God's unifying of husband and wife

God himself unites husband and wife, as we read in the warning given by Jesus: *... what God has joined together, let man not separate* (Matthew 19:6). So God rebukes the man who unjustly divorces his wife: *... she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his* (Malachi 2:14-15). God makes us one in spirit when we make a covenant, but we make ourselves one in body (*flesh*) through our own actions, whether in marriage or (sadly) elsewhere: *... he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body ... the two will become one flesh* (I Corinthians 6:16). So the difference between cohabiting ("living together") and marrying is God's spiritual unifying those who make a covenant. This promise is the difference. Those who live together do not make a promise, and do not gain spiritual union. There is a tearing of flesh when any couple separates, but additionally there is a spiritual tearing - if they were married.

The prophetic purpose of marriage

Married Christians should not be ashamed to declare dependence upon commitment: the Lord's commitment to us; our commitment in response to the Lord; and consequently our ability to commit ourselves in marriage. People will breathe a sigh of relief as we testify to the truth that Christian marriage relies upon a covenant to each other, that arises because God has committed himself to us. We should not be ashamed to declare reliance upon our wedding vows, just as we should not be ashamed to declare our reliance upon the Lord when we struggle in marriage and family life. People will breathe a sigh of relief when they are told that there is a way of escape from the lies that destroy marriage and the family, and people will be more likely to respond in faith as they hear our open and honest testimony. As we crown Jesus as Lord of our marriages, and the authority behind our mutual commitment, then we are proclaiming the gospel message, which itself is an invitation to the wedding at history's end: with God's people as Bride, and Jesus as Bridegroom.





FamilyVoice Australia - www.fava.org.au

4TH Floor, 68 Grenfell Street Phone 1300 365 965

Adelaide SA 5000 Email ddl@fava.org.au

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Marrying with Christian purpose

David d'Lima JP BTh Dip Ed



Each wedding ceremony is really testimony a mirror of that Day.

The joyful congregation observing this reflection witnesses a role-play.

There is a crisis facing marriage. While people are easily falling in love, and marrying, they are equally falling out of love, and divorcing. The annual number of divorces has quadrupled since the Family Law Act was introduced in the mid 1970s, giving us "disposable marriage" so that in Australia 40% of marriages end in divorce. But the crisis has also arisen because people have not realised the prophetic purpose that God intends for our sexuality.

God the divine husband

Marriage was created so there would be a testimony to the union between the LORD and Israel (in Old Testament times), and between Jesus and the Bride (in this era of the New Covenant). So good marriages are prophetic as they signify the sacred marriage, and as they reflect that relationship. In Old Testament times, God's relationship with Israel was described as a marriage (especially in Ezekiel chapter 16) and in the following passages:

> *The LORD said to me, "Go show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites ...."* (Hosea 3:1).

> *For your maker is your husband - the LORD Almighty is his name....*

> *...as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,*
> *so will your God rejoice over you.* (Isaiah 54:5, 62:5).

In the New Covenant era, the relationship between Jesus and the Church is also described in terms of marriage:

> *I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.* (II Corinthians 11:2).

Old Testament examples who prefigure the divine marriage

Several individuals in the Old Testament serve as prefigures of Christ as divine husband marrying his Bride. In particular, the marriages of several key people are a testimony to this relationship:

- **Abraham and Sarah**: Abraham was faithful to his barren wife Sarah, though her infertility would have been a disgrace. In faith, he was intimate with Sarah, in response to the revelation of God's will, purpose and promise, despite the impossible situation (Genesis 21). In the same way Jesus calls us into miraculous union with him as a result of God's will, promise and purpose.

- **Isaac and Rebekah**: Isaac and Rebekah had never met, but entered into marriage in faith, as God led. Christ is witnessed to, as Isaac's love for Rebekah was based on a decision (just as Christ's love is based upon a decision). Love was regarded a matter of commitment in their example, as they recognized the importance of submission to God and commitment to each other when they agreed voluntarily to the arranged marriage which God had orchestrated, though Isaac and Rebekah had never seen each other.

> *So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?" "I will go," she said.... Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her....* (Genesis 24:58, 67).

- **Boaz and Ruth**: Boaz was able to serve as Ruth's *kinsman-redeemer* (Ruth 4:14) who rescued and married the young woman though she was a foreigner and a widow.

- **David and Abigail**: Abigail's foolish husband Nabal was struck dead by God, when Nabal despised David. Abigail was thereby released from her bondage to Nabal and was then free to marry David, who became king of Israel. (1 Samuel 25).

- **The Lover and the Beloved**: This couple in the Song of Songs celebrate sexual union, which is prophetic concerning our mystical union with Christ following physical death.

The husbandship of Christ and sexual ethics

Sexual expression must appreciate Christ as divine husband in order to be sexual expression as God intended. Without this appreciation, sexual expression is more likely to degenerate into sexual aberrations and perversions which might include adultery, sex before marriage, sado-masochistic behaviour, addiction, prostitution, homosexuality, bi-sexuality, cross-dressing, gender reassignment, lust, bestiality, incest, rape, anal-intercourse, group-sex, pederasty, use of pornography, unrealistic expectations and consequent disappointment and frustration, obsession with body image, etc.

If we understand that our sexuality has a prophetic purpose, we will express our sexuality in a way which glorifies God, and which testifies to the sacred marriage. In doing so, we accord with the creational purpose of human sexuality - the union between Christ and the Church:

> *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.... "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.* (Ephesians 5:25-33).

Worldly thinking has no concept of this testimony, and makes no contribution to it. Rather, unbelievers greatly undermine the prophetic design and purpose of human identity and sexuality. The world treats sexuality as an opportunity for idolatry and consumerism, leading to an obsession with body image etc.

The world has rebelled against God and forgotten his purpose for our sexuality. The world has become addicted to the pathetic search for the fashionable body shape, chemistry, good looks, romance etc. In response, God's people have a vital opportunity to challenge unbelievers to recognize the truth about sexuality, as properly belonging under the lordship of Christ. Sexual expression is something which we choose to control as we submit to the Lord Jesus. Sexuality is not a matter of the right chemistry, but the right choice; it finds ideal expression as a Christian man and a Christian woman exclusively commit themselves to each other, under the Lordship of Christ.