

# The Benefits (not Challenges) of Marriage

In an earlier set of posts, I wrote about the biggest challenges men face. These included Managing Work-Life Balance, Reordering Our Priorities, Resisting Temptations, and Maintaining Sexual Purity. Someone recently suggested though that another of a man's biggest challenges is marriage. Well, at the risk of sounding like a "humblebrag", that was not me. I'm blessed with a great marriage!

So during this week in honor of my 37th wedding anniversary, I'm writing not of the challenges, but about the benefits of marriage, and to share some of my experiences from more than three decades of wedded bliss.

In this post and the next, I will describe several of the lessons I've learned from my marriage such as:

- Companionship Offsets Loneliness
- Provision (Security) and Support
- Sex for Intimacy and Procreation (to also avoid temptation)
- Self-sacrifice
- Servant Leadership
- Love and Respect
- Character Refinement and Holiness

First, let's start with some biblical guidance to set the stage for these two posts.

## Biblical Reasons for Marriage

Scripture is filled with numerous verses for husbands and wives to help us learn and grow while we find this marital bliss.

The Bible begins talking about marriage early in the first very book of Genesis during the creation story. God created humans in His own image, yet distinctly as male and female (Genesis 1:27). He created Adam first, then Eve because it was “not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18).

God brought them together to form the most intimate form of any relationship and ordained it as “marriage” as a sign of His unbreakable covenant with us.



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

*–Genesis 2:24 (NIV)*

Two individuals leaving their parents to become one flesh, "*till death do us part*" is how God intended the marriage relationship.

With that said, there are also two caveats to this discussion:

### **Singleness is Also Good**

First, there is more to life than getting married so I affirm that singleness is just as important to help fulfill God's purposes.

The apostle Paul encouraged single men and women to remain unmarried so they could give their undivided concern to the things of the Lord. Paul argues that unmarried believers have a unique opportunity to more fully devote themselves to advancing the Kingdom.

So we must be careful not to uphold marriage as the only good in relationships.

### **Divorce is Permissible for Specific Conditions**

Secondly, despite God's original desire for life-long marriages, my belief is there are only a couple of reasons to dissolve a marriage: adultery by either party and physical or severe mental abuse. Any others are left up to God to judge.

So even if you are divorced, your work for God's kingdom is

just as valuable outside of marriage as it was inside marriage. Our ultimate goal for all of our relationships is to glorify God in all we do, regardless of whether we are married or single, so you should leave any regrets from your marriage behind.

## **Why Marriage is Good for a Man**

Traditionally, the Church has upheld marriage as a good thing. Going back to His creation story, God established this union, blessed it, and gave Adam and Eve responsibilities to carry out together.

But that didn't mean it will always be red rose petals and fine wine.

Marriage is hard because it's a bond between two sinful people with very different ideas about their life together, who should be learning how to make each other better (notice, I did not say 'make each other happy'!).

## **The Lessons Learned**

Early in my marriage, I thought everything revolved about what I wanted and needed, which led to several hard lessons and the eventual understanding of some biblical principles that have led to a successful and happy marriage.

So this first batch is about the basic lessons of marriage.

## ▪ Companionship Offsets Loneliness

In the biblical creation story, God designed man and woman to be in a relationship in order to balance out our loneliness.

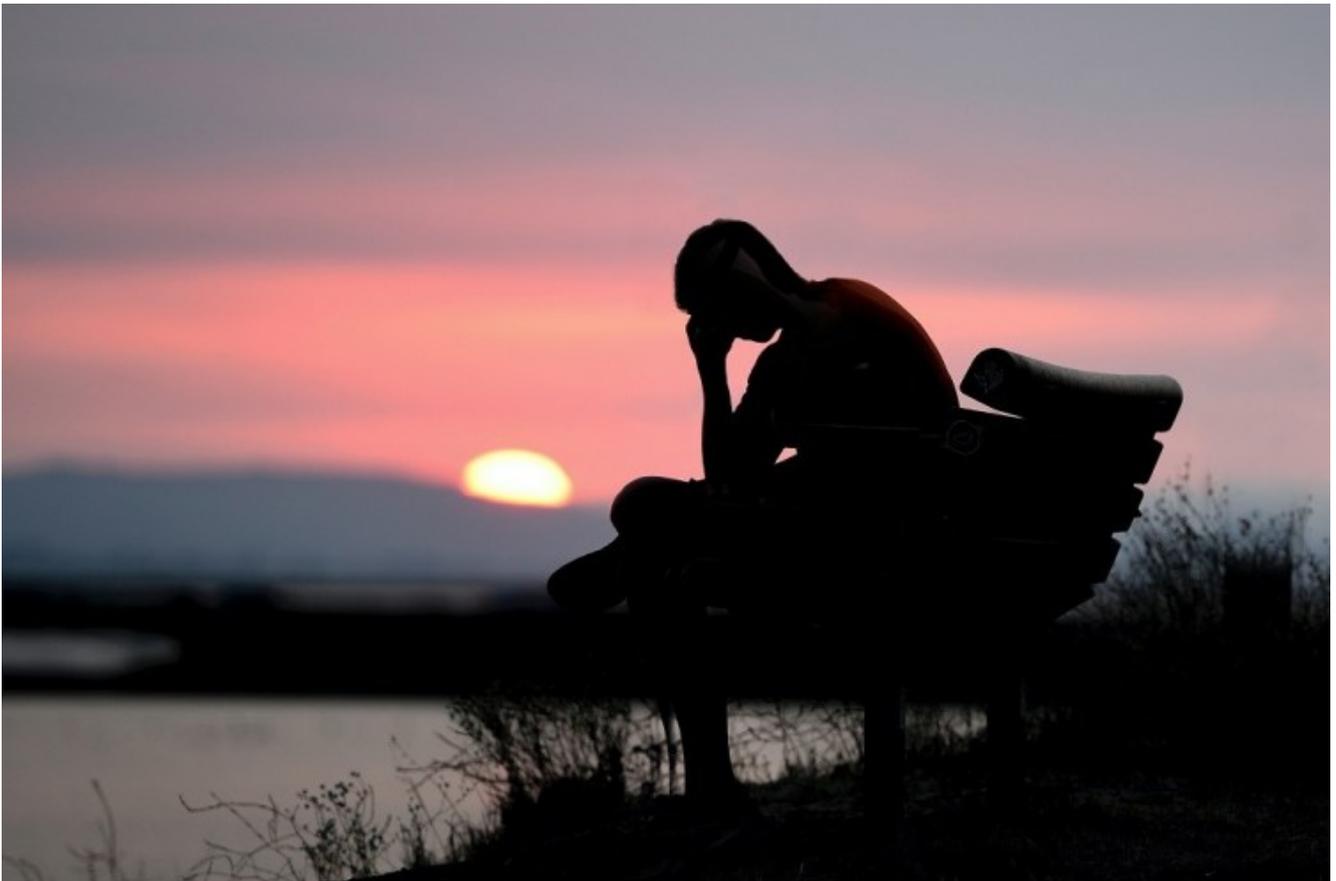


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*“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”*

*–Genesis 2:18 (NASB)*

Personally, I would not do well as a single person. Cyndi is more introverted and needs more time to herself. Although she is very comfortable in most social situations, larger gatherings of people she does not know as well can be draining

to her. Conversely, I need to be around people often and dislike too much alone time and actually gain energy from being around people.

We have learned to give each other space when needed while also finding plenty of fellowship with others and “shoulder-to-shoulder” time together as a couple to keep our relationship strong.

### ▪ **Provision (Security) and Support**

One of the Biblical reasons for marriage was to meet the need for provision and support of a family.

After the first marriage in the Bible, we see the roles of husband and wife defined, which sounds a lot like security and support. Adam was given the job – before the fall – to work the land as a way of providing for himself and later his wife



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*“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”*

*– Genesis 2:15 (NASB)*

Eve was then created to support Adam. She was perfectly created as a helper and counterpart for support (see Genesis 2:18 NASB)

No matter the season of your marriage, it is hard to feel secure when things are in a perpetual state of chaos. A constant change of jobs and schedules, struggle to pay bills, or pull of exhaustion can leave both husband and wife feeling insecure, unstable, and afraid. Consistency is key.

I am blessed with a spouse who is very smart and a strong desire for a career, which helped us financially. However, she

made her career aspirations second to mine to be the primary caregiver of our children as I traveled for my job.

I have learned more about sacrificial love from her and am forever grateful for her support of my career. We are at a life-stage now that I am taking on my responsibility in our home so she can invest in her career as much as she wants.

### ▪ **Sex for Intimacy, Procreation, and Temptation Avoidance**

One of the many reasons people get married is to satisfy their natural sexual desires. God created man and woman in the Garden of Eden completely naked and unashamed with a desire for sexual intimacy and pleasure.



*“Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love.”*

– Proverbs 5:18-19 (NASB)

Sex was a natural part of God's original design and He was being purposeful for the marriage bed. Just read the book of Song of Solomon.

God gave man and woman the gift of sexual intimacy with the commandment to multiply. Procreation was a part of His design and is vital to human existence.

*“God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

– Genesis 1:28 (NASB)

All that said, it is also important to emphasize the moral aspect of marriage since God set healthy boundaries around sexuality to protect us against temptation.

*“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.”*

– 1 Corinthians 6:18 (NASB)

Jesus refers to the evil thoughts of the heart and specifically mentions fornication (sexual intercourse outside

marriage) in Matthew 15.19. The clear command is to avoid sexual immorality so marriage sets proper boundaries for our sexual activity while also providing the proper context to raise children.

Cyndi and I are blessed with 3 children, who are now young adult men. We are committed solely to each other and find time for each other, which also helps minimize sexual temptations.

So that concludes the first batch of lessons learned. The next post will outline the remaining lessons and include a grouping of all these lessons to help you start to realize marriage is not about your needs.