

How to Make Life Work



WISDOM FROM PROVERBS

THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE



MARK REGNERUS

Marriage is now widely perceived as a capstone rather than a foundation. This means that marriage is now something individuals aspire to, rather than something a couple enters in order to fulfill their aspirations... a capstone is the finishing touch of a structure. It is a moment in time. A foundation, however, is what a building rests upon.

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A foundation is essential; a capstone, not so much. A foundation is necessarily hardwearing. A capstone is an accessory that can be replaced if necessary. Similarly, when people are 'building' their lives, marriage is widely considered today as an achievement attained by each, not the beginning of constructing an adult life together.

Outline

1. The pattern for marriage
2. The preparation for marriage
3. The principles for marriage
4. The perfection of marriage



1. The pattern for marriage

Selected Scriptures



1. The pattern for marriage

- Marriage is the monogamous, heterosexual, covenantal union of one man and one woman for life



Genesis 2:22-24

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.



1. The pattern for marriage

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- Marriage is the monogamous, heterosexual, covenantal union of one man and one woman for life
- This is the pattern in creation, the ideal in wisdom literature, and the teaching of Jesus
- Every deviation from this in the ancient or modern world reflects the brokenness resulting from the fall



2. The preparation for marriage

Selected Proverbs



2. The preparation for marriage

Be cautious in choosing a spouse



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Proverbs 12:4

*A wife of noble character is her husband's crown,
but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.*



2. The preparation for marriage

Be cautious in choosing a spouse

Proverbs 27:15-16

*A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping
of a leaky roof in a rainstorm;*

*¹⁶ restraining her is like restraining the wind
or grasping oil with the hand.*



2. The preparation for marriage

Be cautious in choosing a spouse

Proverbs 21:9, 19

*⁹Better to live on a corner of the roof
than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.*

*¹⁹ Better to live in a desert
than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife.*



2. The preparation for marriage

A word to women concerning Proverbs

- a) Remember Proverbs was addressed to young men



2. The preparation for marriage

A word to women concerning Proverbs

- a) Remember Proverbs was addressed to young men
- b) If men heed Proverbs, they will treat women better



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Advice for choosing well

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Advice for choosing well

- a) Seek the Lord's favor first (Prov. 18:22)
- b) Use the right criteria (Prov. 31:30)
- c) Seek the advice of others (Prov. 15:22)
- d) Build your own character (All of Proverbs!)



3. The principles of marriage

Proverbs 5:15-21



Proverbs 5:15-21

¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well.

¹⁶ Should your springs overflow in the streets,
your streams of water in the public squares?



Proverbs 5:15-21

¹⁷ Let them be yours alone,
never to be shared with strangers.

¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.



Proverbs 5:15-21

¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

²⁰ Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife?
Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?



Proverbs 5:15-21

²¹ For your ways are in full view of the Lord,
and he examines all your paths.



3. The principles of marriage

Drink the water (Prov. 5:15-19)



3. The principles of marriage

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- Mutuality
- Exclusivity
- Satisfaction



3. The principles of marriage

Flee the fire (Prov. 5:20-21; 6:27-29)



3. The principles of marriage

Flee the fire (Prov. 5:20-21; 6:27-29)

*27 Can a man scoop fire into his lap
without his clothes being burned?*

*28 Can a man walk on hot coals
without his feet being scorched?*

*29 So is he who sleeps with another man's wife;
no one who touches her will go unpunished.*



4. The perfection of marriage

Proverbs 3:13-18



4. The perfection of marriage

One of our problems is that we idolize marriage, sex, and romance. We take something good and try to make it ultimate.





“Every preference of a small good to a great, or a partial good to a total good, involves the loss of the small or partial good for which the sacrifice was made. Apparently, the world was made that way . . . You can’t get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first . . . [Sensual love] ceases to be a devil when it ceases to be a god . . . So many things – nay, every real thing – is good if only it will be humble and ordinate.”

—C. S. Lewis

4. The perfection of marriage

In the language of Proverbs, the greatest prize isn't a good spouse or a satisfying marriage, but marriage to wisdom herself.



Proverbs 3:13-18

¹³ Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,

¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.

¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.



Proverbs 3:13-18

¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.

¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.

¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her;
those who hold her fast will be blessed.



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Proverbs 3:13-18

- Parallels with Proverbs 31



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Proverbs 3:13-18

- Parallels with Proverbs 31
- Proverbs addresses young men on two levels: (1) avoid the immoral woman and marry a noble wife (2) avoid Madam Folly and embrace Lady Wisdom
- The “tree of life” → in Genesis, Proverbs, and Revelation



4. The perfection marriage

The ultimate marriage is not found in a perfect story-book romance with the person of your dreams, but in the divine romance — the story of the Father's pursuit of a holy bride for his Son.



Summary

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