s redemptive covenantal relationship with His people.

Second, marriage is to be promoted “to all” because God designed and implemented it, and He designed it for all of humanity. Marriage is intentionally used in Scripture as a metaphor for God’s unbreakable

covenant of grace with His people. Note how the Bible describes Christ as “the bridegroom” and His church (those whom He has saved) as His “bride.” Foundationally, marriage is a blessing to humanity, and its primary purpose is to reveal God’s redemptive covenantal relationship with His people.

Two thousand years ago, the Son of God “left His Father” to “cleave to His bride” by purchasing her with His redeeming atonement at the cross. He purposed to dwell with His bride by His Spirit now, and then with His glorified presence in the new heavens and earth. He has covenantally saved His bride to lead her as a servant through “the washing of the Word” and to love her as a joint heir of the grace of life through His Word and by His Holy Spirit while preparing a place for her. Then, He will return to bring her to Himself for all eternity.

Therefore, marriage is to be “held in honor among all” as a blessing to humanity, a continual witness

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Therefore, marriage is to be “held in honor among all” as a blessing to humanity, a continual witness



of Christ's covenantal relationship with His bride, and a glorious testimony of the power of the gospel for Christian marriages "in the Lord," demonstrating "God's grace is greater than all of our sins."

How can Christ's church defend and promote the public policy of marriage as defined by God and do so winsomely - contending without being contentious and defending without being defensive - through demonstrating the blessing of marriages for the Lord and in the Lord?

Ten Practical Suggestions

1. In preaching, promote the public policy of biblically defined marriage and identify its benefits for society.
2. Prepare, officiate, and shepherd marriages that are "in the Lord," beginning with a credible profession of faith from those being united.
3. Provide elder-approved

comprehensive premarital counseling.

4. Insist on worshipful marriage ceremonies that proclaim the gospel to those in attendance as well as those being married.

5. Follow up in the initial, formative months with intentional post-marital shepherding/discipleship.

6. Establish a ministry to "singles" that gives a biblical view of both marriage and singleness and that prepares singles in transition to marriage and equips those who are providentially called to singleness.

7. Develop a Titus 2 ministry of equipped older men ministering to younger men and older women to younger women.

8. Confront the tendency of believers to take the blessings of God's good gifts and make them into idols.

9. Institute intercessory prayer for the promotion of marriage in society as a beneficial public policy, for those not yet married, for those called to singleness, and for existing marriages.

10. Equip the people of God to enjoy and implement family worship while preparing for Lord's Day worship.

[Used with permission: Tabletalk, February 2019]

JC Ryle on Marriage:

"Marriage is a state of life which has the greatest effect on the souls of those who enter into it. It helps them upwards or downwards. It leads them nearer to heaven or nearer to hell. We all depend much on the company we keep."

"Happy are they, who in the matter of marriage observe three rules. The first is to marry only in the Lord, and after prayer for God's approval and blessing. The second is not to expect too much from their partners, and to remember that marriage is, after all, the union of two sinners, and not of two angels. The third rule is to strive first and foremost for one another's sanctification. The more holy married people are, the happier they are."



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