

Union that Leads to Knowing



The Key to a Successful Marriage (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today and to continue with the theme I am dealing with this week, "The Key to a Successful Marriage."

The point that I made in my talk yesterday is that, according to God's plan, marriage is a covenant based on the sacrifice made for us by Jesus on the cross. Through the death of Jesus on our behalf, each party to the marriage lays down his life for the other and then enters into a new life that is lived out through the other. The husband looks back at the cross and says, "That death was my death. When I entered into this covenant, I died. Now I am no longer living for myself, my life is in you." The wife looks back at the cross and she says the same: "That death was my death. When I entered into this covenant with you, I died. Now I am no longer living for myself, my life is in you." And that, I believe, is the only basis on which a marriage can truly succeed—the understanding that it is a covenant and that a covenant is entered into by each party laying down his life for the other and then finding a new life that is lived out through the other.

As I said yesterday, this is contrary to modern thinking. The attitude of most people in our culture today is: "What can I get? What is in this for me?" But I believe there has to be a radical change of thinking for the man or the woman or the couple together who want to make their marriage succeed.

Today I am going to talk to you about the end purpose of marriage. What is it that is made possible through marriage and cannot be achieved in any other way? As I talk to you, if you are married, I want you to be asking yourself, "Am I achieving that or am I missing the real purpose?"

To begin with, I want to read to you part of the conversation that Jesus had with some of the Pharisees about marriage. It is recorded in Matthew 19:3–6:

> "And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?'"

Now that was the teaching of some rabbis at that time. In other words, they were doing just what I said God doesn't

accept. They were setting their own terms for the covenant of marriage. But Jesus answered and said to them:

> "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'? Consequently they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

I want to show you two important points in Jesus' answer to the Pharisees. First of all, when Jesus taught about marriage, He went back to God's purpose at creation. He would not lower the standard to anything that had intervened in history from that time. He was faithful to His Father. He knew from the Scriptures, as all good Jews should know, the story of creation and of how God provided a mate, a helpmeet for Adam, and He said that is the basis, God's original purpose, is the only purpose that is acceptable in God's sight.

And so, when we talk about marriage as Christian believers, we have to do the same as Jesus. We have to go back to the original purpose of God and see what that was.

The second thing I want to point out is what that purpose was. It is that two shall become one. In other words, to sum it up in one word, it is union or unity. What I want to say to you is that unity is God-like. The ultimate, the original, the only perfect pattern of unity is found in the Godhead. The Father and the Son are one. Not one person, but one in union through the Holy Spirit. And, in a certain sense, what God is aiming at in marriage is that a man and a woman will achieve this most God-like of all achievements, true union, true unity. But the way to it is the way that God has laid down. And there is no other way into the kind of union which God desires in marriage but God's way.

The next truth that I have to bring to you follows immediately from what I've already said. The end purpose of marriage is union. And union, in turn, leads to knowing. This is a thought that it's possibly difficult for people in our culture to understand because we've got such an intellectual concept of what knowing is. But in the original language of Scripture, the word "know" had a much deeper meaning than merely knowing facts.

In the Book of Genesis, in chapter 4:1, immediately after the description of man's fall and its consequences, the next chapter opens with this statement: "Adam knew Eve his wife…" Now the modern translations tend to use some phrase like "Adam had relations with his wife." Of course, that is correct in the sense that it describes what happened, but the King James version actually is more faithful to the original text at this point and it brings out that what God is aiming at is "knowing." Of course, between a husband and a wife that includes the sexual relationship. But merely to limit it to a sexual relationship is completely to miss the purpose of God. That is why, in a certain sense, I would rather stay with the King James translation: "Adam knew his wife…" It was not merely sexual.

Now, in the language of the Old Testament there were two distinct phrases used. One says a man "knew" a woman, the other says a may "lay" with a woman and the Bible is very discriminating to how it uses those phrases. In my talk tomorrow, I am going to explain the implication of the difference but what I want to just impress upon you today is that the end purpose of God in marriage, through union, is that a man and a woman truly know one another.

What's involved? The more I meditate on this the more deep and wonderful it seems to me. In Mark's gospel, chapter 8:36–37, Jesus speaks about the worth of the human soul and He says, in fact, one human soul is worth more than the whole universe. Now I believe that. I believe there is no way to measure the value of a single human soul. So what is it that happens in marriage? Marriage, as planned by God, opens the way for two human souls to know each other, to know each other to their innermost depths, in every area of their lives—physical, mental, emotional, cultural. It is the union of two persons not just two bodies not just two minds. Some people put all the emphasis on sex, some put it all on the intellect, but in God's purpose it is total—a total knowing by one person of another.

I speak from the background of a very happy marriage that lasted thirty years and, in my personal judgment, there is no greater privilege in life than to be permitted to know another person this way.

The second point about God's provision of marriage is that by insisting on a covenant and commitment as a way into that marriage, He has provided protection from each party from being exploited or betrayed. Let me say frankly that any woman who allows herself to be sexually exploited by man, to have sexual relations with a man, without that man first making a covenant commitment, she is really prostituting her personality. I am not just talking in terms of sexual morality but I am saying that in actual fact that woman is desecrating the most precious thing that she has—her personality. She is exposing her whole personality to someone who is not willing to pay the price that God requires. It is the same with a man. A man is doing the same when he has relations with a woman but there is no commitment, there is no covenant. The

purpose of marriage is this deep, ongoing, intimate, personal relationship protected by commitment. This relationship should be continually deeper and richer as the marriage continues.

I look back on my own first marriage and I think that for over thirty years Lydia and I were continually coming to know one another more deeply and more intimately. Our marriage grew richer and fuller the longer it lasted. There was never an anti-climax. I think sometimes we would sit and travel in the car together for maybe an hour without speaking and then, when we both began to speak simultaneously, we would start talking about exactly the same thing. In other words, the relationship didn't just depend on verbal communion nor did it depend merely upon sexual relationship but it was a total knowing of one person by another.

Now my time has run out for the day. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at the same time and I'll be talking about counterfeits that cheat us—human substitutes for marriage that do not produce God's results.

Radio Program

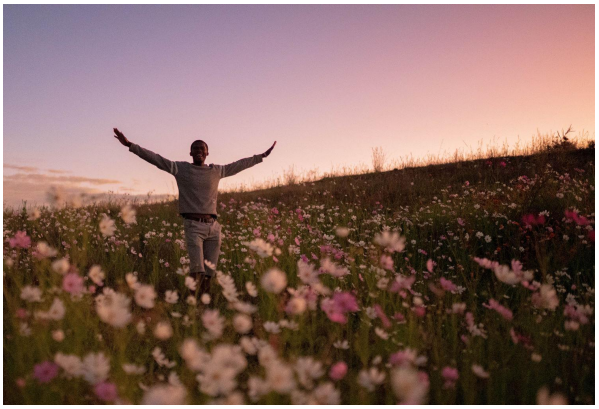
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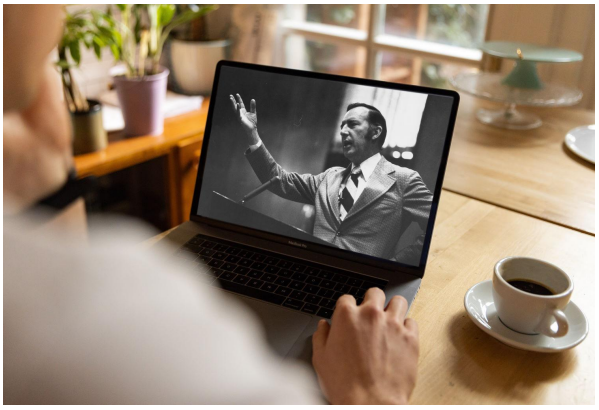
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