Biblical Marriage

Throughout the ages people have married and specifically in the Christian circles a wedding has been important. The forms in which a wedding took place has been influenced by the local cultures as well as by the Jewish traditions. In these days where alternative relationships are accepted in our societies, we could and may be should ask ourselves the question: What is marriage actually? What ly is good and what does God expect from us as we are looking toward building our relationship to become this unity in which we can care for each other and form a base for a family, if God would give us a family.

Also, if we are looking to build this relationship we call marriage, in what forms should it take place?

Let us have a look at one of the important ingredients of what we know as a traditional wedding and try to discover what is the “real thing” is.

In the Jewish tradition, a marriage was seen as a contract between 1 man and 1 woman. They made a commitment to each other to stay loyal to each other and they made this commitment by means of a promise, a contract to each other. This promise they made in front of their family and church, in the sight of God.

Even though we cannot find any specific rules or laws in the OT around this “wedding” and in what kind of form it needs to take place; we can see what God thinks about it. We see in Malachi that God takes this union between man and woman very serious.

**Malachi 2:13-14**

New International Version (NIV)

13Another thing you do: You flood the Lord’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. 14You ask, “Why?” It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

It is not going well in Israel in the time of the prophet Malachi. The Jewish people have come out of captivity from Babel and have returned to their land. They rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple of God. They restored the service of sacrifices as was written in the Law of Moses.

But still, the Jewish people were in bondage to their enemies all around them. But next to the enemies around them, they also are confronted with corruption within them. Each one is living the way they want and they push each other around to try to get whatever they want. That way people get hurt. The weak, the widows and orphans are getting oppressed among them and taken advantage of and they call out to the Lord for help in their trials. And God sends Malachi to warn the Jewish people about their behavior.

From this Scripture we see that God takes the marriage contract between them very serious. He even connects it to their wellbeing and of the wellbeing of them as a people.

The people of Israel have looked at the O.T. Scripture and principles that came through their knowledge of the Scriptures and of God, and it looks like they made the right ethical conclusions and choose good forms in which they did their weddings.

Again at this time, a bit farther along the line of godly revelation, after Christ, we get more and more insight in marriage, but we still did not receive any specific rules that give us a different insight in the wedding and marriage relationship.

As we continue along the line of progressive revelation, as the hidden aspects of the church are getting revealed we learn more and more about our relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and how our marriage relationship can be a picture of the relationship between God, Christ and His Church. But still there is not more revelation in which we get direction about the forms of wedding ceremonies and things like that.

Because of this we continue to build on what has been revealed to us so far and we continue to learn about the wedding and marriage relationship from the Scriptures that are speaking about it. The wedding contract/promise that you will be making, will be based on that what God has revealed in His Word.

1. **The wedding starts with God.**

We see that a wedding and a marriage relationship is something that starts with God Himself. He is the one who married the first couple ever. Many things can differ as we like or as we are culturally influenced. But there are basic principles that we get from Scripture. One of those principles is that a marriage is between 1 man and 1 woman.

**Genesis 2:18-25**

New International Version (NIV)

18The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

19Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%202.18-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-51a)] no suitable helper was found. 21So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%202.18-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-52b)] and then closed up the place with flesh. 22Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib[[c](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%202.18-25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-53c)] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23The 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.”

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

25Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

God Himself states some clear points:

* It is not good for the man to be alone. He needs someone to help him in order to come to his meant potential.
* Questions: How do you see this in your relationship as we look at this individualistic society we live in? What is biblically man’s and woman’s potential? What is the Biblical view on singleness?
* Genesis 2.22 God institutes the marriage. God gives the woman to the man as in many cultures the father gives away his daughter.
* Genesis 2:23 Adam says: Whooooow! It is not as some say, that Adam and Eve could not resist the temptation and they had sex together. It was Gods full intention that within the secure environment of their meant relationship, they were given to each other to enjoy each other fully: Spirit, Soul and Body.
* Questions: How does this relationship grows toward fullness before and after the actual marriage? What can you both do to forgo growing out of balance, before and after the wedding?
* Genesis 2:24 Here we see a principle that we see throughout Scripture as an explanation of what in the garden of Eden took place:
1. The process of leaving father and mother
2. Forming a unit with each other.
3. Becoming the unit as God meant it, in spirit soul and body.
4. **The base of the marriage promise.**

The marriage promise that you give to each other in the presence of God, Church and Family is based on the principles we see throughout Scriptures.

1. **She promises him to be the help to him that God intend her to be.**

**Genesis 2:18** The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” ]

**Proverbs 31:10-12** 10 [[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%2031.10-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-17295a)]A wife of noble character who can find?
    She is worth far more than rubies.
11Her husband has full confidence in her
    and lacks nothing of value.
12She brings him good, not harm,
    all the days of her life.

1. **She promises to submit herself to him like also we all in Christ are to submit ourselves to one another.**

**Ephesians 5:22-23** 22Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

Questions: In this world the submission of a wife to her husband is a bad thing. In the light of other Scripture what does it mean biblically and what is it different from the submission He wants form us all. Compare 1 Pet 5.5, 1 Cor 16.16, Hebr. 13:17, James 4.7, and 1 Pet 2.13.

1. **She promises to love him and show that in her work and care for him and their children (if the Lord gives them children.)**

**Titus 2:4-5** 4Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Questions: Speak with each other about how you naturally show love and how you expect love to be shown. You need to listen carefully, learning how the other thinks.

1. He promises to love her like Christ loves us, in good and bad days.

**Ephesians 5:28-33** 28In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30for we are members of his body. 31“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205.28-33&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-29336a" \o "See footnote a)] 32This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Questions: Speak with each other about how you naturally show love and how you expect love to be shown. You need to listen carefully, learning how the other thinks.

1. **He promises to help her, to take the spiritual lead through the Word and in accordance with the Word of God. He promises to cherish her and protect her.**

**Ephesians 5:26-27** 26to make her holy, cleansing[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205.26-27&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29331a)] her by the washing with water through the word, 27and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

1. **He promises her that, if the Lord will give them children, that he will take the lead in training them preparing them for life.**

**Ephesians 6:4** 4Fathers,[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206.4&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-29342a" \o "See footnote a)] do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

1. **He promises her not to overpower her nor ignore her but to speak with her in love.**

**Colossians 3:19** 19Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

1. **They promise to stay together, until death separates them.**

**Matthew 19:5-6** 5and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2019.5-6&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-23768a" \o "See footnote a)]? 6So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

1. **They promise to be faithful to each other, spiritually, emotionally and physically and not give themselves to someone else.**

**1 Corinthians 7:2-5** 2But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. 3The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. 5Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Questions: Talk together about different scenarios of life (like sickness, infertility or other things) would be a challenge to balanced live in all 3 areas; spiritual, emotional and physical and how would that affect you in each different scenario.

1. **They promise to love each other and grow in this love like described in 1 Corinthians 13.**

**1 Corinthians 13**  1If I speak in the tongues[[a](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2013&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28667a)] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,[[b](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2013&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28669b)] but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Questions: Take the time together to look and speak about all verses of chapter 13.

1. **They promise to each other , as a family, to serve the Lord in the ministries He has for them.**

**Joshua 24:15** But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

Questions: Do you know how the other is gifted? What are the others strengths and weaknesses? What could be and/or are possible ministries the Lord would have you involved in? What do you think about ministries you both can work on together and how would fit in with your gifts? How would you feel if the Lord would give you some separate ministries, would it be hard to support the other in some ministry you are not involved with and how could that work for you?

1. **But how can we promise such things and keep such promises?**

When we read those promises, than you could say that they really sound very good. If you hold such a standard in life, that is great. But is this not a bit naïve? Or maybe it is even prideful to say “Yes” to such moral standard and promise this to each other? Do we know what life will bring our way?

Those promises are good and the standards are excellent. But would we be able to stay faithful to our promise? ….. What if the other would break the promise? What if you stop loving the other? What if circumstances change and everyone would think you would be stupid if you would stay together?

Let’s look at this for a moment. If we think we would be able, in our own strength and wisdom, to keep such promises we would be naïve and/or prideful.

Reality check:

1. Remember why you make these promises to each other: It is based on Gods standard and Gods word and He wants us to promise love, faithfulness, care, protection and so on. It is not just for you but it is Gods standard for all marriage relationships.
2. When God gives us something to do, he will also enable us to do it in his strength and wisdom. As we make these promises to each other we show our dependence on God. That is why we bless the marriage and we pray for the couple as well. With that we say that we need Him to help us. As we repeat this prayer on a daily base, it reminds us of our dependence on Him. We are not naïve or proud if we realize our dependency on our Lord. Even when our marriage hits rough waters and one of us breaks the promise we made, we always can return back to Him and each other and start afresh.

Questions; When one of you failed in one part of the promise, how should the attitude of the other be ? Gal. 6.1-2

When you would fail in one of the things you promised each other, how would you want the other to point it out and help you?