

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">January 2018</p>	
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### **2018: The Year of Marriage.**

Following the decades of attack on the very foundation of Christian marriage, OSJ has declared 2018 ‘the Year of Marriage’ and will be focusing on that theme for the year.

The following year 2019 will be ‘the Year of the Family’.

We still hold that the general foundation of marriage is that it is between a man and a woman and is intended for the procreation of children.

We do not hold that the recent redefining of ‘marriage’ by H M Government is acceptable either.

Politics aside, I do want to start by looking at the opening statements made in the in Common Worship, the Alternative Services Book (ASB), and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. It is a way of establishing a starting point for discussion and dialogue.

Common Worship	Alternative Services Book: Series1	1662 Book of Common Prayer
Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony.	Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and in the face of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony;	Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this Congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy Matrimony;
The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence	which is an honourable estate, instituted of God himself, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church;	which is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church; which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence,

<p>and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honoured among all people.</p>	<p>which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee, and is commended in Holy Writ to be honourable among all men; and therefore is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly; but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which matrimony was ordained.</p>	<p>and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee; and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God; duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained.</p>
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and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.	First, it was ordained for the increase of mankind according to the will of God, and that children might be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name.	First, It was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.
The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity;	Secondly, it was ordained in order that the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God, should be hallowed and directed aright; that those who are called of God to this holy estate, should continue therein in pureness of living.	Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.

	<p>Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.</p> <p>Into which holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined.</p>	<p>Thirdly, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Into which holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined.</p>
<p>Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.</p>		

What you can see when you compare the different horizontal sections are the subtle changes in the use of language and meaning of words and a greater or lesser understanding of marriage as both sacramental and social institutions. Yes, there are hints of uncertainty at times.

One might think that the language and meaning has remained almost unchanged over the centuries but it has not. Actually what you do see are the subtle social and theological changes as each new generation comes to express marriage in its own terms and understanding. It is a continual process of changing understanding, and it isn't always a bad thing to keep coming back to discover the real truths behind this wonderful institution.

The current changes we face as Christians are nothing new but since the early 1900's we are told Christianity has been in decline and its impact on society has changed to a point where some consider it irrelevant and outdated. It may be fair comment. Sometimes the church has acted unwisely in trying to remain relevant in society but it has ended up settling for second best or compromised its scriptural integrity in favour of popular movements.

It is now time to take the initiative and give proper spiritual and scriptural meaning and understanding to this Holy Sacrament. That is one thing that must not be forgotten - it is a sacrament and therefore is not a 'right'. Any OSJ priest can refuse to conduct a service if it is felt 'unsafe'.

The church has the stewardship of the sacraments and we have a responsibility to set a high standards of expectation and hope to the societies in which we exist, especially regarding marriage.

Left to its own devices and without moral and spiritual guidance, society will sink to the lowest denominators, something we have already begun to experience. We can either accept this and face the wrath of God for our failures to meet His expectations, or, we can submit to His good purpose and will, and do what is expected.

Putting it bluntly, if we do not, we will be responsible for failing to be God's light in the world's increasing darkness. We will be judged because our inaction will ultimately put millions of souls at risk. Our guilt at their loss will unavoidably be both corporate and individual.

So we start by re-affirming one simple ideal, a scripturally based principle, marriage is between a man and a woman and is intended for the procreation of children.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

**Luke 4 v 21 – 30**

Unice Brierley, OSJ

According to this reading Jesus has gone back to his house in Nazareth

I don't know about you but I have always had the impression that Nazareth was a village, but according to research it was called a polis which means a town or city, and could well have had 20,000 inhabitants a larger town than Wetherby. Three great roads skirted it. There was the road from the south carrying pilgrims to Jerusalem. There was the great Way of the sea which led from Egypt to Damascus with laden caravans moving along and there was the great road to the east bearing caravans from Arabia and Roman legions marching out to the eastern frontiers of the Empire.

Jesus had gone to the synagogue as was customary, although his local synagogue left much to be desired. Jesus attended services wherever he was every week, His example make our excuses for not attending Church sound weak. We should make regular worship a part of our lives if we are serious at following Jesus' word and works.



Jesus had been given a scroll to read, the passage he reads is Isaiah 61 verses 1 – 20 which is relevant to the delivery of Israel from exile in Babylon.

Our reading this morning starts actually half way through a sentence when Jesus announces “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” Jesus was proclaiming himself as the one who would bring the good news to pass but in a way that people would not yet be able to grasp.

Even Jesus himself was not accepted as a prophet in his home town. Many people have a similar attitude today – an expert is anyone who carries a briefcase and comes from more than 50 miles away. We mustn't be surprised when our Christian life and faith are not easily understood or accepted by those who know us well. I wonder if this is why many local preachers I have met over the years are very nervous preaching in their own Church.

Jesus' remarks filled the people of Nazareth with rage because he was saying that God sometimes choose to reach out to Gentiles instead of Jews, and implied that they were an unbelieving lot.

Both Matthew and Mark record this incident, but neither of them actually state which passage of scripture Jesus read not the implication that he referred to the Gentiles. Luke being a compatriot of Paul wrote his gospel with Gentiles in mind.

The Jews were so sure that they were God's people that they tended to look down on all others. Some believed that God had created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell. And here was this young Jesus, whom they had all known from childhood preaching as if the Gentiles were specially favoured by God. It was beginning to dawn upon them that there were things in this new message the like of which they had never dreamed

We have only to read the passage of Isaiah that Jesus read to see the difference between Jesus and John the Baptist. John was the preacher of doom and those who heard his message must have shuddered with terror. It was a Gospel – good news – which Jesus brought, Jesus, too, knew the wrath of God but it was always the wrath of love.

You have to say it

What has to be said that only you can say it?

Uncomfortable though it may be we sometimes find ourselves in situations where we are convinced that a crucial point is missing from the discussion, or that a particular option is being wilfully ignored, or that someone is being badly treated by the group and no one seems prepared to speak up. So it's up to us – to me! To you!

This can be even more challenging when we are one of the youngest in the group, grateful for what the others have helped us to learn, but now feeling compelled to offer our own opinion, humbly and honestly but with heartfelt conviction.

That is one reading of the situation in which Jesus found himself in the synagogue at Nazareth. He was faced by those who knew him well, were perhaps sceptical of this newly acquired reputation and who wanted to see what he was capable of. Yet Jesus knew his message was radical and was convinced it was of God. So he had to challenge the small-mindedness, prejudice and hostility he found amongst them.

What needs to be challenged in our situations today?

It can be really hard to make a stand for our beliefs and values amongst those with whom we have grown up, or within our own home, Yet it is in these situations that faith can be compromised, spiritual growth blocked and respect for other undermined.

Bigotry and racism must be challenged. It is in the groups and organisations which are full of self-righteousness that openness to learning has to be introduced, in church as well as political, community or economic institutions, a commitment to truth and compassion for others has to be nurtured and resistance to the comfortable and the self-serving has to be shouldered.

You are not the priority.

Many of us do not relish being in the limelight yet it is good to be affirmed and to know that we are appreciated. Perhaps at our best we are prepared to let go some of our rights for the sake of benefitting others in greater need, But having our rights taken from us, our name and reputation besmirched, being treated as second (or lower) class can be difficult. So it must have been galling for those who had known Jesus as a lad to hear such harsh words from him.

It has been said that the powerful do not give up their positions willingly. For men used to having their words hold weight in the home or at work, the adjustment to equality with women has been difficult, even when the justice of the situation is accepted. It is still a big issue in many concerns even today. For older people the revolution in behaviour by the young has been like watching the whole world transform before their eyes.

Perhaps we can recall an experience of hesitating to take an opportunity to which someone else has responded more quickly and we have lost the chance. When we have chosen the safe option and others have gone for the risks and won, it would be churlish to be envious, though that may be actually how we feel.

It was reported a few years ago that an Australian batsman “walked” breaking a well-established pattern of behaviour within the cricket team of waiting till the umpire signalled that the batsman was out. This was reported as unusual, and still is, because the 'gentlemanly' character of the game was assumed to be dead. Voluntarily giving up anything appears to be weak these days.

Yet, is this not at the heart of what Jesus did and taught – self-giving to those in need even at the cost of hardship, pain or ultimate death?

There have been instances of this in Iraq and Afghanistan where soldiers have risked their own lives to try and save a comrade who has been injured..

Many hard decisions have to be made because of scarce resources in the face of need, in medical care, agonising decisions have to be made about priorities for operations, medication even attention, these seem to be becoming more prevalent with cutbacks in National Health Service and the cry for better cancer drugs especially. How do we act when we learn that we are not the priority?

Are we gracious?

Do we even aspire to give up our rightful place in the queue so that the needs of others can be met?

We know and believe that all people are precious in God's eyes. We hold to the conviction that we are loved and cherished. We do not need the assurance of social status, or the protection of rights and privileges for ourselves. We can be content knowing that we are faithful to God in the way of Jesus Christ. It is for the needs and rights of others that we must fight and resist injustice.

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### **Excerpts from the Order of St James 'The Rule of Simplicity':**

#### **Liturgy, the sacraments and worship.**

Regrettably, denominations have caused and still cause divisions and barriers within the body of Christ. This is not compatible with the example and ministry of Christ as outlined in the Gospels or the words of St Paul regarding the one-ness of the body of Christ (the one true and unified church) as found in 1 Corinthians 12 for example.

The Order and its members will continue to ignore and break through the barriers the denominational churches have created by taking the unconditional love of God to wherever it is needed.

This will be done in a way which brings glory to God, strengthens and makes whole the body and is done within the bonds of Christian love and in obedience to the will of God.

Every effort should be made by all members to meet the discerned needs of all those they come into contact with, whatever their personal denominational affiliations. A member's own personal preferences are to be regarded as of no account when it comes to ministry. Christ met our needs unconditionally and all members will reflect that grace in their dealings with others. Members may however pass work on to other members of the Order if they feel that they cannot give 100% support to any requests made.

Since the Order is not bound by denominational traditions, its members are free to access and use whatever forms of sacramental or other liturgies that are appropriate to the needs of the people they serve.

The exclusive promotion of any one denominational form of liturgy or practice within the Order is contrary to the founding principles of the Order and is expressly forbidden.

Similarly, the Order will not be bound by any traditions or canons of 'the church' that deny access to the sacraments or liturgy to any person who approaches them with respect and in faith, however limited.

If these two conditions are met, all are free to receive any of the sacraments of the church and shall not be denied them.



Because of the servant nature of Christ as exemplified by the washing of the disciples' feet, members may out of humility adopt the practice of taking their communion of both kinds after all others have received.

**Prayer.**

Prayer is an integral part of both the faith and life in the Order. Prayer is a spontaneous response and expression of love rather than a duty or obligation.

Because our lives are frequently busy, it is helpful to begin the day with prayer and ask God for the opportunity to serve, for wisdom and discernment, for the necessary gifts to meet each encountered need and for the needs of those whose lives impact on our own.

We should also pray for the work and ministry of the Order and its members, that each shall be faithful to the will of God in all things.

Our prayer should also be that our actions, thoughts and words shall not cause another person to turn away from God but that the light of God's love shall shine through us unhindered and may draw all and welcome all we meet into His presence.

It is also helpful to prayerfully review each day at its closing and offer God our own failings and the successes He has wrought through us. Our attitude should be one of thankfulness and humility as we look for the many different ways God has touched us and others in each passing moment. If we find fault in our words, thoughts and actions, we may also need the forgiveness of God and should ask without fear, trusting in His infinite grace and love for us.

Because prayer is not a matter of duty but of love, the traditions of the cloistered monastic Orders regarding prayer need not be applied corporately unless agreed by those able to meet together and then only for a season unless otherwise discerned 'lest it dulls the spirit'.

It is the rule of life within closed Orders that prayers are offered to God in faith and love at morning, noon, and night. As OSJ is a dispersed Order, there is no insistence for compliance with this tradition. Nevertheless, it is a good discipline, and is helpful for spiritual growth. For this reason it is recommended to the individual member.

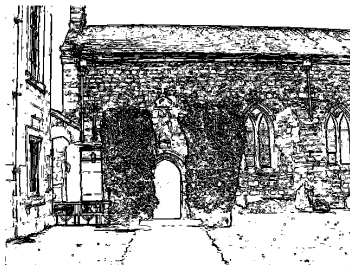
No one form of liturgy is prescribed as all have some benefit in being explored. What one finds useful, another may not and it shows wisdom to discern what is good and remain silent on the remainder lest the seeds of doubt and uncertainty are sown in another's mind.

Concerning both public and personal prayer, a few thoughtful and loving words in prayer are of greater benefit than an undisciplined outpouring – an example may be found in God's creation that the gentle rain is sufficient to encourage fruitfulness from the ground rather than the great flood which washes everything away.

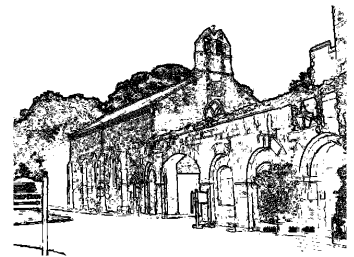
Silence in prayer is a virtue in that still small voice of God may be heard. It is only when we are silent that we begin to listen with both heart and mind.

In public worship and prayer, the needs of others shall take precedence over our own personal preference. We are called to minister to the needs of others, not to fulfil our own personal needs.

*From the Order's 'Rule of Simplicity'*



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

**7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018**

**6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018**

**20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018**

**3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018**

**17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018**

**5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018**

**7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018**

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

**Additional Services:**

**Remembrance Sunday: 11th November 10.35 a.m.**

**Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.**

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## **2018: The Year of Marriage.**

We start by re-affirming one simple ideal, a scripturally based principle, marriage is between a man and a woman and is intended for the procreation of children. (See January's newsletter.)

The first article for consideration is taken from 'Got Questions Ministries'.

***Question: "What constitutes marriage according to the Bible?"***

***Answer:*** *The Bible nowhere explicitly states at what point God considers a man and a woman to be married. Due to the Bible's silence on this matter, identifying the precise moment a man and woman are married in God's eyes is a complex undertaking. Here are the three most common viewpoints:*

*1) God only considers a man and a woman married when they are legally married—that is, when they become husband and wife in the eyes of the law.*

2) A man and a woman are married in God's eyes when they have completed some kind of formal wedding ceremony involving covenantal vows.

3) God considers a man and a woman to be married at the moment they engage in sexual intercourse.

Let's look at each of the three views and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each.

1) God only considers a man and a woman married when they are legally married. The scriptural support typically given for this view is the command to obey the government's laws (Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:17). The argument is that, if the government requires certain procedures and paperwork to be completed before a marriage is recognized, then a couple should submit themselves to that process.

It is definitely biblical for a couple to submit to the government as long as the requirements do not contradict God's Word and are reasonable. Romans 13:1–2 tells us, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

*However, there are some weaknesses and potential problems with this view.*

*First, marriage existed before any government was organized. For thousands of years, people were getting married with no such thing as a marriage license.*

*Second, even today, there are some countries that have no governmental recognition of marriage, and/or no legal requirements for marriage.*

*Third, there are some governments that place unbiblical requirements on a marriage before it is legally recognized.*

*As an example, some countries require weddings to be held in a Catholic church, according to Catholic teachings, and overseen by a Catholic priest.*

*Obviously, for those who have strong disagreements with the Catholic Church and the Catholic understanding of marriage as a sacrament, it would be unbiblical to submit to being married in the Catholic Church.*

*Fourth, to make the legitimacy of the marriage union solely*

*dependent on government statutes is to indirectly sanction the statutory definition of marriage, which may fluctuate.*

*2) A man and a woman are married in God's eyes when they have completed some kind of formal wedding ceremony.*

*Some interpreters understand God's bringing Eve to Adam (Genesis 2:22) as God's overseeing the first wedding "ceremony"—the modern practice of a father giving away his daughter at a wedding reflects God's action in Eden.*

*In John chapter 2, Jesus attended a wedding ceremony. Jesus would not have attended such an event if He did not approve of what was occurring. Jesus' presence at a wedding ceremony by no means indicates that God requires a wedding ceremony, but it does indicate that a wedding ceremony is acceptable in God's sight.*

*Nearly every culture in the history of humanity has observed some kind of formal wedding ceremony. In every culture there is an event, action, covenant, vow, or proclamation that is recognized as declaring a man and woman to be married.*

*3) God considers a man and a woman to be married at the moment they engage in sexual intercourse.*



*There are some who take this to mean that a married couple is not truly “married” in God’s eyes until they have consummated the marriage physically.*

*Others argue that, if any man and woman have sex, God considers the two of them to be married. The basis for this view is the fact that sexual intercourse between a husband and wife is the ultimate fulfilment of the “one flesh” principle (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31).*

*In this sense, sexual intercourse is the final “seal” on a marriage covenant. However, the view that intercourse constitutes marriage is not biblically sound.*

*If a couple is legally and ceremonially married, but for some reason is unable to engage in sexual intercourse, that couple is still considered married.*

*We know that God does not equate sexual intercourse with marriage based on the fact that the Old Testament often distinguishes a wife from a concubine.*

*For example, 2 Chronicles 11:21 describes one king’s family life:*

*“Rehoboam loved Maakah daughter of Absalom more than any of his other wives and concubines. In all, he had eighteen wives and sixty concubines.”*

*In this verse, concubines who had sexual intercourse with King Rehoboam are not considered wives and are mentioned as a separate category.*

*Also, 1 Corinthians 7:2 indicates that sex before marriage is immorality. If sexual intercourse causes a couple to become married, it could not be considered immoral, as the couple would be considered married the moment they engaged in sexual intercourse.*

*There is absolutely no biblical basis for an unmarried couple to have sex and then declare themselves to be married, thereby declaring all future sexual relations to be moral and God-honouring.*

*Some point to Genesis 24 and the story of Isaac and Rebekah as an example of a couple being married solely by sexual intercourse, without any type of ceremony. But the details that lead up the marriage reveal that a formal process was followed. Isaac's father, Abraham, gave his servant a list of things to do to find Isaac a wife (Genesis 24:1–10). The servant did all his master asked, plus he prayed to God for guidance and confirmation (verses 12–14).*

*God did guide him, and He also confirmed all of the servant's "tests" to show that the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was indeed God-approved (verses 15–27). So convinced was the servant of God's will that he immediately related to Rebekah's brother, Laban, all of the details confirming God's choice (verses 32–49). By the time dinner was served, everyone knew that this was of God, that both Isaac and Rebekah should be married (verses 50–51). Then a dowry was paid, and verbal contracts were pledged between them (verses 52–59).*

*Thus, the marriage mentioned in verse 67 was hardly based on a mere sexual act. Cultural procedures and dowry traditions were fulfilled, conditions were met, answers to prayer were seen, and the obvious blessing by God was upon the entire scenario.*

*So, what constitutes marriage in God's eyes? It would seem that the following principles should be followed:*

*1) As long as the requirements are reasonable and not against the Bible, a man and a woman should seek whatever formal governmental recognition is available.*

*2) A man and a woman should follow whatever cultural, familial, and covenantal practices are typically employed to recognize a couple as "officially married."*

*3) If possible, a man and a woman should consummate the marriage sexually, fulfilling the physical aspect of the “one flesh” principle.*

*What if one or more of these principles are not fulfilled?*

*Is such a couple still considered married in God’s eyes?*

*Ultimately, that is between the couple and God. God knows our hearts (1 John 3:20).*

*God knows the difference between a true marriage covenant and an attempt to justify sexual immorality.*

*Citation: "What constitutes marriage according to the Bible?" Got Questions Ministries, accessed 06/01/2018, [<https://www.gotquestions.org/marriage-constitutes.html>] © permission to print.*

It is a thought provoking discussion but it does not tackle one main consideration, and that is what part does God play in leading us to that perfect (in His eyes that is) partner for us.

In fact, if we chose someone outside of His will, are we married at all and doing no more than living in sin in a state of legalised fornication? It may be a brutal question to ask, but it is worth asking for the sake of clarity.

Now for the second article. It is 'in depth' and broad, and gives a biblical perspective on marriage.

### ***What Is Marriage?***

*Marriage is a covenant, a sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God and normally consummated by sexual intercourse.*

*God's plan for the marriage covenant involves at least the following five vital principles:*

*(1) The permanence of marriage: Marriage is intended to be permanent, since it was established by God (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9). Marriage represents a serious commitment that should not be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. It involves a solemn promise or pledge, not merely to one's marriage partner, but before God. Divorce is not permitted except in a very limited number of biblically prescribed circumstances (see Divorce below).*

*(2) The sacredness of marriage: Marriage is not merely a human agreement between two consenting individuals (a "civil union"); it is a relationship before and under God (Genesis 2:22). Hence, a "same-sex marriage" is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. Since Scripture universally condemns homosexual*

*relationships (see further under Homosexuality below) God will never sanction a marital bond between two members of the same sex.*

*3) The intimacy of marriage: Marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships, uniting a man and a woman in a "one-flesh" union (Genesis 2:23 -25). Marriage involves "leaving" one's family of origin and "being united" to one's spouse, which signifies the establishment of a new family unit distinct from the two originating families. While "one flesh" suggests sexual intercourse and normally procreation, at its very heart the concept entails the establishment of a new kinship relationship between two previously unrelated individuals (and families) by the most intimate of human bonds.*

*(4) The mutuality of marriage: Marriage is a relationship of free self-giving of one human being to another (Ephesians 5:25-30). The marriage partners are to be first and foremost concerned about the wellbeing of the other person and to be committed to each other in steadfast love and devotion. This involves the need for forgiveness and restoration of the relationship in the case of sin. Mutuality, however, does not mean sameness in role. Scripture is clear that wives are to submit to their husbands and to serve as their "suitable helpers," while husbands are to bear the ultimate responsibility for the marriage before God (Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18, 20).*

*(5) The exclusiveness of marriage: Marriage is not only permanent, sacred, intimate, and mutual; it is also exclusive (Genesis 2:22-25; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5). This means that no other human relationship must interfere with the marriage commitment between husband and wife. For this reason, Jesus treated sexual immorality of a married person, including even a husband's lustful thoughts, with utmost seriousness (Matthew 5:28; 19:9). For the same reason, premarital sex is also illegitimate, since it violates the exclusive claims of one's future spouse. As the Song of Solomon makes clear, only in the secure context of an exclusive marital bond can free and complete giving of oneself in marriage take place.*

### ***How Did Sin Affect Marriage and the Family?***

*Knowing the divine ideal for marriage, and aware that marriage and the family are divine institutions, we are now able to move from God's creation of man and woman and his institution of marriage to the Fall of humanity and its negative consequences on the marriage relationship. As a study of biblical history shows, humanity's rebellion against the Creator's purposes led to at least the following six negative consequences:*

- (1) polygamy;*
- (2) divorce;*
- (3) adultery;*

- (4) homosexuality;
- (5) sterility; and
- (6) gender role confusion.

*The first shortcoming, polygamy--more specifically, polygyny, marrying multiple wives--violates God's instituted pattern of marital monogamy. While it was certainly within God's prerogative and power to make more than one wife for the man, God only made Eve. Yet within six generations after the fall of humanity, barely after Adam had died, Lamech took two wives (Genesis 4:19). Later, prominent men in Israel's history such as Abraham, Esau, Jacob, Gideon, Elkanah, David, Solomon, and others engaged in polygamy.*

*However, not only did polygamous marriage fall short of God's original design, it regularly resulted in disruptive favouritism, jealousy between competing wives, and decline into idolatry.*

*The second compromise of God's ideal for marriage was divorce, which disrupted the permanence of marriage. While divorce became so common that it had to be regulated in the Mosaic code (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), the Bible makes clear that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). Divorce is also used repeatedly as an analogy for spiritual apostasy (Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8).*



*A third shortcoming was adultery, the breaking of one's marriage vows. The Decalogue stipulates explicitly, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18). An egregious case of adultery was David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11).*

*In cases such as these, the principle of marital fidelity to one's marriage partner was compromised. The Book of Proverbs calls adultery both foolish and dangerous (e.g. Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:3-22; 6:32-33; 7:5-23; 9:13-18).*

*In the Old Testament, adultery is frequently used as an analogy to depict the spiritual unfaithfulness of God's people Israel (Jeremiah 3:8-9; Ezekiel 16:32, 38; Hosea 1:1-3:5).*

*Homosexuality, fourth, marks another falling away from God's creation purposes in that it violates the divine will for marriage to be between one man and one woman. As Genesis 2:24 stipulates, "A man [masculine] shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife [feminine], and the two shall become one flesh."*

*Heterosexuality is the only possible arrangement for marriage, as the Creator has commanded and expects married couples to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28).*

*Since homosexuality involves same-sex intercourse that cannot lead to procreation, it is unnatural and cannot logically entail the possibility of marriage.*

*A fifth shortcoming of God's ideal for marriage is sterility, which falls short of the fertility desired by the Creator. Fertility is implicit in the biblical reference to the "one flesh" union. At times, lack of fertility is said in the Old Testament to be the result of personal sin (Genesis 20:17-18; 2 Samuel 6:23), while on other occasions sterility is presented as a simple fact of (fallen) nature (Genesis 11:30; 25:21; 30:1; 1 Samuel 1:2). However, God is often shown to answer prayers for fertility offered by his people in faith (e.g. 1 Samuel 1:9-20).*

*Gender role confusion is a sixth and final result of humanity's rebellion against the Creator. Where God's design for man and woman to be distinct yet complementary partners in procreation and stewardship of God's earth is diluted, people will inexorably be confused about what it means to be masculine or feminine, and the lines between the two sexes made by God will increasingly be blurred.*

*Despite the above-mentioned ways in which God's original design for marriage and the family was compromised, however, the Bible in*

*the Old Testament continues to extol the virtues of the excellent wife (Proverbs 31:10-31) and to celebrate the beauty of sex in marriage (Song of Solomon).*

### ***The Restoration of God's Original Design for Marriage and the Family in Christ***

*The New Testament teaches that the restoration of God's original design for marriage in Christ is part of God's realignment of all things under Christ's authority and lordship. In the book of Ephesians, we read that it is God's purpose "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Ephesians 1:10 , NIV).*

*Thus marriage is not an end in itself but part of God's end-time restoration of all things in the person of Jesus Christ. Part of this restoration is that all evil powers are brought under control and are submitted to the supreme authority of Christ (Ephesians 1:21-22). Later on in the same letter, Paul addresses the subject of marriage in general, and marital roles in particular, within the larger context of believers needing to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18 ).*

*What is the biblical pattern for marriage?*

*This is best seen in a close study of the pre-eminent passage on marital roles in the New Testament, Ephesians 5:21-33. In this passage, instructions are given to both husbands and wives in form of a "house table," which features commands given first to the person under authority followed by instructions for the person in a position of authority. In keeping with this pattern, the passage addresses first wives, then husbands (Ephesians 5:22-33); first children, then parents (Ephesians 6:1-4); and first slaves, and then masters (Ephesians 6:5-9; similar "house tables" are also found in Colossians 3:18-4:1 and 1 Peter 2:11-3:7).*

*Wives, for their part, are called to submit to their own husbands, as to the Lord. As the church submits to Christ, so wives should to their husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:21-24).*

*Husbands, in turn, are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. They are to provide for their wives both physically and spiritually and to cherish them as God's special provision for them (Ephesians 5:25-30).*

*As Christian husbands and wives live out these marital roles, God's original creation design for marriage will be fulfilled once again: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31).*

*As mentioned, this pattern of headship and submission is placed within the larger context of Christ's headship over all other powers, which Paul addressed at the beginning of his letter to the Ephesians (see Ephesians 1:10, 20-23). Paul returns to this subject at the end of his epistle where he urges all Christians--including husbands and wives, parents and children--to put on the "whole armour of God" so they can stand against the devil (Ephesians 6:10; for the various pieces in this spiritual "armour," see Ephesians 6:14-18). In this warfare, believers' struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the evil supernatural (Ephesians 6:12). Armed with truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and God's word, they will be able to stand firm and resist the devil "in the evil day" (Ephesians 6:13).*

*The reality of the power of Satan and his forces explains at least in part why there is so much conflict in many marriages and families today. It also helps account for the widespread nature of divorce and the massive assault on marriage as an institution in our contemporary culture.*

## ***Singleness***

*We turn now to a discussion of singleness and the unmarried state.*

*In Old Testament times, singleness was rare among individuals old enough to marry. Those unmarried were therefore limited to widows, eunuchs, those who could not marry due to diseases such as leprosy or severe economic difficulties, those who did not marry because of some type of divine call, those who had undergone a divorce, or unmarried young men and women.*

*Thus marriage was the overwhelming norm in Old Testament times, in keeping with the foundational creation narrative in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2.*

*In the New Testament, a somewhat different picture emerges. Major figures such as John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and Timothy were unmarried. Jesus spoke favourably about "eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:12), and Paul even called celibacy a "gift from God" (1 Corinthians 7:7).*

*He further suggested that married people's interests were divided while the unmarried could devote themselves wholly to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32-35). What is more, Jesus taught that in the eternal state, there will be no more marriage, but all will be "like angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:29-30).*

*Thus we see in the sweep of biblical history a trend from marriage as the norm (with singleness being limited to exceptional cases), to a place where the advantages and disadvantages of both marriage and singleness are affirmed (in Jesus and Paul), to a marriage-less state in heaven where the only "marriage" will be that of Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom, to the church as his spiritual "bride."*

## ***Homosexuality***

*What does the Bible teach on the subject of homosexuality? As mentioned, the Genesis creation account stipulates heterosexual, not homosexual, marriage as God's original design. Homosexuality falls short in several critical ways.*

*First, homosexual relationships fall short in the area of procreation, since they are by their very nature not able to fulfill God's creation mandate for humanity to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.*

*Second, homosexuality also violates another cardinal underlying principle of God's creation design for human relationships, namely that of complementarity. The very fact that in some homosexual relationships one partner takes on a male and the other a female role (attested by two different Greek words for homosexuality in the New Testament) provides indirect support for the complementarity*

*inherent in the divine creation design.*

*In recent years, homosexual advocates have argued that the Bible, rightly interpreted, does not forbid homosexual relationships, only perverse expressions of such. For example, they have argued that God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:17-19:29) was merely for these cities' inhospitality, not for the sin of homosexuality.*

*However, while Sodom and Gomorrah did in fact show a lack of hospitality, it is hardly conceivable that God would punish these cities by utter annihilation for this comparatively minor offence.*

*Also, the Epistle of Jude clearly states that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah "indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire" (i.e. homosexuality; Jude 7; cf. Romans 1:26-27).*

*With regard to the Levitical Holiness Code (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), some have suggested that these passages prohibited only homosexual acts performed by Canaanite temple prostitutes as part of the worship of false gods, not homosexuality at large.*

*However, these passages are clearly general in nature, which is seen by the application of the word "abomination" elsewhere also to incest, adultery, and bestiality (Leviticus 18:6-23).*



*None of these sins are prohibited only in the context of idolatrous worship; all have broader, universal application.*

*In the New Testament, Paul addresses the issue of homosexuality extensively in his letter to the Romans, where he writes, "For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error" (Romans 1:26-27). This is followed by a long list of vices (Romans 1:29-31).*

*Again, the Bible's prohibition clearly refers to homosexuality at large, not merely to perverted forms of it (see also 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10).*

## ***Divorce***

*As mentioned, divorce is a result of the Fall of humanity. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 regulates divorce in ancient Israel. In Jesus' day, rabbinic schools lined up behind two major interpretations of this passage.*

*The conservative school of Shammai allowed for divorce in cases of immodest behavior or sexual immorality. The more moderate school of Hillel allowed divorce in any instance where a wife had done something displeasing to her husband. It appears that this more permissive interpretation held sway among most of Jesus' contemporaries (see Matthew 19:3).*

*Jesus, for his part, interpreted the passage as allowing divorce only in cases of sexual immorality, that is, sexual marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:9; cf. Matthew 5:32; Greek porneia). Even in such cases, divorce is only permissible, not encouraged or even preferable. Instead, Jesus strongly insisted that marriage according to God's original design was lifelong and permanent, based on the statement in Genesis that a man will leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, "and they shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5, citing Genesis 2:24). Jesus' conclusion was therefore that, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6).*

*Paul, likewise, extolled the virtues of marriage (see especially Ephesians 5:21-33), calling on husbands to love their wives and on wives to submit to their husbands and to treat them with respect. The only legitimate divorce allowed by Paul is what has been called the "Pauline privilege."*

*This refers to cases where in an unbelieving couple one of the spouses comes to faith in Christ and the other partner refuses to continue the marriage. Addressing this kind of situation, Paul stipulates, "But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15).*

*Thus there are only two (or possibly three) biblically sanctioned instances of divorce:*

- (1) sexual marital unfaithfulness (i.e. adultery); and*
- (2) the unbelieving spouse's refusal to continue the marriage after the conversion of the other partner.*

*In addition, marital separation (though not necessarily divorce) may be needed in cases of persistent physical spousal abuse.*

## **Conclusion**

*The contemporary culture is in a deep crisis regarding marriage and family today. While the crisis has important political, social, and economic ramifications, in the ultimate analysis only a spiritual return to the biblical foundations will address the root issue of the current crisis.*

*Marriage and the family were God's idea, and as divine institutions they are not open to human renegotiation or revision. As we have seen, the Bible clearly teaches that God instituted marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman, a lifelong union of two partners created in God's image to govern and manage the earth for him.*

*In keeping with his wonderful design, the Creator will normally bless a married couple with children, and it is his good plan that a family made up of a father, a mother, and several children witness to his glory and goodness in a world that has rejected the Creator's plan and has fashioned a variety of God-substitutes to fill the void that can properly be filled only by God himself.*

*Ascribed to the Family Research Council and written by Andreas Kostenberger.*

Comment:

All good stuff but nothing regarding the tricky matter of God's will for choice of partners. This is a subject that neither writer has dealt with.

The one thing I am clear about is having been involved in so many weddings is that God does not generally figure when it comes to choice of partner.

The general motivation is 'love' but even that shows little understanding of biblical principles - I hate to be cynical but the kind of 'love' that many relationships seem founded on predominately emanate from three very simple sources:

1. sexual desire
2. fear of being alone/insecurity
3. drift/because it was 'expected'.

Many couples I deal with have not discussed **why** they are getting married, or what the consequences will be. There is certainly little thought about the couple's long term future together.

Many think that it will not change their relationship or affect how they currently behave. The reality is often a great shock and result in growing resentment which undermines the relationship, often to the point of breaking. Many don't survive and add to the number of marriages that fail.

However, as many couples do learn 'to love one another' and grow to maturity through the adversity and conflict they face in their relationship, and I am not talking about 'romantic love' but the scripturally based stuff which is built to withstand the test of time and everything life can throw at it, 'even unto death'.

'Romantic love' is simply not enough in itself and 'Happy ever after' is not a matter of human rights but a lifetime's work.

So what about this as yet unanswered question of who is God's chosen partner for you?

You might like this short and biblically informative extract from an article by Ron Mehl writing for 'Family Life' as a practical starting point. It outlines some of the 'key characteristics' of a potential right partner.

*How do you choose a marriage partner? Let me leave you with just a few thoughts.*

*Make sure your life partner loves God more than he or she loves you.*

*Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:37-39, NIV)*

*It is so important to observe your partner's love for God. Why? Because in time, the way he or she loves and serves Him will be reflected in the way he or she loves and serves you.*

*Make sure your life partner is a person of character: "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord." (Psalm 119:1, NIV)*

*Men and women of character are trustworthy in all they do and have an appetite for righteousness. They will keep their word no matter what the cost.*

*Make sure your life partner is kind to others: "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32, NKJV)*

*If you don't see your partner treat others with kindness and grace, in time he or she will be treating you the same way.*

*Make sure to note the way your life partner dresses. "And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do." (1 Timothy 2:9-10, NLT)*

*I'm not saying your partner should wear a gunnysack and combat boots to cover herself. I'm just saying the modest things she wears reveal a lot about her heart.*

*Make sure your life partner treats his or her parents with honour and respect: "Honour your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise." (Ephesians 6:2, NKJV)*

*I have never yet met a young person who is truly successful or blessed who doesn't love his or her parents.*

*Make sure your life partner is respected by others: "Choose a good reputation over great riches, for being held in high esteem is better than having silver or gold." (Proverbs 22:1, NLT)*

*Be wise about how you do this, but I would recommend that you discreetly ask a few people what they have observed about the person you're considering. Pay as much attention to their hesitations as to their words!*

*Make sure your life partner is not flirtatious: "Smooth words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot." (Proverbs 26:23, NLT)*



*A person's actions and looks speak volumes, so be advised and be wise.*

*Make sure you understand the true priorities of your life partner's life: "Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity." (1 Timothy 4:12, NLT)*

*Watch closely to see signs of your partner's love, faith, and purity.*

*Has this person put God first?*

*Does this person live to serve others?*

*Is this person selfish?*

*Make sure you know whom your life partner's close friends are: "Do not be misled. 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV)*

*Make sure your life partner is not contentious or violent: "Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred." (Proverbs 15:17, NIV)*

*If you're picking up a lot of unhappiness or anger in this person, then be warned in advance.*

*Make sure you ask the Lord for discernment. "Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul... May your good Spirit lead me on level ground." (Psalm 143:8,10, NIV)*

*"Trust in the lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6, NLT)*

*Make sure you pray, pray, pray: "Show me the path where I should walk, O lord; point out the right road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you." (Psalm 25:4-5, NLT)*

I know that 'Who is God's chosen partner for you?' has not been fully answered yet but there are things that can help point you in the right direction.

Dr Neill Neill has seven questions that you might ask yourself before you make a damaging commitment to a possibly unhealthy relationship:

***Choosing well is the foundation for a good marriage.*** Yet choosing is one of the most neglected pieces of the process of meeting, bonding, marrying, living life together and possibly having children. Choose well: the good and bad outcomes of your choice will shape your life.

1.       ***Can you accept each other as you are, warts and all?*** You can't change another person and you have absolutely no right to try to change your spouse. At the same time don't promise to change if your potential partner can't accept you as you are.

*This in no way means that you have to be the same. Acceptance of yourself and each other can accommodate wide differences between you.*

*Acceptance is the most basic issue.*

***If you can't accept the reality of each other, walk.***

2.       ***Do you like each other?***

*Liking is more basic than loving. Is he or she your ideal 'best friend?' If not, consider it a big red flag.*

3.       ***Are your values compatible?***

*Are you open and honest with each other about your values?*

*For example, do you both value family?*

*Do you both value commitment and have a common understanding of what commitment is?*

4. ***Are you compatible in the way you express (and discuss) your feelings?***

*There is probably no more disastrous marriage than that between one who openly and easily talks about personal feelings and another who can't or won't. The mantra of the latter is "I don't want to talk about it," whether it is expressed in words, silence or leaving.*

5. ***Are you compatible in how positively you look at life?***

*An optimistic, positive person and a pessimistic negative person could drive each other crazy. They often do.*

6. ***Are you compatible in your spiritual growth?***

*This is a life-cycle issue, that is, a very long-term issue.*

*People relate to something beyond themselves, and this spiritual inclination becomes more important over the course of life.*

*If you are both growing spiritually over the years, you will experience more fulfilment, even if you have different religious practices.*

7.        ***Is “Love” enough?***

*There are lots of men or women you could be in love with, but a tiny fraction of whom you could live with successfully.*

*So remember this principle: don't fall in love with someone your intuition says you couldn't build a satisfying and fulfilling life with.*

There will be more on this in the next newsletters as we are not done on this topic yet.

There is a lot to think about in this month's submission and it is a pretty big read. You will probably not agree with everything that is written in these articles, and your own understanding and interpretation of scripture and its application may be quite challenged or conflicted.

That is to be expected.

What matters is that we all give all this some serious thought and then act upon it if it is necessary.

It means that we all should prayerfully set aside our own personal situations and circumstances and actively seek the truth, however uncomfortable that may turn out to be.

Likewise, we don't need to feel bad if we find we carry historic emotional baggage but we do need to set these things aside in searching for the truth. We should never be afraid of the truth.

We are all sinners and fall short in understanding and action, but we can still learn through God's grace and love. He empowers us when we would fail and He leads us to understanding and wisdom and discernment when we don't know.

James, Chapter 1, v 2-6 states:

*<sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup> But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt.....*

So onwards and upwards.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

## **Luke 5 v 1 – 11**

Unice Brierley, OSJ

On going through this morning's Gospel reading and realising that Matthew and Mark covered this event in only 4 verses, I wondered why Luke gave it the full treatment and went into so much detail about the event.

On reading about Luke in my “Whose who in the Bible” I find that Luke was a gentile convert, came from Antioch . As a physician he was a member of a highly skilled profession, and very well educated. It also states that he was a historian which comes out in the way he starts his Gospel and also Acts. He spent a lot of time with Paul both as a physician and teaching and preaching, He doesn't refer to having met Jesus personally but he seemed very familiar with Jesus' style of preaching.

Hence the full story of the calling of the fishermen. Luke unfolds a disastrous nights fishing expedition and makes it into a call to follow him and be “Fishers of men”

They were by Lake Gennesaret, a lake which also goes under the names of The Sea of Galilee, and the Sea of Tiberias A lake which is thirteen miles long by 8 miles wide, I don't know about you but I can't imagine a Lake of that size, we certainly don't have anything in England anywhere near this size.

It lies in a dip in the earth's surface and is 680 feet below sea level which gives it almost a tropical climate, These days it is not well populated, but in the time of Jesus there were nine townships clustering round the shores, non fewer than 15,000 people which would make it a very busy area. It is difficult to imagine 9 townships the size of Wetherby in the area.

Gennesaret is really the name of the lovely plain on the west side of the lake a most fertile piece of land. The Jews loved to play with derivations.

We are here confronted with a turning point in the career of Jesus. Last time we heard him preach he was in the synagogue , now he is at the lakeside. True, he will be back to the synagogue again, but the time was coming when the door of the synagogue will be shut to him and his Church will be the lakeside and the open road, and his pulpit a boat. He would go anywhere where people would listen to him. Which reminds us of the founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley who had the church doors closed to him and said "Our societies were found from those who were wandering upon the dark mountains , that belonged to no Christian church, but were awakened by the preaching of the Methodists -who had pursued them through the wilderness of the world to the High ways and the



hedges – to the markets and the Fairs – to the Hills and the Dales – who set up the Standard of the Cross in the streets and lanes of the cities, Farmers Kitchens etc. and all this done in such a way and such an extent as had never been done before since the Apostolic age. “I love a commodious room a soft cushion and a handsome pulpit , but field preaching saves souls. When the synagogue was shut to Jesus he took to the open road.

There is in this story what we might call a list of conditions of a miracle.

There was the eye that sees. There is no need to think that Jesus created a shoal of fishes for the occasion. In the Sea of Galilee there were phenomenal shoals which covered the sea as if it was solid for as much as an acre. Most likely Jesus' discerning eye saw such a shoal and his keen sight made it look like a miracle. We need the eye that really sees.

Many people saw steam rising from the lid of the kettle but it was only James Watt who could think of a steam engine. Many people saw an apple fall from a tree but it was only Isaac Newton who went on to think out the laws of gravity. The earth is full of miracles for the eye that sees.

There is the spirit that that will make an effort. If Jesus saw it, tired as he was Peter was prepared to try again. For most people the disaster of life is that we give up just one effort too soon.

There is the spirit which will attempt what seems hopeless. The night was past and that was the time for fishing. All the circumstances were unfavourable but Peter said "Let circumstances be what they may, if you say so, we will try again. Too often we wait because the time is not opportune . If we wait for a perfect set of circumstances we will never begin at all . If we want a miracle we must take Jesus at his word when he bids us attempt the impossible.

Jesus' relationship with Simon was just beginning but Jesus believed in Peter's future ministry (against all the odds) And when Simon recognises that Jesus is holy he experiences Jesus' divinity and by contrast, his own sinfulness, he is not interested in the sinfulness of the past once it has been admitted but in Simon's future mission.

At that moment Simon had no idea of what lay in store, but Jesus knew the pearl that was within him.

Actions speak louder than words.

How practical is the message of good news we proclaim? What would be good news to your community? Simon had seen Jesus heal his mother the previous day. He recognised Jesus, was probably curious and was willing to interrupt his daily chores and go along with the ridiculous idea when logic told him there was no point fishing after last night's failure and it went against all his experience to fish in deep water during the day.

His step into unknown territory is rewarded by the extreme generosity of God's grace. How can we help people take that first steep? There were three steps to Simon's recognition. First Jesus built on a growing relationship. Second Jesus issued a challenge to look at this differently and third Jesus showered Simon with undeserved and overwhelming generosity. In what ways do we engage in these three steps with people in our community? It takes time and effort to invest in people's future, are they worth it? With God we too need to believe in that future.

God's very holiness may cause us to feel unworthy and draw back from him. Jesus encourages Simon not to be afraid of his holiness but to stay and work with him.

Jesus recruits us all to work with him in mission. When we respond we become part of a group who work with Jesus it does not all

depend on us, and Jesus promises the outcome in seeing others join the group.

Looking back over this passage and following it with research, it has been revealed that many people have experiences which they rarely put into words but which are powerful factors in shaping their lives. The experiences of the fishermen on this particular day would be looked back on with bewilderment, We cannot have the same experiences as the fishermen, but we can meet Jesus and know his call to work for him these can come to us in dreams and visions, or the experience of the ordinary such as a word spoken by a friend in a difficult situation, which nevertheless takes on an extraordinary significance in our lives and work.

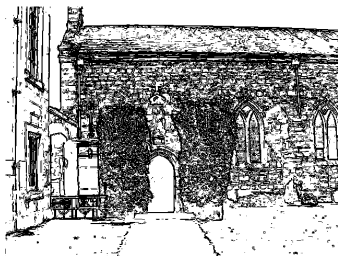
Rudolph Otto in "The idea of the Holy speaks about experiences which are awesome, mysterious fascinating and tremendous. Another Christian mystic wrote the book The Cloud of Unknowing. Which people who have read it, have found a deep source of spiritual refreshment

Brian Keenion whilst a hostage in Lebanon had such an experience. He was looking at an orange when it took on a special appearance.

Afterwards in his imprisonment this was a source of inspiration for him.. There are stories of saints through the ages who have had similar experiences. St Paul had a life changing experience of a meeting with the risen Christ.

There is a challenge to all of us in this story. In the present climate when we can read articles in the newspapers denying Christianity, and when the schools are being encouraged to drop Christian assemblies are we keeping our end up by definitely proclaiming the Good News of Christ whenever we have the opportunity, or are we sitting on the fence and taking things quietly hoping for someone else to take the lead.

It is a question only we can answer personally, but I know that Jesus will be with us all the way whatever happens, and with him behind us we can go out and proclaim Jesus' word wherever we are.



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services usually occur on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

**7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018**

**6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018**

**20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018**

**3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018**

**17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018**

**5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018**

**7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018**

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

**Additional Services:**

**Remembrance Sunday:**

**11th November 10.35 a.m.**

**Midnight Mass:**

**24th December 11.20 p.m.**



	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">March 2018</p>	
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### **2018: The Year of Marriage.**

Following our last two issues, more articles for your consideration and thought on marriage. This issue starts with two quite individual viewpoints on the Christian way of finding the right partner.

Like many articles they are based on personal experience, scriptural principles and prayer. You also perhaps need to realize that both writers are the products of the societies in which they live (as we all are) and may also carry some inherited and unintended prejudices, but that shouldn't take away any wisdom in their words.

Neither do you have to agree with what is written but you should be able to offer a prayerfully reasoned, thoughtful and considered response. That is the OSJ way. Talking about things is always a good starting point.



In both articles you get hints that keeping your feet firmly on the ground isn't that easy when you have huge conflicts between the emotional and the spiritual, and between what we need and what we want.

What is interesting is that both these articles are seen from the male perspective, and it appears there are far more written by men than women on the subject. I'm not sure what that suggests.

### **14 Principles For Finding A Godly Wife Or Husband**

This article covers 14 principles for finding a godly Christian partner in this rather lonely world.

1. Work on making yourself the sort of person that a godly Christian would LIKE to marry. Be kind, reliable, courteous and attractive. Have your life disciplined and godly and in reasonably good order. Be full of love.
2. Have something interesting about you and work on it. You need to stand out from the crowd a little. Get interested in missions, help the poor, do something different that is still you.
3. Be godly yourself. Have a daily quiet time where you read the

Bible and pray and start putting Scripture into practice in your life. Go to church regularly to worship God and switch off your "partner searching periscope" when you go there. In fact switch it off as often as you can. There is something very unattractive about people who are obviously looking for a partner. Godly people want a godly partner.

4. Make a success of your career. It will cultivate good qualities in you such as forward thinking, planning, diligence, and hard work and it will increase your self-esteem so that you don't feel as devastated by being single. It will also increase your confidence and attractiveness. Godly Christians tend to like people who do their best. Jesus had an obvious soft spot for stewards who did their work diligently and well and makes them the heroes of many of his parables.

5. Make a list of the qualities you really want in a partner and bring this list to God in prayer. Make it quite specific. Use it as a "filter" to prevent you going out with people that are completely wrong. When you make the list remember the golden rule "do unto others as you would want them to do unto you". Would you want your future partner to be drawing up a list like yours? Would you have any chance of getting selected if they did? Is your list too unreal? Make

sure that an "average person" - the sort you are likely to marry, is able to fulfil it.

6. Take their weaknesses seriously. If a person is a Christian but has a problem with drugs or alcohol or promiscuity then be very careful. If they are constantly in financial trouble or always quitting their jobs you may be marrying misery.

Things like eating disorders, very low self-esteem, high levels of hostility, and the need to control people can wreak havoc in a marriage. If they are believers then God is working in their lives and there is hope but some believers are not yet ready for responsibility. Some may be "barely believers" and not really committed to long term change. I am not saying don't marry them, I am saying think very, very long and hard before you do. Give them time to grow and to prove themselves before you tie the knot.

7. Marry someone you can pray with. Couples that pray together stay together and that's a proven fact. The Christian marriages that fail have one partner that avoids having daily devotionals together. Prayer really builds deep intimacy into a marriage.

8. Learn to recognize predators. There are quite a number of

people who hang around churches to pick up a "Christian partner" and who can fake being a Christian with considerable skill. They generally have no intention of being godly and little intention of marriage. They are generally after unprotected sex with someone innocent and free of disease. Sorry to be that blunt in a Christian magazine but you need to know the truth. Predators are often betrayed by their lack of true feeling for Christian things and their lack of insight into Scripture. Greed, not tithing, and minor ethical breaches are other good clues. Listen to God's promptings and your intuition. The Holy Spirit will scream "No" at you pretty early on. When God says "No" stop right then and there!

9. Move steadily and wisely towards commitment and put aside undue suspicion, hostility and distrust of the opposite gender. As a rough rule of thumb people end up living up to your projections of their behaviour. If you distrust people and are sure they will not stay with you but are "just using you" then they will flee! No-one will stay in a relationship with a person who distrusts them. However if you treat your partner well and trust, love, and enjoy them and delight in who they are and expect good things of them then they will enjoy your love so much that they will not think of doing anything else except marrying you! Positive people tend to get positive results and negative people tend to get negative results - so deal with your

fears.

10. Don't be paranoid about members of the opposite sex. In conservative Christian circles there is almost an assumption that you only talk to members of the opposite sex that you are interested in marrying!

That is so destructive! Build many ordinary good friendships and confuse your church thoroughly! It takes the pressure off any emerging relationships and also gives you a better understanding of women/men as the case may be.

11. Get good Christian counselling if you have had traumatic experiences that may be hindering your ability to relate to members of the opposite sex.

12. If you really like someone and they are a good Christian then go for it! I spent a lot of time thinking "so and so is too good for me" and holding back and thus losing out. Being strong and courageous has many advantages and seems to get God's blessing.

13. Many good Christian marriages have developed when a friend

introduces two people together and they click. While some friends playing Cupid with your life can be a pain if you have a few really good friends that you trust ask them to keep a lookout for you and to pray for the right person to come along.

14. Ask God's blessing on your efforts and develop the ability to listen to Him. God has a long history of putting some first class romances together. Let Him order your days and they will be pleasant. He really does care!

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**God will guide us when we walk with Him**  
**and are committed to His purpose.**

Under that overall theme, I want to give five principles on how to know God's guidance. These are not comprehensive and they are not a formula to plug into your computer, but I think they will help.

**1. To know God's guidance we must be unswerving in our commitment to God and His purpose.**

Both Abraham and his servant had an unswerving commitment to the Lord and His purpose concerning the land of Canaan. Abraham calls his unnamed servant and commissions him to find a wife for Isaac, but not from among the Canaanites. The servant asks a practical question: "Suppose the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?" (24:5). Abraham strongly warns him against doing that and repeats God's call and promise to give him the land of Canaan. So the servant swears to do what Abraham has said (24:6-9).

To know God's guidance we must put aside our own will and seek the will of the God who has called us. That is the basic principle in determining the will of God in any situation--to empty yourself, as

much as you are able, of your own will and to commit yourself to seeking and obeying God's will.

As you seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, He will reveal the specific steps you need to take as you need to know them. But if you claim to want to know God's will, but you're not willing to do it unless it agrees with your will, you're kidding yourself. All you really want is God's approval of your plans. But you'll never know God's direction that way. God reveals His will to those who are committed to doing it.

Often it is more difficult to go this route than it is to operate on the basis of human wisdom. For Abraham's servant, it meant a 500-mile journey across difficult terrain.

It involved a lot of planning, expense, and hassle. "Why be so fanatical about this, Abraham? Surely there are some nice girls somewhere in Canaan!" But Abraham saw that it was crucial for his son to marry a woman who would share his commitment to the Lord and His purpose concerning the land.

Seeking first God's kingdom is the primary factor in finding the right marriage partner. If you're committed to doing what God wants, He will give you a partner who wants to do His will as you wait on Him.



That unity of purpose builds unity in marriage, as the two of you work together in serving the Lord.

But be forewarned! Just as it was more of a hassle for Abraham to secure a wife for Isaac from his own people rather than from the Canaanites, so it will be more difficult for you to find a mate who is committed to God's purpose.

Let's face it, there are a lot of nice, good-looking single pagans out there. And there are a fair amount of nice, good-looking churchgoers who are living for themselves, not for Christ.

But it can be pretty slim pickings to find a nice, good-looking (there's nothing wrong with good looks--Rebekah is described as "very beautiful" [v. 16]), *godly* single person. And as you watch other Christian singles marrying those who aren't so committed to the Lord, it's easy to begin thinking, "Maybe I'm being too rigid. Maybe there are some nice Canaanite girls (or guys) around." But if you want God's guidance for a marriage partner, you must be unswerving in your commitment to God and His purpose.

2. To know God's guidance we must move out in obedience accompanied by common sense.

Abraham's servant didn't sit in his tent praying for a wife for Isaac. He prayed a lot, but when Abraham told him to go to Haran and find a wife for Isaac, he arose and went (24:10).

He moved out in obedience and he used common sense by taking the gifts needed to secure a bride in that culture.

Sometimes we get super-spiritual about this matter of determining God's will, especially as it pertains to finding a mate.

In college I heard speakers say that we should just trust God for a wife. I felt like if I went to a Christian gathering to look for a Christian girl to date, I was really carnal! I bought that for a while.

But I remember one time after I hadn't had a date for about two years, I was on my knees pleading with God for a wife when I realized that He wasn't going to bring her floating through the window like the old Hertz rent-a-car ads.

The Lord was saying to me, "At least go where there are some prospects!"

That's what Abraham's servant did. He didn't start hanging out at the local bars or discos in Canaan. He went where he could find a godly young woman from Abraham's relatives, as Abraham had told him to do. So obey God and use the common sense He gave you. You won't find a godly mate in bars. Don't go there! You may find a godly mate at church. Go there! That's not super-spiritual. But I think it's biblical!

3. To know God's guidance we must seek and expect it, while submitting to His sovereign ways.

Abraham told his servant that he could expect God's angel to go before him and lead him to the right young woman for Isaac (24:7). So the servant went in obedience, called to God for guidance, and God gave it to him (24:11-14).

So often we don't experience God's guidance because we get so caught up doing our own thing that we fail to stop and ask God to reveal His will to us. Or we get into our established routine, and it takes a catastrophe for God to get our attention so He can let us know what He wants us to do. So if you want God's guidance, stop and ask Him for it, expect Him to give it, and wait long enough to listen to what He might have to say.

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8 v14)

But what if God doesn't say anything? Maybe you're waiting for the wrong kind of communication. Note here that there was no voice from heaven, no miracle, no visible angel, no display of God's glory, no sign in the sky. In fact, there was no guarantee of success. Both Abraham and the servant recognized that they might not succeed (24:5, 8, 49, 58). So how did he know what God's will was in this situation?

The answer is that when you seek and expect God's guidance, and remain submissive to God's sovereign ways, He providentially orchestrates circumstances in such a way as to confirm His will.

Before the servant was done praying, God brought Rebekah along and the circumstances fit together in such an unmistakable way that the servant knew God had led him.

You need to be aware that God's providential ordering of circumstances does not always work out in storybook fashion with a happy ending. Sometimes He providentially leads you into a relationship where you get your heart broken.

While such experiences are not fun, the Lord does have important lessons to teach you if you submit to His sovereign ways. But if you think, “I trusted God and got burned, so I’m going to take matters in my own hands,” you’re not going to know His guidance. You’ll only bring more pain and discipline into your life.

In the case of Abraham’s servant, God did confirm His will through the circumstances. But however it works out, to experience God’s guidance, we must seek and expect it, while submitting to His sovereign ways.

#### 4. To know God’s guidance we must apply God’s wisdom.

Some think that Abraham’s servant was putting out a fleece when he laid out the terms of how he would know which young woman was right for Isaac (24:14). But there’s a big difference between what he did and what Gideon did in putting out his fleece.

God had clearly told Gideon what His will was; the fleece was Gideon’s way of catering to his weak faith. God graciously consented to it, but it’s not a model for determining God’s will.

But here, the servant wasn’t dictating to God what to do or doubting

what God had already made clear. Rather, he was trying to provide a basis upon which he could know that his prayer had been answered. The test he proposed shows that he was applying God's wisdom to this situation.

It would have been customary for any young woman to have given a stranger a drink. But to draw water for ten thirsty camels, each of which could drink about 20 gallons, and to do so without being asked, required a woman who was not self-centred, but who had a servant's heart.

Since self-centeredness is the root of most marriage conflicts, the servant was going to the very heart of what Isaac needed in a bride to have a happy home life. He applied God's wisdom in seeking God's will.

Note how Rebekah's normal thoughtfulness and willingness to serve paid off for her. She didn't know who this stranger was. She wasn't putting on her best "date" behavior to impress him. She was simply living as she always did, thinking of the needs of others and giving herself to meet those needs. God used that to make her the wife of Isaac, the mother of Israel (Jacob).

Note four aspects of God's wisdom for the choice of a mate:

*1) Look for godly character qualities above all else in a prospective mate.*

Beauty is okay (24:16), but godliness is essential. Especially look for someone who denies self and is focused on loving God and others. Look for a person who bases his or her life on obedience to God's Word, who is growing in the fruit of the Spirit. If you marry a beautiful woman who is focused on herself or a hunk who thinks the world revolves around him, you're in for a miserable ride in marriage!

*2) Finding the right person depends on being the right person.*

Because Rebekah had a servant's heart, she found Isaac. If she had thought, "Who is this old man asking me for water?" and had gone on her way, she wouldn't have met Isaac.

You've got to be the kind of person the kind of person you want to marry would want to marry. If you want a kind, loving, godly mate, you've got to become a kind, loving, godly person.

### *3) Seek the wisdom of your parents.*

You probably didn't want to hear that! But it's an unmistakable principle in the Bible. Abraham, through his servant, picked Isaac's wife. Although Rebekah had some say in the matter, it was her parents who really approved it. Even though we don't have our parents arrange our marriages, we still need to listen to their counsel. If your parents are not believers, their counsel may not be as valid as that of godly parents. But if your parents have a strong objection to your fiancé, you need to listen to them and think carefully about what they say. They often have wisdom you lack, especially when you're in the passion of romantic love.

### *4) Marriage is the foundation for love; love is not the foundation for marriage.*

Isaac and Rebekah married; then we read that Isaac loved her (24:67). Don't misunderstand; I believe in romantic love. But if you build a marriage on romantic love, what do you do if conflicts develop and you don't feel in love any more?

But if you build love on the foundation of the marriage commitment, then you can weather the inevitable storms.



In the Bible, we are commanded to love our mates whether we feel in love or not; the feelings follow if we obey.

To know God's guidance we must: (1) Be unswerving in our commitment to God and His purpose. (2) Move out in obedience accompanied by common sense. (3) Seek and expect it, while submitting to His sovereign ways. (4) Apply God's wisdom. Finally,

5. To know God's guidance we must bathe the whole process in prayer and constant fellowship with God.

The servant didn't meet Rebekah and say, "You're Rebekah? No kidding! What a coincidence! This must be my lucky day!" He knew it wasn't luck because he had sought the Lord in prayer. I think Abraham and Isaac were praying, too (see v. 63). The story reveals that this servant walked in fellowship with God. So when God worked the circumstances out, he worshiped the Lord and then was careful to tell Rebekah and her family the whole story of how God had led him. When he got done and asked whether they would permit Rebekah to go with him, they could only answer, "The matter is from the Lord; what can we say? ... Take her and go ... as the Lord has spoken." (24:51-52).

The longer I'm a Christian, the more I believe that finding God's will isn't a matter of some formula. It's a matter of walking in constant fellowship with the Lord, taking everything to Him in prayer. When you know that prayer is behind your circumstances, then that which otherwise may seem to be a coincidence turns out not to be a coincidence at all.

Your steps are ordered by the Lord. When you walk with Him and are committed to His purpose, He will work quietly behind the scenes of your life, leading you through potential hazards, not always leading as you might have hoped, but still leading, putting all the pieces together. The process becomes a beautiful blending of God's faithfulness and sovereignty and of our obedient trust in Him.

Steven J Cole

Two interesting and informative views on the basis of finding the right partner. I hope you found them productive and made you think.

They are quite individual approaches, but is finding the right partner something that should be left to the individual or is there a Christian family/Christian community responsibility, if you like, 'a care of loving duty'?

I believe that there is a need for families and the Christian community to work closely with couples intending to get married or in the process of actively seeking lifelong partners, but it should be a 'ground zero' approach rather than an 'add on'.

The general teaching of the church (in this case, particularly about 'marriage') should be built upon from the earliest of ages of church attendance.

Running pre-marriage counselling is perhaps more an indication and admission that the general teaching of the church regarding marriage is in fact inadequate, and that such courses are in fact a last ditch attempt to stop potentially 'badly made' marriages.

Couples may not like this apparent interference but the percentage failure rate of marriages perhaps demands a different and long term approach by 'the church' as a whole.

It is a consideration given the number of individuals who need help but are not offered it nor even know it might exist.

Given the situation that already exists, a short term remedy is necessary. There is no doubt a suggestion that there is a strong case for some kind of pre-marriage counselling amongst young people.

Most pre-marriage courses are in fact not suitable for purpose and many couples feel disengaged by them and nothing more than a trial to be endured so they can get married.

In my opinion, one of the more down to earth and biblically based approaches has been suggested by H. Norman Wright and an extract of his reasoning and conclusions are printed below:

The National Alliance for Family Life (1972) survey of 2,500 professional family-life educators revealed the following facts:

(1) Ninety-eight percent of them stated there is a definite need for strengthening family life in this nation.

(2) When asked the question "Are churches doing an adequate job of promoting and maintaining family life as a contemporary concept?" 66 percent said no.

(3) Another question which relates to this chapter was, "Do you feel that young people are receiving adequate preparation for marriage from their parents?" Only 3 percent said definitely 'yes' whereas 93 percent said 'no'.

If parents are not doing the job, who is?

In most cases churches have made just token ventures into this field, although it is gratifying to see some of the strides which are currently being made. Most Christian colleges do not have a required course in family life or marriage preparation and numerous Christian schools do not even have such an effective course in their curriculum.

Youthful marriages are of deepening concern, because the younger the ages of the couples the greater is the possibility of the bride being pregnant and the higher is the risk of this union ending in divorce.

The church has one of the most advantageous positions for marriage preparation of any group. Youth, parents, and, in fact, the entire family can be educated by the church for better marriage preparation.

A total marriage preparation program must include

1. instruction for parents of children and youth of all ages and
2. direct teaching to the youth within the church.

Herbert Otto has stated that those in the best position to do marriage enrichment are churches and ministries. If this is true for marriage enrichment, it is equally true for marriage preparation.

The proper place for marriage preparation is the home.

Youth need a model of a healthy Christian marriage with healthy patterns of communication, problem-solving skills, creative resolving of disagreements and demonstration of love and appropriate male-female behaviour.

However, ... because many youth come from non-Christian homes, (*my text - and some quite dysfunctional Christian ones too!*) churches must fill the gap where families are inadequate.

Young people face numerous questions about marriage:

Who is the right partner for me and how will I know?

How can I be sure that it will work out?

What if I don't find someone before I get out of college?

Unfortunately, a person's level of insecurity or self-image strongly influences his dating pattern and behaviour and his choice of a future mate.

Many young people seek to bolster their low self-image by dating or marrying indiscriminately, with almost anyone who will date or marry them. The questions that junior high and high school youth are asking about sexuality today are questions that in years past were asked by college-age youth.

Assisting youth in establishing proper dating patterns is an initial step in building standards for (life long partner) selection. Dating has marriage as its ultimate purpose.

Therefore, certain guidelines must be followed:

(a) a Christian young person should not date a non-Christian;

(b) a Christian should not date a Christian who is spiritually immature;

(c) a Christian teen should not date an emotionally immature person.

Miles has pointed out that experience and extensive sociological research have led to a rather clear picture of qualities in marriage partners essential for a successful marriage.

These qualities should, he suggests, also be considered in selecting a dating partner:

1. Belief in God

2. Self-confidence, with positive determination to face and work through life's problems

3. Self-discipline and self-control, including reasonable control over bodily appetites, thoughts, temper, and personal relationships.



4. Ambition and purpose, including positive short-range and long-range life goals, and experience in responsible work

5. Willingness to admit mistakes, take responsibility for them, and profit by them

6. Mature ideas about how to handle money and things

7. Love, respect, and appreciation for one's home and family

8. Respect and appreciation of personal and individual rights, dignity, and freedom of others with the ability to look beyond their weaknesses to their strong qualities

9. A sense of humour, including the ability to laugh at oneself

10. A balanced view of sex, being neither ascetic nor hedonistic

11. Contentment and happiness

Miles adds the excellent observation that any young person looking for these qualities in a marriage should work diligently to develop these

qualities in himself or herself.

Finding a marriage partner is not so much finding the right person as it is becoming the right person. Both individuals can lose in the game of marriage, but it is just as possible for both to win!

What is involved in the process of selecting a mate?

What factors, conscious or unconscious, move people toward one another?

Several reasons, apart from "being in love," account for marriage.

*Pregnancy* is still a reason that couples marry. In fact, about one-fourth of all marriages are consummated when the bride is pregnant. It is also probable that many of these marriages would have never occurred had the woman not been pregnant. Research on these marriages shows a relationship between a premarital pregnancy and unhappiness in marriage.<sup>4</sup> These marriages need not end in divorce nor unhappiness; the forgiveness of Jesus Christ can affect this situation as well as any of the others.

***Rebound*** is another reason for some marriages. After a dating couple "break up," one of the partners sometimes soon finds another person to marry. In a sense, this is a frantic attempt to establish desirability in the eyes of the person who terminated the dating relationship. Marriage on the rebound is questionable because the marriage occurs in reference to the previous man or woman and not in reference to the person being married.

***Rebellion*** is another reason some young people marry. If a teen's parents do not approve of their young person's dating partner, that teen may get married anyway in order to demonstrate his control over his own life. Unfortunately, such a young person is then using his marriage partner to get back at his parents.

***Escape.*** Some people marry as an attempt to *escape* from an unhappy home environment. Fighting, alcohol, and abuse, are some of the reasons given.

This kind of marriage is risky because it often does not include genuine feelings of mutual trust, respect, and mature love.

***Loneliness*** is another motive for marriage. Some cannot bear the thought of remaining alone for the rest of their days, and yet they fail

to realize that a person can be married and still feel terribly lonely. Instantaneous intimacy does not occur at the altar but must be developed over months and years of sharing and involvement. This reason may also place a strain on the relationship, because one partner may be saying, "I'm so lonely. Be with me all of the time and make me happy." The problems stemming from this attitude are apparent.

***Physical appearance*** is a factor that possibly influences everyone to one degree or another. Our society is highly influenced by the cult of youth and beauty. Often, standards for physical appearance in the other partner are not so much to satisfy one's need but simply to gain the approval and admiration of others. Some build their self-concept on their partner's physical attributes.

***Social pressure*** may be a direct or indirect motive, and may come from several sources. Friends, parents, churches, and schools convey the message, "It is normal to be married, and therefore you should 'get with it.' " On some college campuses a malady known as "senior panic" occurs during the final year of college, especially among unmarried women. For some young people, engagement and marriage is a means of gaining status.

***Guilt and pity*** are reasons for some marriages. A person may marry someone out of feeling sorry for his partner's physical defects or illness. However, having a poor lot in life does not guarantee a stable marital relationship.

Part of the ministry to youth involves helping them become aware of the reason people choose a marital partner. One needs to choose a marriage partner out of strength and not out of weakness. Helping youth develop a strong self-concept is basic in helping them achieve healthy marital relationships.

## **SESSIONS ON MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

The following three-point outline has been the basis for many marriage preparation sessions for young people and could be adopted for similar programs.

### **I. A Christian Standard for Sexual Behaviour**

#### **A. Adultery and fornication are condemned in Scripture**

##### **1. Adultery is expressly prohibited in the Ten Commandments (Exodus**

20:14) and is condemned in many other passages in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 20:3; Prov 6:32-33, Jer 5:7-8).

2. Jesus repeated the commandment prohibiting adultery (Mark 10:19) and even added that looking on a woman to lust after her amounts to committing adultery with her in one's heart (Matt 5:27-28). He condemned both adultery and fornication (Mark 7:20-23; Mark 10:11-12).

3. One of the few "essentials" that the apostles at the Jerusalem Council felt necessary to mention in their letter to the Antioch Christians was that they abstain from fornication (Acts 15:28-29).

4. Paul speaks out strongly against sex outside of marriage in many of his letters. For example:

a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 (NASB). Paul warns that those who continue to practice fornication or adultery "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 9). He adds that our bodies are "not for immorality, but for the Lord" (v. 13). In fact, believers' bodies are "members of Christ" (v. 15), and "temples of the Holy Spirit" who indwells them (v. 19). Accordingly, they are to glorify God in their bodies (v. 20) by fleeing immorality (v. 18).

b. Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB). Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality and carousing are all included in Paul's list of the "deeds of the flesh," the doers of which will not inherit the kingdom of God. Christians are to display the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which includes love, patience, goodness, and self-control (vv. 22-23).

c. Ephesians 5:3-12 (NASB). Paul urges the Ephesians Christians not to let sexual sins of immorality or impurity "even be named" among them (v. 3). Moreover, they were told not to participate in the "deeds of darkness," for the light will expose and reprove them (v. 13). See also Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Colossians 3: 5-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:22.

5. Other New Testament authors were equally emphatic in their condemnation of sex outside marriage. See Hebrews 13:4; James 2:11; 2 Peter 2:9-16; Jude 7; and Revelation 2:20-22; 9-21.

B. An example of a biblical figure who fled from sexual immorality is Joseph (Gen 39:7-12, NASB). His master's wife asked him repeatedly, day after day, to lie with her, but Joseph refused each time: "How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" (v. 9).

One day when he was doing his work around the house, she caught him by his garment and asked him again.

Understanding the seriousness of the temptation, Joseph "left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside" (v. 12).

## **II. Benefits of Waiting until Marriage**

A. *No guilt.* God's design for sex is that it be a part of marriage (Heb 13:4). Not waiting for marriage creates guilt that hampers one's relationships with Him, with one's partner, and with many others.

B. *No fear.* Waiting insures that one will never need to be afraid — not even to the extent of one fleeting thought — of having to build a marriage on an unexpected pregnancy.

C. *No comparison.* Waiting insures that a spouse will never fall into the devastating trap of comparing his spouse's sexual performance with that of a previous partner.

D. *Spiritual growth.* Positively, waiting will help one subject physical drives to the lordship of Christ, and thereby develop self-control, an



important aspect of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Also, if those marriage partners are later separated temporarily (e.g., for a business trip), then this discipline early in their relationship will give them confidence and trust in each other during that time of separation.

*E. Great joy.* Waiting insures that there will be something saved for the marriage relationship, for that first night and for the many nights thereafter. The anticipation of the fulfilment of their relationship in sexual union is exciting, and should not be spoiled by a premarital relationship.

At least this is a genuinely well informed, honest and considered piece, but it won't be to everyone's taste. Some may find it quite unpalatable.

What I am struggling with, and I guess it is no different to anyone else looking into a broad theology of marriage, is there is often no sense of established and long term 'preparation'. It seems most couples still drift into marriage without asking the question 'why are we getting married?'

Great sex and being able to live with someone comfortably may be a part of 'a marriage' but it isn't 'marriage'. Neither is living together and/or having children. It isn't a substitute or reason for 'being/getting married'

either, even if it has become more socially accepted.

I will remind you that it is a 'sacrament', and that is one word which has been missing in the three articles I quoted earlier in this issue of the newsletter. I recognise that it may have not been within the intended remit of the individual writers, so my observation is not a complaint of omission, but the idea of marriage being a sacrament needs including. I found this un-ascribed article a useful description of what a Sacrament is and it may be helpful.

#### WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

*St Augustine, in the 5th century described a sacrament as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.' It sounds a very simple answer, but, to understand the depth of what that means, we need to probe rather more deeply.*

#### THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

*As Christians the journey of our lives is about coming to know God better, about building the kingdom of God here on earth, and, finally, to be with God forever. As Christians we move on this journey as the Church, that*

*gathering of the baptised, striving to be the sign of Christ in the world.*

*Thus, we are a community, the community of Christ. St John, in his gospel tells us 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.' (John 3:16) God's love for us, his will for us to participate in his life, is manifested in the Incarnation, God's giving of himself in the humanity of Jesus; 'the word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1:14) Jesus is the visible, outward sign of God's love for us.*

*In turn, it is in the Church that Christ remains visible and tangible for us, most particularly in our encounters with him in the sacraments. The sacraments are where we meet Christ, where God's action, in Christ, through the Church, transforms us, bringing us to what God wants us to be. As baptised Christians, this is what we want too, we want to be what God wills for us. And what God wills for us is a life of joy in his presence and the promise of eternity. As Psalm 16 tells us: 'You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.'*

## 'SACRAMENT'

*Historically, the word 'sacrament' developed from the Greek word 'mysterion' and the Latin word 'sacramentum'. 'Mysterion' means 'something hidden or secret' – our word 'mystery'. The language surrounding 'sacraments' did not develop in the Church for some time. We hear of a ritual of baptism in the Christian community of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the 'breaking of bread' – the Eucharist (Acts 2:38, 41- 42).*

*These celebrations were called by their name, there was no generic term for these experiences. It was not until the third century that the word 'mysterion', a word that the pagans used to describe rites of initiation, began to be used to describe Christian rites.*

*In order to avoid any confusion with pagan thinking the theologian Tertullian began to use the Latin word, 'sacramentum' for 'mysterion' particularly in explaining baptism.*

*The sacramentum was a sacred oath of allegiance to the emperor taken by a Roman soldier. Tertullian suggested that just as the soldier's oath was a sign of the beginning of a new life, so too was initiation into the Christian community through baptism and eucharist. '*

*Sacramentum' then became a general term for the rites of Christian initiation.*

### *DEVELOPMENT*

*A more detailed reflection on the sacraments came from St Augustine of Hippo in the 5th century. Augustine developed the notion that a sacramentum is a sign that sanctifies – makes holy – because it is efficacious – produces the intended effect. For instance, Christ and the Holy Spirit make effective, through grace, the cleansing that water signifies in baptism.*

*It was Augustine who called a sacrament 'a visible sign of invisible grace'. He also, in his letters referred to a sacramentum as a 'sacrum signum' or 'sign of a sacred thing' It is worth mentioning that Augustine did not consider only rituals to be sacraments but listed over three hundred.*

*The Church gradually reduced this by differentiating between rituals and signs and symbols that assist people in prayer and devotion such as holy water, palms, ashes etc. These latter are called sacramentals.*

*Gradually seven major rituals came to be accepted as sacraments, named*

*in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council as the sacraments of the Church, confirmed at the Councils of Lyon II (1247), Florence (1439) and Trent (1547). These seven were, as we have today, baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, anointing of the dying (today the anointing of the sick), marriage (matrimony) and the ordination of priests.*

### DEFINITIONS

*So, then what is a sacrament? As stated above, St Augustine described a sacrament as ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.’*

*‘A Catechism of Christian Doctrine’ tells us ‘a sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to our souls.’*

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, ‘The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.*

*The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament.’*

*Their Code of Canon Law states, 'The sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. As actions of Christ and the Church, they are signs and means which express and strengthen the faith, render worship to God, and effect the sanctification of humanity and thus contribute in the greatest way to establish, strengthen, and manifest ecclesiastical communion.'*

*The 'Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy' tells us, 'the purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to worship God. Because they are signs, they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it.'*

So to recap, there are seven sacraments of the church.

**Baptism:** the first sacrament in which recipients join the Church.

**Eucharist/Communion:** remembers the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

**Confirmation:** in which adults personally commit to the baptismal promises made for them by their parents.

**Reconciliation:** confers God's forgiveness of sins and reconciliation.

**Matrimony:** reflecting the love of God in a covenant expressing a lifelong partnership, including procreation.

**Anointing of the Sick:** formerly called ‘the Last Rites’, provides healing and strength to those suffering from physical or mental illness.

**Holy Orders:** the rite that ordains bishops, priests, and deacons, investing them with the power to perform sacred duties.

**For clarity: the intentions and purposes of the Sacrament of Marriage.**

<b>Protestant</b>	<b>Roman Catholic</b>
The sacrament of Holy Matrimony 1. signifies the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and is intended for 2. is for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord, 3. and is the union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity;	As a sacrament, it reflects 1. the union of Jesus Christ and His Church. 2. is the lifelong union between a man and a woman for mutual support 3. and is intended for procreation of children



### **Practical considerations for OSJ priests.**

If we are asked to conduct a service as a visiting priest/minister/pastor following a civil service, should it be a 'wedding blessing' or the Sacrament (or Rite) of Holy Matrimony?

They are very different in intent and both in this context are generally referred to by most brides and grooms as different forms of 'Wedding Blessings' although this notion is incorrect.

A 'Wedding Blessing' is what it says it is, a short service of blessing of the newly married couple by an appointed person following a civil service conducted by a registrar in premises (or rooms) licensed for the Solemnisation of Marriage or at a Registrar's Office. A 'Wedding Blessing' can be conducted anywhere by any competent person, lay or ordained.

It is not a sacrament or pertains to be. It is purely and simply 'a blessing'.

The 'Rite of Holy Matrimony' or 'the Sacrament of Marriage/Holy Matrimony' is a faith based stand alone event and should be conducted by

a properly ordained priest/minister/pastor in a consecrated building or grounds. Marriage vows are made in the presence of God and are witnessed by the church community and guests.

It is purely a sacrament and on its own 'the marriage' is not and will not be recognised by law.

A civil service will be required if the couple wish to have their marriage recognised by law and benefit from the protection that gives (unless the celebrant is a registrar and the ceremony is conducted on properly licensed premises and the approved form of agreed words are used).

To be absolutely clear:-

1. the 'Wedding Blessing' is not a sacrament, anyone can conduct one anywhere.
2. the 'Rite of Holy Matrimony' is a sacrament, should be conducted in a consecrated building (or on consecrated ground) by a properly ordained person.
3. Neither forms services are legally binding. They are a matter of personal choice and faith.
4. and a civil service conducted by Registrars is required if the marriage is to be recognised by law.

In terms of OSJ good practice: this means that,

1. unless agreed with the Registrars in writing and in advance of any service conducted by OSJ priests, the general practice of OSJ is that a 'wedding blessing' follows a service conducted by Registrars, likewise a service using the Rite of Holy Matrimony (in which case any 'legal' references are removed).

2. OSJ priests will not conduct either of these two forms of service in isolation unless evidenced by a legally valid civil marriage license/certificate or other acceptable evidence.

3. 'Render unto God what is God's and render unto Caesar what is Caesar's.' The work of the Registrar Services is legally protected and OSJ members will respect and continue to be supportive of the Registrars civil roles and jurisdictions. We will expect the same in return, that Registrars do not exceed their authority in matters outside their jurisdiction. Mutual recognition, support and encouragement where it can be achieved is always the better and more productive approach.

4. The form of service we ultimately use needs to be based on each individual couple's clear pastoral and spiritual needs (rather than wants!!!)

and be a clear and solid foundation for their own specific marriage. There are never any generic solutions.

**Continuing in Psalms:**

Rev David Startup, OSJ

Today we continue our look at the Book of Psalms. The purpose of Psalms was to provide poetry for the expression of praise, worship and confession to God. David wrote 73 of the Psalms some attributed to others while 51 Psalms are indicated as anonymous. David was clearly an exceptional poet.

David - Beloved.

The Psalms were written between the time of Moses (around 1440 B.C.) & 586 B.C. For the most part the Psalms were not intended to be narrations of historic events but they do often parallel events in history, such as David's flight from Saul and his sinning with Bathsheba.

David was the youngest son of the eight sons of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, and was the second and greatest of Israel's kings, an eloquent poet and one of the most prominent figures in the history of the world. he was quite literally

## **"A Man after God's own heart"**

Volumes have been written about David, about his trial and triumphs including being carefully chosen by God to be Israel's second king. In his youth David was trained to be a Shepherd, tending his father's sheep. Although he was the youngest of the family it pleased God to raise him from a low estate and make him king.

### **David was a Warrior.**

David was courageous and a great soldier (I II Samuel) although he did not have the training of a soldier. His fight with Goliath made him a marked man.

David and Goliath - so unequally matched but when David was victorious there was no empty boasting, no reliance on his own strength and power. God gave the victory and David gave God all the Glory.

### **He was a skilful Musician.**

He played well on the harp and therefore suffered the job of playing for King Saul and only David's playing would sooth him.

### **He was a Saint.**

David was acknowledged and accepted as a child of God. Not as a result of any remarkable goodness in David. god had chosen him to be the ruler of His people.

### **He was a Sinner.**

David really tarnished his character by his sin against Uriah and by the deceitful way he gained this gallant soldier's wife as his very own. He did however make a deep cry for forgiveness from the Lord Psalm 32,51 show.

### **He was a Prophet.**

Moved by  
the Holy Spirit he was moved to lay out many truths related to Jesus as Lord and saviour

### **He was like Jesus**

Not only did David prophesy about Jesus he was like Jesus in many ways. Both were born in Bethlehem.

Both were of low birth - no status or rank, no wealth.

Both were Shepherds - one caring for sheep, the other for souls.

Both were sorely oppressed and persecuted but neither said anything.  
Both became Kings in their own right. David subdued his enemies and had a kingdom stretching from shore to shore. Jesus was born a King, and has an everlasting Kingdom.

Enough about David, more about God and David's relationship with each other.

Why should we read the Psalms and indeed, how many of us do?

The Life Application Bible states that as we read and memorise the Psalms we will gradually discover how much they are already part of us, reflecting our own thoughts, feelings and emotions. They put into words our deepest hurts, longings, thoughts and prayers. And gently push us towards being more of what God designed us to be - people loving and living for Him. To me the Psalms are a tremendous discovery!

### **Let's look closer then at Psalm 145. A Psalm of Praise.**

David makes the claim that he will submit to God. David, King of Israel, submits himself to God as his King. David begins and ends this Psalm with Praise and in the middle David says why he is praising God. He wants

people to know his God is the greatest. He tells us about **five qualities** that make God not just great - but the Greatest God.

## **1 His Great Works v3-6**

God reveals how truly great He is by the works he does. We can't even begin to realise, to put a figure on, just how much work he has done. We can explore the universes to the nth degree and there is still more. God is so much greater than our greatest need. Applies to everything...

John Wesley wrote: "Give me a worm that can understand a man and I will give you a man who can understand God"

Even Google can't catalogue all the good works that God has done.

## **2 His Great Goodness v7**

God is great because God is good. When people talk about things God has done, they are demonstrating the good things he has done. It seems to be only non-believers that accuse him of doing bad things. He only allows bad things to happen and they happen because God has allowed man his freedom.



God is good, generous, waiting, smiling and wanting to do something good for us. Many people has totally the opposite view of Him though and asked why does He allow bad things to happen.... if he controlled us and stopped bad from happening to us, we would soon be fed up with not doing what we wanted to do - not having our freedom.

### **3 His Great Kingdom v 10-13**

God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His rule will last forever. His kingdom refers to His reign and power over his people. Everyone, ultimately, will fall under His rule, one way or another. Some defy his rule, but in the end all will submit to Him. His rule consists of mercy, grace and goodness. God is not a dictator, He is neither a tyrant nor a maniac. God is a great Ruler of a Great Kingdom.

### **4 His Great Faithfulness v 14-21**

God likes to help His Children - picking them up after failure. David committed adultery and murder but God didn't step back from Him. When we acknowledge our failings we promote the Glory of God in allowing Him to show His forgivenessing, display His faithfulness and Love to each and every one of us

God provides for our spiritual needs... v15-16

God can relate to us..He *knows* each and every one of us intimately.... v17

God listens to us.... v18

God answers us..... v19

God protects us..... v20

## **5 His Great Love for us v8-9**

*The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in faithful love. The Lord is good to everyone; His compassion rests on all He has made.*

God shows that He is good, not just by His great works and goodness but by His Love for everyone of us. He is good to everyone, showing mercy, compassion and grace, *if we allow Him to be*. There are those who reject God.

At the centre and in the midst of all His good works, His goodness, His

rule His faithfulness, grace and mercy - *is His Love for us.*

When we put together all the attributes and freely given qualities from God, we realise He is something very, very special and is the Light of our Lives.

We should worship the ground He walks on so to speak...

Our lives should consist of a great deal of praise and worship of the Lord and perhaps we all wonder if we do this enough?

### ***Examples***

Do we get to a point where we take Him for granted?

Do we forget about Him, even in times of trouble when we really need Him?

Where would we be if he controlled everything we do?

What would we do if He wasn't there for us?

Do we sing on a Sunday parrot fashion and praise him every Sunday - only?

How often do we thank Him for what he does for us?

How often do we talk about Him to others?

How often do we talk to Him?

How much Love do we show to others in an attempt to be more like Jesus.

It's hard work sometimes to practice this fundamental Fruit of the spirit...especially when we have been wronged, or when we try to help and be accused of not being helpful enough. When we sacrifice somethings that we want to do to satisfy someone else's wants, someone who thinks the whole world revolves around them. The way a lot of human kind is performing on God's earth - He needs an awful lot of patience and understanding in loving us then.

I'm sure we all do the very best we can in all we do for Him and give Him the most of what we are blessed with. But He, God is awesome and deserves an awful lot more from us in terms of Worship, Praise and deeds!!!

We are only human and a very feint reflection of Him...

- God's love is steadfast and unchanging
- God's love comforts us
- God's love is revealed to us through Jesus Christ
- God's love is poured into us through the Holy Spirit
- God's love compels us to love one another

Love is all around

Romans 8:38-39 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, <sup>[a]</sup>neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It's a good job that Love conquers all...God's Love that is.

The liturgy over this last two months seem to have been putting an emphasis on the cost of following Jesus. Not monetary cost but the cost of relationships etc., This morning Luke is quoting Jesus' emphasis on the use of wealth.

At the time of this parable the Pharisees considered wealth to be proof of a persons righteousness. Jesus startled them with the story of a diseased beggar being rewarded and a rich being man punished. The rich man did not go to hell because of his wealth, but because he was selfishness refusing to feed Lazarus, take him in an care for him

Let us look at the situation further.

First there is the rich man, usually called Dives, which is the Latin for rich. Every phrase adds something to the luxury in which he lived. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. That is the description of the robes of the high priests, and such robes were very expensive , costing many times the value of a working man's wage. He feasted in luxury every day. Gourmet feeding on exotic and costly dishes. He did this every day.

And in doing so he positively broke the fourth commandment. That commandment not only forbids work on the Sabbath, it also says six days you shall labour ( Exodus 20:9) which the rich man obviously ignored.

In a country where the people were very fortunate if they ate meat once in the week and where they toiled for six days of the week. Dives is a figure of indolent self-indulgence. Lazarus was waiting for the crumbs that fell from Dives table, in that time there were no knives , forks or napkins, Food was eaten with the hands and, in very wealthy houses, the hands were cleaned by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. That was what Lazarus was waiting for.

Second, there is Lazarus. It is strange that Lazarus is the only character in any of the parables who is given a name. The name in Latin means God is my help. He was a beggar, he was covered in ulcerated sores, and so helpless that he could not even ward off the street dogs which pestered him.

This is the scene that Jesus describes. Then it abruptly changes to Lazarus being in glory and Dives being in torment. What was

Dives sin. He hadn't ordered Lazarus to be removed, and was quite happy for him to receive the bread thrown away from the table. He wasn't deliberately cruel, but to him Lazarus was part of the landscape, he never saw him when he came and went from his house. His sin was that he could look on the world's suffering, and with all his wealth, do nothing. How often does this apply to people today? This passage is a terrible warning that the sin of Dives, and of many today is not that they do wrong, but that they do nothing.

Didn't Jesus say as much as you did or did not do anything you did or did not do it unto me"

This is one of the many occasions when Jesus spoke sharply about attitudes to money and material possessions. He spoke more about this subject than about any other simple issue. It was just as much a problem then and is for his disciples today. The key to this story is verse 14. The Pharisees who were lovers of money, heard all this and they ridiculed him. And no doubt Jesus' listeners clearly identified the hated Pharisees with the rich man in the story.

The rich man had a attitude problem, demonstrated by the fact that he loved luxury. Dressing in fine linens. Living in a fine house and hosting fine parties. But it's not his wealth that Jesus condemns.



But the pursuit of it for its own sake, as though salvation were available through material possessions.

The story is told of the funeral of a wealthy person. A relative asked “How much did he leave” Everything came the reply.

The rich man is completely blind to the suffering of Lazarus outside his gate He only saw value in people who could serve his needs. He cannot see that the privilege of wealth also has its responsibilities – to care for those less comfortable. He demonstrated this further when, instead of offering to return to warn his brothers of the torment he demands of Abraham that Lazarus returns. A big contrast with Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

The rich man's attitude to spiritual matters is shown through his rejection of the Old Testament revelation already available to him. When his attention was drawn to it, he complained that it wasn't enough – someone needed to rise from the dead.

A famous preacher was greeting his congregation after the service when a woman told him off for repeating a sermon he had preached a few weeks earlier in another Church. He asked if she had put it

into practice yet. As she fumbled with an answer, he said “Well my dear I'll keep preaching it until you do.

The best way to cultivate a right attitude to money, people and spiritual things is to see the beggar outside our gate – the poor, the exploited, the sick, the dying, the marginalised – in fact all who are not like ourselves. The miracle is that the more loosely we hold our possessions the more we enjoy them, the more we serve the needs of others, the more we value them, and the more we listen to God's words, the more we value ourselves.

This is a parable of yawning gaps.

We live in a world of yawning gaps where people keep a safe distance from those who are different – white from black, East from West. Christian from Muslim, heterosexual and homosexual. And our country seems to be going more and more down this road.

This story is about one of the most obvious yawning gaps. Between rich and poor. The obvious yawning gap is that one lives in a world of obvious luxury and the other suffers grinding poverty. We have only to look round the world today to see that this is still very

evident, the Western world lives in this gap. Within and between nations, the wealth gap is getting wider. The rich often have no idea of the problems of poverty.

It is often said (Why can't they work harder and manage their money better) and the poor often have no concept of the problems of wealth (Why don't they give it away to the people who need it?) so instead of solutions being sought the gap gets wider.

In this story this yawning gap is reversed between Dives and Lazarus. The rich man is in eternal torment and Lazarus ends up in eternal joy. Warmth and love. This must have been a terrible shock to Jesus' listeners, who would assume that wealth was a sign of God's blessing. But the gap between the two men didn't just relate to wealth, it was more than that, it was attitude. Dives was blind to his neighbour's needs. Instead of using his wealth to benefit others, he abused it to establish his status. Yet in the afterlife Lazarus enjoyed an eternity of divine blessing while the rich man discovered what it was like to be Lazarus.

The rich man fondly hopes that a simple warning will rescue his brothers from the torment he is suffering, whereas the reality is that

even if someone were to rise from the dead they would not believe. Even Jesus who did rise from the dead still came up against the attitude of the Pharisees, as he has over the centuries by many, and he still does, we have only to look round the world and even in our own country, to see the worship of money and possessions. Although people wouldn't call it that.

In the musical My Fair Lady Eliza cries "Don't talk of love. Show me" Our post modern culture demands the same of the Church- don't talk of Jesus show us. . Good evangelism does not just proclaim the truth that Jesus is risen, but also gives people a reason to believe it. In Jesus' time, as in ours people need to know not only that the gospel is true but that it works.

How are we, at the present time, going about the task that this parable has set us. Only we in our hearts know the answer to this.



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

**7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018**

**No service**

**20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018**

**3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018**

**17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018**

**5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018**

**7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018**

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

**Additional Services:**

**Remembrance Sunday:**

**11th November 10.35 a.m.**

**Midnight Mass:**

**24th December 11.20 p.m.**

	<p><b>The Order of St James Newsletter</b></p> <p>March 2018</p>	
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### 2018: The Year of Marriage.

Following our last two issues, more articles for your consideration and thought on marriage. This issue starts with two quite individual viewpoints on the Christian way of finding the right partner.

Like many articles they are based on personal experience, scriptural principles and prayer. You also perhaps need to realize that both writers are the products of the societies in which they live (as we all are) and may also carry some inherited and unintended prejudices, but that shouldn't take away any wisdom in their words.

Neither do you have to agree with what is written but you should be able to offer a prayerfully reasoned, thoughtful and considered response. That is the OSJ way. Talking about things is always a good starting point.

In both articles you get hints that keeping your feet firmly on the ground isn't that easy when you have huge conflicts between the emotional and the spiritual, and between what we need and what we want.

What is interesting is that both these articles are seen from the male perspective, and it appears there are far more written by men than women on the subject. I'm not sure what that suggests.

### **14 Principles For Finding A Godly Wife Or Husband**

This article covers 14 principles for finding a godly Christian partner in this rather lonely world.

1. Work on making yourself the sort of person that a godly Christian would LIKE to marry. Be kind, reliable, courteous and attractive. Have your life disciplined and godly and in reasonably good order. Be full of love.
2. Have something interesting about you and work on it. You need to stand out from the crowd a little. Get interested in missions, help the poor, do something different that is still you.
3. Be godly yourself. Have a daily quiet time where you read the

Bible and pray and start putting Scripture into practice in your life. Go to church regularly to worship God and switch off your "partner searching periscope" when you go there. In fact switch it off as often as you can. There is something very unattractive about people who are obviously looking for a partner. Godly people want a godly partner.

4. Make a success of your career. It will cultivate good qualities in you such as forward thinking, planning, diligence, and hard work and it will increase your self-esteem so that you don't feel as devastated by being single. It will also increase your confidence and attractiveness. Godly Christians tend to like people who do their best. Jesus had an obvious soft spot for stewards who did their work diligently and well and makes them the heroes of many of his parables.

5. Make a list of the qualities you really want in a partner and bring this list to God in prayer. Make it quite specific. Use it as a "filter" to prevent you going out with people that are completely wrong. When you make the list remember the golden rule "do unto others as you would want them to do unto you". Would you want your future partner to be drawing up a list like yours? Would you have any chance of getting selected if they did? Is your list too unreal? Make



sure that an "average person" - the sort you are likely to marry, is able to fulfil it.

6. Take their weaknesses seriously. If a person is a Christian but has a problem with drugs or alcohol or promiscuity then be very careful. If they are constantly in financial trouble or always quitting their jobs you may be marrying misery.

Things like eating disorders, very low self-esteem, high levels of hostility, and the need to control people can wreak havoc in a marriage. If they are believers then God is working in their lives and there is hope but some believers are not yet ready for responsibility. Some may be "barely believers" and not really committed to long term change. I am not saying don't marry them, I am saying think very, very long and hard before you do. Give them time to grow and to prove themselves before you tie the knot.

7. Marry someone you can pray with. Couples that pray together stay together and that's a proven fact. The Christian marriages that fail have one partner that avoids having daily devotionals together. Prayer really builds deep intimacy into a marriage.

8. Learn to recognize predators. There are quite a number of

people who hang around churches to pick up a "Christian partner" and who can fake being a Christian with considerable skill. They generally have no intention of being godly and little intention of marriage. They are generally after unprotected sex with someone innocent and free of disease. Sorry to be that blunt in a Christian magazine but you need to know the truth. Predators are often betrayed by their lack of true feeling for Christian things and their lack of insight into Scripture. Greed, not tithing, and minor ethical breaches are other good clues. Listen to God's promptings and your intuition. The Holy Spirit will scream "No" at you pretty early on. When God says "No" stop right then and there!

9. Move steadily and wisely towards commitment and put aside undue suspicion, hostility and distrust of the opposite gender. As a rough rule of thumb people end up living up to your projections of their behaviour. If you distrust people and are sure they will not stay with you but are "just using you" then they will flee! No-one will stay in a relationship with a person who distrusts them. However if you treat your partner well and trust, love, and enjoy them and delight in who they are and expect good things of them then they will enjoy your love so much that they will not think of doing anything else except marrying you! Positive people tend to get positive results and negative people tend to get negative results - so deal with your

fears.

10. Don't be paranoid about members of the opposite sex. In conservative Christian circles there is almost an assumption that you only talk to members of the opposite sex that you are interested in marrying!

That is so destructive! Build many ordinary good friendships and confuse your church thoroughly! It takes the pressure off any emerging relationships and also gives you a better understanding of women/men as the case may be.

11. Get good Christian counselling if you have had traumatic experiences that may be hindering your ability to relate to members of the opposite sex.

12. If you really like someone and they are a good Christian then go for it! I spent a lot of time thinking "so and so is too good for me" and holding back and thus losing out. Being strong and courageous has many advantages and seems to get God's blessing.

13. Many good Christian marriages have developed when a friend

introduces two people together and they click. While some friends playing Cupid with your life can be a pain if you have a few really good friends that you trust ask them to keep a lookout for you and to pray for the right person to come along.

14. Ask God's blessing on your efforts and develop the ability to listen to Him. God has a long history of putting some first class romances together. Let Him order your days and they will be pleasant. He really does care!

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**God will guide us when we walk with Him**  
**and are committed to His purpose.**

Under that overall theme, I want to give five principles on how to know God's guidance. These are not comprehensive and they are not a formula to plug into your computer, but I think they will help.

**1. To know God's guidance we must be unswerving in our commitment to God and His purpose.**

Both Abraham and his servant had an unswerving commitment to the Lord and His purpose concerning the land of Canaan. Abraham calls his unnamed servant and commissions him to find a wife for Isaac, but not from among the Canaanites. The servant asks a practical question: "Suppose the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?" (24:5). Abraham strongly warns him against doing that and repeats God's call and promise to give him the land of Canaan. So the servant swears to do what Abraham has said (24:6-9).

To know God's guidance we must put aside our own will and seek the will of the God who has called us. That is the basic principle in determining the will of God in any situation--to empty yourself, as

much as you are able, of your own will and to commit yourself to seeking and obeying God's will.

As you seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, He will reveal the specific steps you need to take as you need to know them. But if you claim to want to know God's will, but you're not willing to do it unless it agrees with your will, you're kidding yourself. All you really want is God's approval of your plans. But you'll never know God's direction that way. God reveals His will to those who are committed to doing it.

Often it is more difficult to go this route than it is to operate on the basis of human wisdom. For Abraham's servant, it meant a 500-mile journey across difficult terrain.

It involved a lot of planning, expense, and hassle. "Why be so fanatical about this, Abraham? Surely there are some nice girls somewhere in Canaan!" But Abraham saw that it was crucial for his son to marry a woman who would share his commitment to the Lord and His purpose concerning the land.

Seeking first God's kingdom is the primary factor in finding the right marriage partner. If you're committed to doing what God wants, He will give you a partner who wants to do His will as you wait on Him.

That unity of purpose builds unity in marriage, as the two of you work together in serving the Lord.

But be forewarned! Just as it was more of a hassle for Abraham to secure a wife for Isaac from his own people rather than from the Canaanites, so it will be more difficult for you to find a mate who is committed to God's purpose.

Let's face it, there are a lot of nice, good-looking single pagans out there. And there are a fair amount of nice, good-looking churchgoers who are living for themselves, not for Christ.

But it can be pretty slim pickings to find a nice, good-looking (there's nothing wrong with good looks--Rebekah is described as "very beautiful" [v. 16]), *godly* single person. And as you watch other Christian singles marrying those who aren't so committed to the Lord, it's easy to begin thinking, "Maybe I'm being too rigid. Maybe there are some nice Canaanite girls (or guys) around." But if you want God's guidance for a marriage partner, you must be unswerving in your commitment to God and His purpose.

2. To know God's guidance we must move out in obedience accompanied by common sense.

Abraham's servant didn't sit in his tent praying for a wife for Isaac. He prayed a lot, but when Abraham told him to go to Haran and find a wife for Isaac, he arose and went (24:10).

He moved out in obedience and he used common sense by taking the gifts needed to secure a bride in that culture.

Sometimes we get super-spiritual about this matter of determining God's will, especially as it pertains to finding a mate.

In college I heard speakers say that we should just trust God for a wife. I felt like if I went to a Christian gathering to look for a Christian girl to date, I was really carnal! I bought that for a while.

But I remember one time after I hadn't had a date for about two years, I was on my knees pleading with God for a wife when I realized that He wasn't going to bring her floating through the window like the old Hertz rent-a-car ads.

The Lord was saying to me, "At least go where there are some prospects!"



That's what Abraham's servant did. He didn't start hanging out at the local bars or discos in Canaan. He went where he could find a godly young woman from Abraham's relatives, as Abraham had told him to do. So obey God and use the common sense He gave you. You won't find a godly mate in bars. Don't go there! You may find a godly mate at church. Go there! That's not super-spiritual. But I think it's biblical!

3. To know God's guidance we must seek and expect it, while submitting to His sovereign ways.

Abraham told his servant that he could expect God's angel to go before him and lead him to the right young woman for Isaac (24:7). So the servant went in obedience, called to God for guidance, and God gave it to him (24:11-14).

So often we don't experience God's guidance because we get so caught up doing our own thing that we fail to stop and ask God to reveal His will to us. Or we get into our established routine, and it takes a catastrophe for God to get our attention so He can let us know what He wants us to do. So if you want God's guidance, stop and ask Him for it, expect Him to give it, and wait long enough to listen to what He might have to say.

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Romans 8 v14)

But what if God doesn't say anything? Maybe you're waiting for the wrong kind of communication. Note here that there was no voice from heaven, no miracle, no visible angel, no display of God's glory, no sign in the sky. In fact, there was no guarantee of success. Both Abraham and the servant recognized that they might not succeed (24:5, 8, 49, 58). So how did he know what God's will was in this situation?

The answer is that when you seek and expect God's guidance, and remain submissive to God's sovereign ways, He providentially orchestrates circumstances in such a way as to confirm His will.

Before the servant was done praying, God brought Rebekah along and the circumstances fit together in such an unmistakable way that the servant knew God had led him.

You need to be aware that God's providential ordering of circumstances does not always work out in storybook fashion with a happy ending. Sometimes He providentially leads you into a relationship where you get your heart broken.

While such experiences are not fun, the Lord does have important lessons to teach you if you submit to His sovereign ways. But if you think, “I trusted God and got burned, so I’m going to take matters in my own hands,” you’re not going to know His guidance. You’ll only bring more pain and discipline into your life.

In the case of Abraham’s servant, God did confirm His will through the circumstances. But however it works out, to experience God’s guidance, we must seek and expect it, while submitting to His sovereign ways.

#### 4. To know God’s guidance we must apply God’s wisdom.

Some think that Abraham’s servant was putting out a fleece when he laid out the terms of how he would know which young woman was right for Isaac (24:14). But there’s a big difference between what he did and what Gideon did in putting out his fleece.

God had clearly told Gideon what His will was; the fleece was Gideon’s way of catering to his weak faith. God graciously consented to it, but it’s not a model for determining God’s will.

But here, the servant wasn’t dictating to God what to do or doubting

what God had already made clear. Rather, he was trying to provide a basis upon which he could know that his prayer had been answered. The test he proposed shows that he was applying God's wisdom to this situation.

It would have been customary for any young woman to have given a stranger a drink. But to draw water for ten thirsty camels, each of which could drink about 20 gallons, and to do so without being asked, required a woman who was not self-centred, but who had a servant's heart.

Since self-centeredness is the root of most marriage conflicts, the servant was going to the very heart of what Isaac needed in a bride to have a happy home life. He applied God's wisdom in seeking God's will.

Note how Rebekah's normal thoughtfulness and willingness to serve paid off for her. She didn't know who this stranger was. She wasn't putting on her best "date" behavior to impress him. She was simply living as she always did, thinking of the needs of others and giving herself to meet those needs. God used that to make her the wife of Isaac, the mother of Israel (Jacob).

Note four aspects of God's wisdom for the choice of a mate:

*1) Look for godly character qualities above all else in a prospective mate.*

Beauty is okay (24:16), but godliness is essential. Especially look for someone who denies self and is focused on loving God and others. Look for a person who bases his or her life on obedience to God's Word, who is growing in the fruit of the Spirit. If you marry a beautiful woman who is focused on herself or a hunk who thinks the world revolves around him, you're in for a miserable ride in marriage!

*2) Finding the right person depends on being the right person.*

Because Rebekah had a servant's heart, she found Isaac. If she had thought, "Who is this old man asking me for water?" and had gone on her way, she wouldn't have met Isaac.

You've got to be the kind of person the kind of person you want to marry would want to marry. If you want a kind, loving, godly mate, you've got to become a kind, loving, godly person.

### *3) Seek the wisdom of your parents.*

You probably didn't want to hear that! But it's an unmistakable principle in the Bible. Abraham, through his servant, picked Isaac's wife. Although Rebekah had some say in the matter, it was her parents who really approved it. Even though we don't have our parents arrange our marriages, we still need to listen to their counsel. If your parents are not believers, their counsel may not be as valid as that of godly parents. But if your parents have a strong objection to your fiancé, you need to listen to them and think carefully about what they say. They often have wisdom you lack, especially when you're in the passion of romantic love.

### *4) Marriage is the foundation for love; love is not the foundation for marriage.*

Isaac and Rebekah married; then we read that Isaac loved her (24:67). Don't misunderstand; I believe in romantic love. But if you build a marriage on romantic love, what do you do if conflicts develop and you don't feel in love any more?

But if you build love on the foundation of the marriage commitment, then you can weather the inevitable storms.

In the Bible, we are commanded to love our mates whether we feel in love or not; the feelings follow if we obey.

To know God's guidance we must: (1) Be unswerving in our commitment to God and His purpose. (2) Move out in obedience accompanied by common sense. (3) Seek and expect it, while submitting to His sovereign ways. (4) Apply God's wisdom. Finally,

5. To know God's guidance we must bathe the whole process in prayer and constant fellowship with God.

The servant didn't meet Rebekah and say, "You're Rebekah? No kidding! What a coincidence! This must be my lucky day!" He knew it wasn't luck because he had sought the Lord in prayer. I think Abraham and Isaac were praying, too (see v. 63). The story reveals that this servant walked in fellowship with God. So when God worked the circumstances out, he worshiped the Lord and then was careful to tell Rebekah and her family the whole story of how God had led him. When he got done and asked whether they would permit Rebekah to go with him, they could only answer, "The matter is from the Lord; what can we say? ... Take her and go ... as the Lord has spoken." (24:51-52).

The longer I'm a Christian, the more I believe that finding God's will isn't a matter of some formula. It's a matter of walking in constant fellowship with the Lord, taking everything to Him in prayer. When you know that prayer is behind your circumstances, then that which otherwise may seem to be a coincidence turns out not to be a coincidence at all.

Your steps are ordered by the Lord. When you walk with Him and are committed to His purpose, He will work quietly behind the scenes of your life, leading you through potential hazards, not always leading as you might have hoped, but still leading, putting all the pieces together. The process becomes a beautiful blending of God's faithfulness and sovereignty and of our obedient trust in Him.

Steven J Cole

Two interesting and informative views on the basis of finding the right partner. I hope you found them productive and made you think.

They are quite individual approaches, but is finding the right partner something that should be left to the individual or is there a Christian family/Christian community responsibility, if you like, 'a care of loving duty'?



I believe that there is a need for families and the Christian community to work closely with couples intending to get married or in the process of actively seeking lifelong partners, but it should be a 'ground zero' approach rather than an 'add on'.

The general teaching of the church (in this case, particularly about 'marriage') should be built upon from the earliest of ages of church attendance.

Running pre-marriage counselling is perhaps more an indication and admission that the general teaching of the church regarding marriage is in fact inadequate, and that such courses are in fact a last ditch attempt to stop potentially 'badly made' marriages.

Couples may not like this apparent interference but the percentage failure rate of marriages perhaps demands a different and long term approach by 'the church' as a whole.

It is a consideration given the number of individuals who need help but are not offered it nor even know it might exist.

Given the situation that already exists, a short term remedy is necessary. There is no doubt a suggestion that there is a strong case for some kind of pre-marriage counselling amongst young people.

Most pre-marriage courses are in fact not suitable for purpose and many couples feel disengaged by them and nothing more than a trial to be endured so they can get married.

In my opinion, one of the more down to earth and biblically based approaches has been suggested by H. Norman Wright and an extract of his reasoning and conclusions are printed below:

The National Alliance for Family Life (1972) survey of 2,500 professional family-life educators revealed the following facts:

(1) Ninety-eight percent of them stated there is a definite need for strengthening family life in this nation.

(2) When asked the question "Are churches doing an adequate job of promoting and maintaining family life as a contemporary concept?" 66 percent said no.

(3) Another question which relates to this chapter was, "Do you feel that young people are receiving adequate preparation for marriage from their parents?" Only 3 percent said definitely 'yes' whereas 93 percent said 'no'.

If parents are not doing the job, who is?

In most cases churches have made just token ventures into this field, although it is gratifying to see some of the strides which are currently being made. Most Christian colleges do not have a required course in family life or marriage preparation and numerous Christian schools do not even have such an effective course in their curriculum.

Youthful marriages are of deepening concern, because the younger the ages of the couples the greater is the possibility of the bride being pregnant and the higher is the risk of this union ending in divorce.

The church has one of the most advantageous positions for marriage preparation of any group. Youth, parents, and, in fact, the entire family can be educated by the church for better marriage preparation.

A total marriage preparation program must include

1. instruction for parents of children and youth of all ages and
2. direct teaching to the youth within the church.

Herbert Otto has stated that those in the best position to do marriage enrichment are churches and ministries. If this is true for marriage enrichment, it is equally true for marriage preparation.

The proper place for marriage preparation is the home.

Youth need a model of a healthy Christian marriage with healthy patterns of communication, problem-solving skills, creative resolving of disagreements and demonstration of love and appropriate male-female behaviour.

However, ... because many youth come from non-Christian homes, (*my text - and some quite dysfunctional Christian ones too!*) churches must fill the gap where families are inadequate.

Young people face numerous questions about marriage:

Who is the right partner for me and how will I know?

How can I be sure that it will work out?

What if I don't find someone before I get out of college?

Unfortunately, a person's level of insecurity or self-image strongly influences his dating pattern and behaviour and his choice of a future mate.

Many young people seek to bolster their low self-image by dating or marrying indiscriminately, with almost anyone who will date or marry them. The questions that junior high and high school youth are asking about sexuality today are questions that in years past were asked by college-age youth.

Assisting youth in establishing proper dating patterns is an initial step in building standards for (life long partner) selection. Dating has marriage as its ultimate purpose.

Therefore, certain guidelines must be followed:

(a) a Christian young person should not date a non-Christian;

(b) a Christian should not date a Christian who is spiritually immature;

(c) a Christian teen should not date an emotionally immature person.

Miles has pointed out that experience and extensive sociological research have led to a rather clear picture of qualities in marriage partners essential for a successful marriage.

These qualities should, he suggests, also be considered in selecting a dating partner:

1. Belief in God

2. Self-confidence, with positive determination to face and work through life's problems

3. Self-discipline and self-control, including reasonable control over bodily appetites, thoughts, temper, and personal relationships.

4. Ambition and purpose, including positive short-range and long-range life goals, and experience in responsible work

5. Willingness to admit mistakes, take responsibility for them, and profit by them

6. Mature ideas about how to handle money and things

7. Love, respect, and appreciation for one's home and family

8. Respect and appreciation of personal and individual rights, dignity, and freedom of others with the ability to look beyond their weaknesses to their strong qualities

9. A sense of humour, including the ability to laugh at oneself

10. A balanced view of sex, being neither ascetic nor hedonistic

11. Contentment and happiness

Miles adds the excellent observation that any young person looking for these qualities in a marriage should work diligently to develop these

qualities in himself or herself.

Finding a marriage partner is not so much finding the right person as it is becoming the right person. Both individuals can lose in the game of marriage, but it is just as possible for both to win!

What is involved in the process of selecting a mate?

What factors, conscious or unconscious, move people toward one another?

Several reasons, apart from "being in love," account for marriage.

*Pregnancy* is still a reason that couples marry. In fact, about one-fourth of all marriages are consummated when the bride is pregnant. It is also probable that many of these marriages would have never occurred had the woman not been pregnant. Research on these marriages shows a relationship between a premarital pregnancy and unhappiness in marriage.<sup>4</sup> These marriages need not end in divorce nor unhappiness; the forgiveness of Jesus Christ can affect this situation as well as any of the others.



***Rebound*** is another reason for some marriages. After a dating couple "break up," one of the partners sometimes soon finds another person to marry. In a sense, this is a frantic attempt to establish desirability in the eyes of the person who terminated the dating relationship. Marriage on the rebound is questionable because the marriage occurs in reference to the previous man or woman and not in reference to the person being married.

***Rebellion*** is another reason some young people marry. If a teen's parents do not approve of their young person's dating partner, that teen may get married anyway in order to demonstrate his control over his own life. Unfortunately, such a young person is then using his marriage partner to get back at his parents.

***Escape.*** Some people marry as an attempt to *escape* from an unhappy home environment. Fighting, alcohol, and abuse, are some of the reasons given.

This kind of marriage is risky because it often does not include genuine feelings of mutual trust, respect, and mature love.

***Loneliness*** is another motive for marriage. Some cannot bear the thought of remaining alone for the rest of their days, and yet they fail

to realize that a person can be married and still feel terribly lonely. Instantaneous intimacy does not occur at the altar but must be developed over months and years of sharing and involvement. This reason may also place a strain on the relationship, because one partner may be saying, "I'm so lonely. Be with me all of the time and make me happy." The problems stemming from this attitude are apparent.

***Physical appearance*** is a factor that possibly influences everyone to one degree or another. Our society is highly influenced by the cult of youth and beauty. Often, standards for physical appearance in the other partner are not so much to satisfy one's need but simply to gain the approval and admiration of others. Some build their self-concept on their partner's physical attributes.

***Social pressure*** may be a direct or indirect motive, and may come from several sources. Friends, parents, churches, and schools convey the message, "It is normal to be married, and therefore you should 'get with it.' " On some college campuses a malady known as "senior panic" occurs during the final year of college, especially among unmarried women. For some young people, engagement and marriage is a means of gaining status.

***Guilt and pity*** are reasons for some marriages. A person may marry someone out of feeling sorry for his partner's physical defects or illness. However, having a poor lot in life does not guarantee a stable marital relationship.

Part of the ministry to youth involves helping them become aware of the reason people choose a marital partner. One needs to choose a marriage partner out of strength and not out of weakness. Helping youth develop a strong self-concept is basic in helping them achieve healthy marital relationships.

## **SESSIONS ON MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

The following three-point outline has been the basis for many marriage preparation sessions for young people and could be adopted for similar programs.

### **I. A Christian Standard for Sexual Behaviour**

#### **A. Adultery and fornication are condemned in Scripture**

##### **1. Adultery is expressly prohibited in the Ten Commandments (Exodus**

20:14) and is condemned in many other passages in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 20:3; Prov 6:32-33, Jer 5:7-8).

2. Jesus repeated the commandment prohibiting adultery (Mark 10:19) and even added that looking on a woman to lust after her amounts to committing adultery with her in one's heart (Matt 5:27-28). He condemned both adultery and fornication (Mark 7:20-23; Mark 10:11-12).

3. One of the few "essentials" that the apostles at the Jerusalem Council felt necessary to mention in their letter to the Antioch Christians was that they abstain from fornication (Acts 15:28-29).

4. Paul speaks out strongly against sex outside of marriage in many of his letters. For example:

a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 (NASB). Paul warns that those who continue to practice fornication or adultery "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 9). He adds that our bodies are "not for immorality, but for the Lord" (v. 13). In fact, believers' bodies are "members of Christ" (v. 15), and "temples of the Holy Spirit" who indwells them (v. 19). Accordingly, they are to glorify God in their bodies (v. 20) by fleeing immorality (v. 18).

b. Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB). Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality and carousing are all included in Paul's list of the "deeds of the flesh," the doers of which will not inherit the kingdom of God. Christians are to display the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which includes love, patience, goodness, and self-control (vv. 22-23).

c. Ephesians 5:3-12 (NASB). Paul urges the Ephesians Christians not to let sexual sins of immorality or impurity "even be named" among them (v. 3). Moreover, they were told not to participate in the "deeds of darkness," for the light will expose and reprove them (v. 13). See also Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Colossians 3: 5-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:22.

5. Other New Testament authors were equally emphatic in their condemnation of sex outside marriage. See Hebrews 13:4; James 2:11; 2 Peter 2:9-16; Jude 7; and Revelation 2:20-22; 9-21.

B. An example of a biblical figure who fled from sexual immorality is Joseph (Gen 39:7-12, NASB). His master's wife asked him repeatedly, day after day, to lie with her, but Joseph refused each time: "How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" (v. 9).

One day when he was doing his work around the house, she caught him by his garment and asked him again.

Understanding the seriousness of the temptation, Joseph "left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside" (v. 12).

## **II. Benefits of Waiting until Marriage**

A. *No guilt.* God's design for sex is that it be a part of marriage (Heb 13:4). Not waiting for marriage creates guilt that hampers one's relationships with Him, with one's partner, and with many others.

B. *No fear.* Waiting insures that one will never need to be afraid — not even to the extent of one fleeting thought — of having to build a marriage on an unexpected pregnancy.

C. *No comparison.* Waiting insures that a spouse will never fall into the devastating trap of comparing his spouse's sexual performance with that of a previous partner.

D. *Spiritual growth.* Positively, waiting will help one subject physical drives to the lordship of Christ, and thereby develop self-control, an

important aspect of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Also, if those marriage partners are later separated temporarily (e.g., for a business trip), then this discipline early in their relationship will give them confidence and trust in each other during that time of separation.

*E. Great joy.* Waiting insures that there will be something saved for the marriage relationship, for that first night and for the many nights thereafter. The anticipation of the fulfilment of their relationship in sexual union is exciting, and should not be spoiled by a premarital relationship.

At least this is a genuinely well informed, honest and considered piece, but it won't be to everyone's taste. Some may find it quite unpalatable.

What I am struggling with, and I guess it is no different to anyone else looking into a broad theology of marriage, is there is often no sense of established and long term 'preparation'. It seems most couples still drift into marriage without asking the question 'why are we getting married?'

Great sex and being able to live with someone comfortably may be a part of 'a marriage' but it isn't 'marriage'. Neither is living together and/or having children. It isn't a substitute or reason for 'being/getting married'

either, even if it has become more socially accepted.

I will remind you that it is a 'sacrament', and that is one word which has been missing in the three articles I quoted earlier in this issue of the newsletter. I recognise that it may have not been within the intended remit of the individual writers, so my observation is not a complaint of omission, but the idea of marriage being a sacrament needs including. I found this un-ascribed article a useful description of what a Sacrament is and it may be helpful.

#### WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

*St Augustine, in the 5th century described a sacrament as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.' It sounds a very simple answer, but, to understand the depth of what that means, we need to probe rather more deeply.*

#### THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

*As Christians the journey of our lives is about coming to know God better, about building the kingdom of God here on earth, and, finally, to be with God forever. As Christians we move on this journey as the Church, that*



*gathering of the baptised, striving to be the sign of Christ in the world.*

*Thus, we are a community, the community of Christ. St John, in his gospel tells us 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.' (John 3:16) God's love for us, his will for us to participate in his life, is manifested in the Incarnation, God's giving of himself in the humanity of Jesus; 'the word became flesh and lived among us' (John 1:14) Jesus is the visible, outward sign of God's love for us.*

*In turn, it is in the Church that Christ remains visible and tangible for us, most particularly in our encounters with him in the sacraments. The sacraments are where we meet Christ, where God's action, in Christ, through the Church, transforms us, bringing us to what God wants us to be. As baptised Christians, this is what we want too, we want to be what God wills for us. And what God wills for us is a life of joy in his presence and the promise of eternity. As Psalm 16 tells us: 'You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.'*

## 'SACRAMENT'

*Historically, the word 'sacrament' developed from the Greek word 'mysterion' and the Latin word 'sacramentum'. 'Mysterion' means 'something hidden or secret' – our word 'mystery'. The language surrounding 'sacraments' did not develop in the Church for some time. We hear of a ritual of baptism in the Christian community of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the 'breaking of bread' – the Eucharist (Acts 2:38, 41- 42).*

*These celebrations were called by their name, there was no generic term for these experiences. It was not until the third century that the word 'mysterion', a word that the pagans used to describe rites of initiation, began to be used to describe Christian rites.*

*In order to avoid any confusion with pagan thinking the theologian Tertullian began to use the Latin word, 'sacramentum' for 'mysterion' particularly in explaining baptism.*

*The sacramentum was a sacred oath of allegiance to the emperor taken by a Roman soldier. Tertullian suggested that just as the soldier's oath was a sign of the beginning of a new life, so too was initiation into the Christian community through baptism and eucharist. '*

*Sacramentum' then became a general term for the rites of Christian initiation.*

### *DEVELOPMENT*

*A more detailed reflection on the sacraments came from St Augustine of Hippo in the 5th century. Augustine developed the notion that a sacramentum is a sign that sanctifies – makes holy – because it is efficacious – produces the intended effect. For instance, Christ and the Holy Spirit make effective, through grace, the cleansing that water signifies in baptism.*

*It was Augustine who called a sacrament 'a visible sign of invisible grace'. He also, in his letters referred to a sacramentum as a 'sacrum signum' or 'sign of a sacred thing' It is worth mentioning that Augustine did not consider only rituals to be sacraments but listed over three hundred.*

*The Church gradually reduced this by differentiating between rituals and signs and symbols that assist people in prayer and devotion such as holy water, palms, ashes etc. These latter are called sacramentals.*

*Gradually seven major rituals came to be accepted as sacraments, named*

*in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council as the sacraments of the Church, confirmed at the Councils of Lyon II (1247), Florence (1439) and Trent (1547). These seven were, as we have today, baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, anointing of the dying (today the anointing of the sick), marriage (matrimony) and the ordination of priests.*

### DEFINITIONS

*So, then what is a sacrament? As stated above, St Augustine described a sacrament as ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.’*

*‘A Catechism of Christian Doctrine’ tells us ‘a sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to our souls.’*

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, ‘The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.*

*The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament.’*

*Their Code of Canon Law states, 'The sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. As actions of Christ and the Church, they are signs and means which express and strengthen the faith, render worship to God, and effect the sanctification of humanity and thus contribute in the greatest way to establish, strengthen, and manifest ecclesiastical communion.'*

*The 'Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy' tells us, 'the purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to worship God. Because they are signs, they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it.'*

So to recap, there are seven sacraments of the church.

**Baptism:** the first sacrament in which recipients join the Church.

**Eucharist/Communion:** remembers the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

**Confirmation:** in which adults personally commit to the baptismal promises made for them by their parents.

**Reconciliation:** confers God's forgiveness of sins and reconciliation.

**Matrimony:** reflecting the love of God in a covenant expressing a lifelong partnership, including procreation.

**Anointing of the Sick:** formerly called ‘the Last Rites’, provides healing and strength to those suffering from physical or mental illness.

**Holy Orders:** the rite that ordains bishops, priests, and deacons, investing them with the power to perform sacred duties.

**For clarity: the intentions and purposes of the Sacrament of Marriage.**

<b>Protestant</b>	<b>Roman Catholic</b>
The sacrament of Holy Matrimony 1. signifies the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and is intended for 2. is for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord, 3. and is the union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity;	As a sacrament, it reflects 1. the union of Jesus Christ and His Church. 2. is the lifelong union between a man and a woman for mutual support 3. and is intended for procreation of children

### **Practical considerations for OSJ priests.**

If we are asked to conduct a service as a visiting priest/minister/pastor following a civil service, should it be a 'wedding blessing' or the Sacrament (or Rite) of Holy Matrimony?

They are very different in intent and both in this context are generally referred to by most brides and grooms as different forms of 'Wedding Blessings' although this notion is incorrect.

A 'Wedding Blessing' is what it says it is, a short service of blessing of the newly married couple by an appointed person following a civil service conducted by a registrar in premises (or rooms) licensed for the Solemnisation of Marriage or at a Registrar's Office. A 'Wedding Blessing' can be conducted anywhere by any competent person, lay or ordained.

It is not a sacrament or pertains to be. It is purely and simply 'a blessing'.

The 'Rite of Holy Matrimony' or 'the Sacrament of Marriage/Holy Matrimony' is a faith based stand alone event and should be conducted by

a properly ordained priest/minister/pastor in a consecrated building or grounds. Marriage vows are made in the presence of God and are witnessed by the church community and guests.

It is purely a sacrament and on its own 'the marriage' is not and will not be recognised by law.

A civil service will be required if the couple wish to have their marriage recognised by law and benefit from the protection that gives (unless the celebrant is a registrar and the ceremony is conducted on properly licensed premises and the approved form of agreed words are used).

To be absolutely clear:-

1. the 'Wedding Blessing' is not a sacrament, anyone can conduct one anywhere.
2. the 'Rite of Holy Matrimony' is a sacrament, should be conducted in a consecrated building (or on consecrated ground) by a properly ordained person.
3. Neither forms services are legally binding. They are a matter of personal choice and faith.
4. and a civil service conducted by Registrars is required if the marriage is to be recognised by law.



In terms of OSJ good practice: this means that,

1. unless agreed with the Registrars in writing and in advance of any service conducted by OSJ priests, the general practice of OSJ is that a 'wedding blessing' follows a service conducted by Registrars, likewise a service using the Rite of Holy Matrimony (in which case any 'legal' references are removed).

2. OSJ priests will not conduct either of these two forms of service in isolation unless evidenced by a legally valid civil marriage license/certificate or other acceptable evidence.

3. 'Render unto God what is God's and render unto Caesar what is Caesar's.' The work of the Registrar Services is legally protected and OSJ members will respect and continue to be supportive of the Registrars civil roles and jurisdictions. We will expect the same in return, that Registrars do not exceed their authority in matters outside their jurisdiction. Mutual recognition, support and encouragement where it can be achieved is always the better and more productive approach.

4. The form of service we ultimately use needs to be based on each individual couple's clear pastoral and spiritual needs (rather than wants!!!)

and be a clear and solid foundation for their own specific marriage. There are never any generic solutions.

**Continuing in Psalms:**

Rev David Startup, OSJ

Today we continue our look at the Book of Psalms. The purpose of Psalms was to provide poetry for the expression of praise, worship and confession to God. David wrote 73 of the Psalms some attributed to others while 51 Psalms are indicated as anonymous. David was clearly an exceptional poet.

David - Beloved.

The Psalms were written between the time of Moses (around 1440 B.C.) & 586 B.C. For the most part the Psalms were not intended to be narrations of historic events but they do often parallel events in history, such as David's flight from Saul and his sinning with Bathsheba.

David was the youngest son of the eight sons of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, and was the second and greatest of Israel's kings, an eloquent poet and one of the most prominent figures in the history of the world. he was quite literally

## **"A Man after God's own heart"**

Volumes have been written about David, about his trial and triumphs including being carefully chosen by God to be Israel's second king. In his youth David was trained to be a Shepherd, tending his father's sheep. Although he was the youngest of the family it pleased God to raise him from a low estate and make him king.

### **David was a Warrior.**

David was courageous and a great soldier (I II Samuel) although he did not have the training of a soldier. His fight with Goliath made him a marked man.

David and Goliath - so unequally matched but when David was victorious there was no empty boasting, no reliance on his own strength and power. God gave the victory and David gave God all the Glory.

### **He was a skilful Musician.**

He played well on the harp and therefore suffered the job of playing for King Saul and only David's playing would sooth him.

### **He was a Saint.**

David was acknowledged and accepted as a child of God. Not as a result of any remarkable goodness in David. god had chosen him to be the ruler of His people.

### **He was a Sinner.**

David really tarnished his character by his sin against Uriah and by the deceitful way he gained this gallant soldier's wife as his very own. He did however make a deep cry for forgiveness from the Lord Psalm 32,51 show.

### **He was a Prophet.**

Moved by  
the Holy Spirit he was moved to lay out many truths related to Jesus as Lord and saviour

### **He was like Jesus**

Not only did David prophesy about Jesus he was like Jesus in many ways. Both were born in Bethlehem.

Both were of low birth - no status or rank, no wealth.

Both were Shepherds - one caring for sheep, the other for souls.

Both were sorely oppressed and persecuted but neither said anything.  
Both became Kings in their own right. David subdued his enemies and had a kingdom stretching from shore to shore. Jesus was born a King, and has an everlasting Kingdom.

Enough about David, more about God and David's relationship with each other.

Why should we read the Psalms and indeed, how many of us do?

The Life Application Bible states that as we read and memorise the Psalms we will gradually discover how much they are already part of us, reflecting our own thoughts, feelings and emotions. They put into words our deepest hurts, longings, thoughts and prayers. And gently push us towards being more of what God designed us to be - people loving and living for Him. To me the Psalms are a tremendous discovery!

### **Let's look closer then at Psalm 145. A Psalm of Praise.**

David makes the claim that he will submit to God. David, King of Israel, submits himself to God as his King. David begins and ends this Psalm with Praise and in the middle David says why he is praising God. He wants

people to know his God is the greatest. He tells us about **five qualities** that make God not just great - but the Greatest God.

## **1 His Great Works v3-6**

God reveals how truly great He is by the works he does. We can't even begin to realise, to put a figure on, just how much work he has done. We can explore the universes to the nth degree and there is still more. God is so much greater than our greatest need. Applies to everything...

John Wesley wrote: "Give me a worm that can understand a man and I will give you a man who can understand God"

Even Google can't catalogue all the good works that God has done.

## **2 His Great Goodness v7**

God is great because God is good. When people talk about things God has done, they are demonstrating the good things he has done. It seems to be only non-believers that accuse him of doing bad things. He only allows bad things to happen and they happen because God has allowed man his freedom.

God is good, generous, waiting, smiling and wanting to do something good for us. Many people has totally the opposite view of Him though and asked why does He allow bad things to happen.... if he controlled us and stopped bad from happening to us, we would soon be fed up with not doing what we wanted to do - not having our freedom.

### **3 His Great Kingdom v 10-13**

God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His rule will last forever. His kingdom refers to His reign and power over his people. Everyone, ultimately, will fall under His rule, one way or another. Some defy his rule, but in the end all will submit to Him. His rule consists of mercy, grace and goodness. God is not a dictator, He is neither a tyrant nor a maniac. God is a great Ruler of a Great Kingdom.

### **4 His Great Faithfulness v 14-21**

God likes to help His Children - picking them up after failure. David committed adultery and murder but God didn't step back from Him. When we acknowledge our failings we promote the Glory of God in allowing Him to show His forgivenessing, display His faithfulness and Love to each and every one of us

God provides for our spiritual needs... v15-16

God can relate to us..He *knows* each and every one of us intimately.... v17

God listens to us.... v18

God answers us..... v19

God protects us..... v20

## **5 His Great Love for us v8-9**

*The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and great in faithful love. The Lord is good to everyone; His compassion rests on all He has made.*

God shows that He is good, not just by His great works and goodness but by His Love for everyone of us. He is good to everyone, showing mercy, compassion and grace, *if we allow Him to be*. There are those who reject God.

At the centre and in the midst of all His good works, His goodness, His



rule His faithfulness, grace and mercy - *is His Love for us.*

When we put together all the attributes and freely given qualities from God, we realise He is something very, very special and is the Light of our Lives.

We should worship the ground He walks on so to speak...

Our lives should consist of a great deal of praise and worship of the Lord and perhaps we all wonder if we do this enough?

### ***Examples***

Do we get to a point where we take Him for granted?

Do we forget about Him, even in times of trouble when we really need Him?

Where would we be if he controlled everything we do?

What would we do if He wasn't there for us?

Do we sing on a Sunday parrot fashion and praise him every Sunday - only?

How often do we thank Him for what he does for us?

How often do we talk about Him to others?

How often do we talk to Him?

How much Love do we show to others in an attempt to be more like Jesus.

It's hard work sometimes to practice this fundamental Fruit of the spirit...especially when we have been wronged, or when we try to help and be accused of not being helpful enough. When we sacrifice somethings that we want to do to satisfy someone else's wants, someone who thinks the whole world revolves around them. The way a lot of human kind is performing on God's earth - He needs an awful lot of patience and understanding in loving us then.

I'm sure we all do the very best we can in all we do for Him and give Him the most of what we are blessed with. But He, God is awesome and deserves an awful lot more from us in terms of Worship, Praise and deeds!!!

We are only human and a very feint reflection of Him...

- God's love is steadfast and unchanging
- God's love comforts us
- God's love is revealed to us through Jesus Christ
- God's love is poured into us through the Holy Spirit
- God's love compels us to love one another

Love is all around

Romans 8:38-39 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, <sup>[a]</sup>neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It's a good job that Love conquers all...God's Love that is.

The liturgy over this last two months seem to have been putting an emphasis on the cost of following Jesus. Not monetary cost but the cost of relationships etc., This morning Luke is quoting Jesus' emphasis on the use of wealth.

At the time of this parable the Pharisees considered wealth to be proof of a persons righteousness. Jesus startled them with the story of a diseased beggar being rewarded and a rich being man punished. The rich man did not go to hell because of his wealth, but because he was selfishness refusing to feed Lazarus, take him in an care for him

Let us look at the situation further.

First there is the rich man, usually called Dives, which is the Latin for rich. Every phrase adds something to the luxury in which he lived. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. That is the description of the robes of the high priests, and such robes were very expensive , costing many times the value of a working man's wage. He feasted in luxury every day. Gourmet feeding on exotic and costly dishes. He did this every day.

And in doing so he positively broke the fourth commandment. That commandment not only forbids work on the Sabbath, it also says six days you shall labour ( Exodus 20:9) which the rich man obviously ignored.

In a country where the people were very fortunate if they ate meat once in the week and where they toiled for six days of the week. Dives is a figure of indolent self-indulgence. Lazarus was waiting for the crumbs that fell from Dives table, in that time there were no knives , forks or napkins, Food was eaten with the hands and, in very wealthy houses, the hands were cleaned by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. That was what Lazarus was waiting for.

Second, there is Lazarus. It is strange that Lazarus is the only character in any of the parables who is given a name. The name in Latin means God is my help. He was a beggar, he was covered in ulcerated sores, and so helpless that he could not even ward off the street dogs which pestered him.

This is the scene that Jesus describes. Then it abruptly changes to Lazarus being in glory and Dives being in torment. What was

Dives sin. He hadn't ordered Lazarus to be removed, and was quite happy for him to receive the bread thrown away from the table. He wasn't deliberately cruel, but to him Lazarus was part of the landscape, he never saw him when he came and went from his house. His sin was that he could look on the world's suffering, and with all his wealth, do nothing. How often does this apply to people today? This passage is a terrible warning that the sin of Dives, and of many today is not that they do wrong, but that they do nothing.

Didn't Jesus say as much as you did or did not do anything you did or did not do it unto me"

This is one of the many occasions when Jesus spoke sharply about attitudes to money and material possessions. He spoke more about this subject than about any other simple issue. It was just as much a problem then and is for his disciples today. The key to this story is verse 14. The Pharisees who were lovers of money, heard all this and they ridiculed him. And no doubt Jesus' listeners clearly identified the hated Pharisees with the rich man in the story.

The rich man had a attitude problem, demonstrated by the fact that he loved luxury. Dressing in fine linens. Living in a fine house and hosting fine parties. But it's not his wealth that Jesus condemns.

But the pursuit of it for its own sake, as though salvation were available through material possessions.

The story is told of the funeral of a wealthy person. A relative asked “How much did he leave” Everything came the reply.

The rich man is completely blind to the suffering of Lazarus outside his gate He only saw value in people who could serve his needs. He cannot see that the privilege of wealth also has its responsibilities – to care for those less comfortable. He demonstrated this further when, instead of offering to return to warn his brothers of the torment he demands of Abraham that Lazarus returns. A big contrast with Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

The rich man's attitude to spiritual matters is shown through his rejection of the Old Testament revelation already available to him. When his attention was drawn to it, he complained that it wasn't enough – someone needed to rise from the dead.

A famous preacher was greeting his congregation after the service when a woman told him off for repeating a sermon he had preached a few weeks earlier in another Church.

He asked if she had put it into practice yet. As she fumbled with an answer, he said “Well my dear I'll keep preaching it until you do.

The best way to cultivate a right attitude to money, people and spiritual things is to see the beggar outside our gate – the poor, the exploited, the sick, the dying, the marginalised – in fact all who are not like ourselves. The miracle is that the more loosely we hold our possessions the more we enjoy them, the more we serve the needs of others, the more we value them, and the more we listen to God's words, the more we value ourselves.

This is a parable of yawning gaps.

We live in a world of yawning gaps where people keep a safe distance from those who are different – white from black, East from West. Christian from Muslim, heterosexual and homosexual. And our country seems to be going more and more down this road.

This story is about one of the most obvious yawning gaps. Between rich and poor. The obvious yawning gap is that one lives in a world of obvious luxury and the other suffers grinding poverty.

We have only to look round the world today to see that this is still



very evident, the Western world lives in this gap. Within and between nations, the wealth gap is getting wider. The rich often have no idea of the problems of poverty.

It is often said (Why can't they work harder and manage their money better) and the poor often have no concept of the problems of wealth (Why don't they give it away to the people who need it?) so instead of solutions being sought the gap gets wider.

In this story this yawning gap is reversed between Dives and Lazarus. The rich man is in eternal torment and Lazarus ends up in eternal joy. Warmth and love. This must have been a terrible shock to Jesus' listeners, who would assume that wealth was a sign of God's blessing. But the gap between the two men didn't just relate to wealth, it was more than that, it was attitude. Dives was blind to his neighbour's needs. Instead of using his wealth to benefit others, he abused it to establish his status. Yet in the afterlife Lazarus enjoyed an eternity of divine blessing while the rich man discovered what it was like to be Lazarus.

The rich man fondly hopes that a simple warning will rescue his brothers from the torment he is suffering, whereas the reality is that

even if someone were to rise from the dead they would not believe. Even Jesus who did rise from the dead still came up against the attitude of the Pharisees, as he has over the centuries by many, and he still does, we have only to look round the world and even in our own country, to see the worship of money and possessions. Although people wouldn't call it that.

In the musical My Fair Lady Eliza cries "Don't talk of love. Show me" Our post modern culture demands the same of the Church- don't talk of Jesus show us. Good evangelism does not just proclaim the truth that Jesus is risen, but also gives people a reason to believe it. In Jesus' time, as in ours people need to know not only that the gospel is true but that it works.

How are we, at the present time, going about the task that this parable has set us. Only we in our hearts know the answer to this.



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

**7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018**

**No service**

**20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018**

**3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018**

**17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018**

**1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018**

**15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018**

**5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018**

**7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018**

**21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018**

**4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018**

**16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018**

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

**Additional Services:**

**Remembrance Sunday:**

**11th November 10.35 a.m.**

**Midnight Mass:**

**24th December 11.20 p.m.**



## The Order of St James Newsletter

May 2018: The Year of Marriage

*faithworks*  
affiliate

### Marriage and Divorce: the numbers.

So far we have looked at several issues regarding the spiritual, theological and social aspects of marriage, its Christian definition and its impact.

Whilst it seems that 'marriage' has declined almost in parallel with Church attendance, it does seem that it has a life and strength of its own. Even couples cohabiting still look to 'marriage' as the ideal, as it seems do couples in same sex relationships.

It seems to suggest that 'marriage' is a concept that is deeply embedded in our psyche.

It is time to look at actual numbers and for this I have turned to the Office for National Statistics and their release of the figures for 2011.

Here are a couple of facts for us as members of OSJ regarding trends:

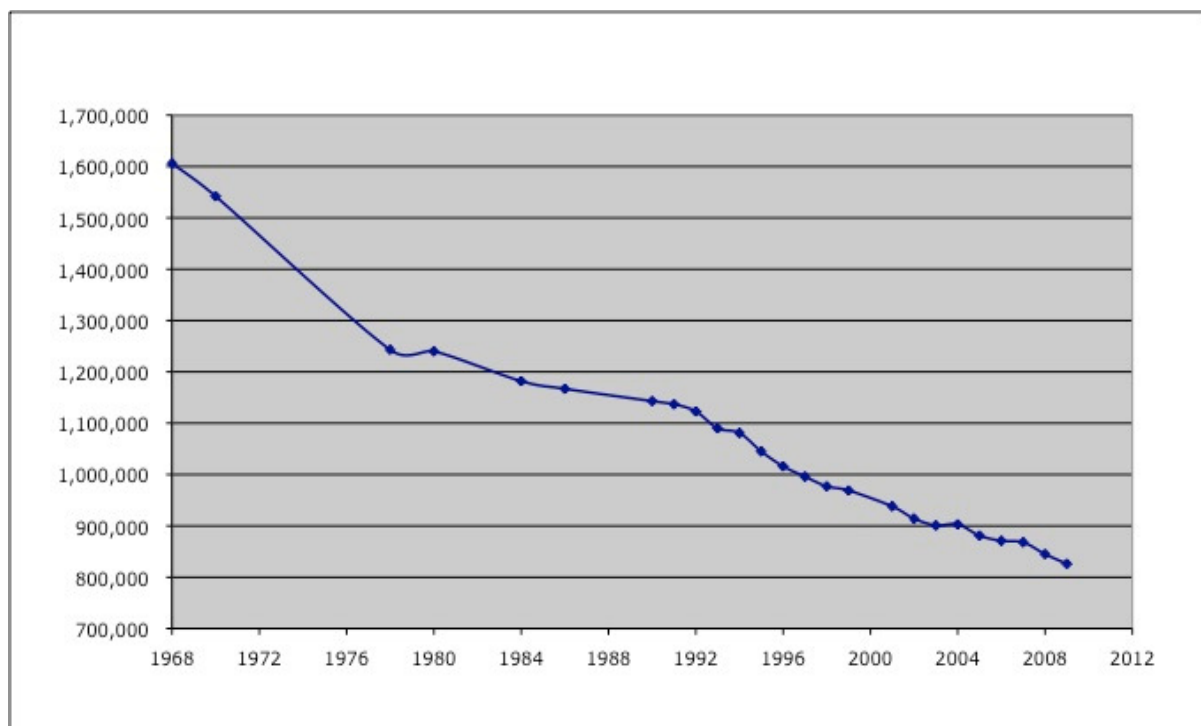
	1981	1991	2001	2011
Church Marriages	179459	151333	88989	74452
Total Number of Marriages	351973	306756	249227	249113
Church Marriages as a percentage of Total Number	50.98%	49.33%	35.70%	29.88%
C of E weekly attendance	1230000	1137000	938000	826000 (2009 figures)
Percentage fall of church attendance compared to 1981				32.85%
Percentage fall in total marriages compared to 1981				29.22%
Percentage fall in church marriages compared to 1981				58.51%

It all looks pretty damning, but it all depends on how you look at the statistics and how you interpret them – the saying there are ‘lies, damned lies, and then there are statistics’ is quite true. Statistics can be useful but they don’t always paint a realistic picture.

The statistics don’t take into consideration the increasing and often prohibitive costs of getting married (the average wedding cost for 2018 is predicted to be around £28.5K) or the church’s general unwillingness to marry couples who are not prepared to become full members.

Perhaps you can understand why cohabiting is often considered a more acceptable option to couples even though their ideal would be to get married ‘in church’. It was recorded that 77.4% (or 192829 couples) cohabited prior to getting married in 2011.

The following graph was copied from <http://www.churchsociety.org> and relates to attendance in the Church of England. It correlates quite well with the fall in church marriages and perhaps explains some of the reasons why this has happened if this is representative across all denominations.



The Church Society interestingly quotes the following diversionary comment:

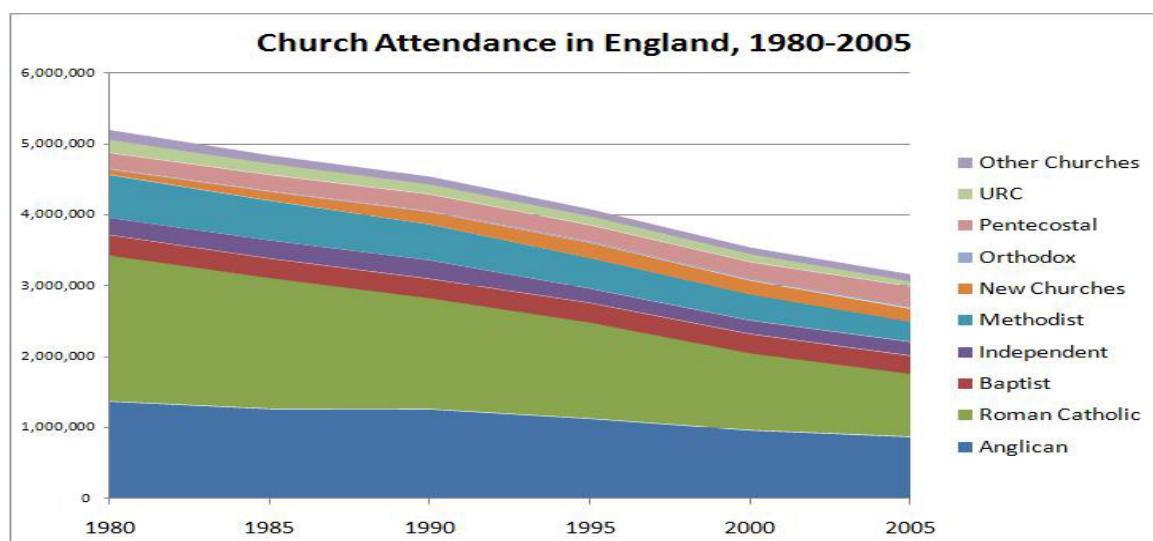
*'On the basis of these figures in the decade to 1980 the Church of England lost around 30,000 members per year. In the 1980s this decline slowed to around 10,000 a year but decline accelerated in 1992 (the year when women were ordained as priests) to around 20,000 average per year though in the last 3 years the annual fall appears to be less severe.'*

With regard to a broader breakdown of the major denominations, these two tables might present a better general overview.

**Total Church Attendance England 1980-2015** <http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures/church-attendance-in-britain-1980-2015/>

England	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Anglican	1370400	1264600	1259800	1126700	963300	870600	780000	660000
Baptist	286900	274000	271600	275800	270900	254800	242100	226000
Catholic	2064000	1851500	1571300	1360500	1090400	893100	736600	608000
Independent	239200	252900	258100	198900	186100	190500	174500	170000
Methodist	606400	560500	506400	433100	372600	289400	248800	200000
New Churches	75000	124700	174600	213100	195500	183600	178400	166000
Orthodox	10200	11300	12700	20500	25300	25600	25900	26100
Pentecostal	221100	225800	235900	228600	233300	287600	289300	298000
URC	188300	163000	141500	127900	112000	69900	55700	33100
Other Churches	139800	116800	112100	99300	94800	101100	91500	87000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5201300</b>	<b>4845100</b>	<b>4544000</b>	<b>4084400</b>	<b>3544200</b>	<b>3166200</b>	<b>2822800</b>	<b>2474200</b>
% of population	11.1	10.2	9.4	8.3	7.2	6.3	5.5	4.7

Sources: Religious Trends 3 (published 2002/3) and Religious Trends 7 (published 2008). Estimates for 2010 and 2015 were projections.



## Summary of marriage characteristics, 1981- 2011.

England/Wales	1981	1991	2001	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
---------------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------

**Total marriages**                      **351,973**    **306,756**    **249,227**    **239,454**    **235,367**    **235,794**    **232,443**    **243,808**    **249,133**

### Previous marital status

First marriage for both                      227,713    192,238    148,642    145,995    146,216    149,204    151,392    161,028    165,467

First marriage for one                      67,048    63,159    55,943    50,061    47,669    46,712    44,323    46,190    47,425

Remarriage for both                      57,212    51,359    44,642    43,398    41,482    39,878    36,728    36,590    36,241

### Manner of solemnisation

Civil ceremonies                      172,514    151,333    160,238    158,350    156,198    157,296    155,950    165,680    174,681

#### of which were in

Approved Premises                      :                      :    50,149    95,763    101,158    106,298    111,313    125,612    143,296

Religious ceremonies                      179,459    155,423    88,989    81,104    79,169    78,498    76,493    78,128    74,452

#### of which were

C of E & Church in Wales                      118,435    102,840    60,878    57,963    57,101    57,057    56,236    57,607    54,463

Roman Catholic                      26,097    19,551    10,518    9,263    8,904    8,909    8,426    8,622    8,390

Other Christian denominations<sup>1</sup>                      33,439    31,069    15,210    11,249    10,351    9,745    8,973    9,032    8,844

Other faiths<sup>2</sup>                      1,488    1,963    2,383    2,629    2,813    2,787    2,858    2,867    2,755

Notes:

1 'Other Christian denominations' include Methodist, Calvinistic Methodist, United Reform Church, Congregationalist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Society of Friends (Quakers), Salvation Army, Brethren, Mormon, Unitarian and Jehovah's Witnesses.

2 'Other faiths' include Jewish, Muslim and Sikh.

Source: Office for National Statistics

## **Divorce rates: how have they changed?**

The number of divorces in England and Wales has risen slightly according to official figures, with 118,140 divorces recorded in 2012, but the number of couples getting divorced has fallen (overall) according to the latest ONS statistics.

The number of divorces in England and Wales has slightly increased. The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) records a total of 118,140 divorces in 2012 - an increase of 0.495% on the previous year.

Of the 2012 total, almost half of these divorces occurred in the first 10 years of marriage, with divorces most likely to occur between the fourth and eighth years of marriage. This statement does not apparently factor in any previous years of cohabitation or gives causes so may need treating with some caution when it comes to planning the pastoral care of married couples.

The ONS release also shows that 71% of divorces were for first marriages and this likely indicates a complete lack of preparedness and possibly too high/unrealistic expectations. It does show that as a society we are failing couples at the outset and, in particular, the church has let both God and society down by its failure to set the appropriate moral, spiritual, emotional, physical and social standards.

Compared to 2011 there was an increase of just slightly over 1% of the married population getting divorced in 2012. Compared to the 2002 figures, there had been a marked decline of 19% in the numbers getting divorced.

If you look at where the figures increase, it has been pointed out that there is an interesting (if small) trend: there are peaks in the early 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and the increase in 2010\* before the slight drop with the 2011 rate.

What is the most likely common factor of those dates?

They happen to broadly match periods of economic recession in the UK.



Whilst not conclusive, it suggests that financial hardships/money problems may potentially be one of the major contributory causes to marriages breaking down.

However, this may be nothing more than a convenient and sacrificial excuse as all couples face financial problems and hardships at some point in their marriage. It might be better to use a convenient excuse than face the real truth.

The fact is that many couples, given the right support, help and encouragement when needed, overcome the problems they face and develop even stronger bonds.

Only the couples themselves know the real reasons why their marriage ended, even if they can't bring themselves to admit them.

It seems to me that we come back to that principle of preparing couples and setting realistic expectations and goals. It's that old adage about putting down good deep foundations and building on those. It doesn't mean they have to be perfect, just able to support the weight, stress and strain put on them without failing, even if the odd crack appears. For those who are Christians, a shared faith is a strong mortar.

Good counseling in the face of a failing marriage, however well intended, is almost a case of 'shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted', but it equally should be part of the rescue package.

Let's look at the figures for divorce and see what is suggested by them without actually losing sight of the fact that each single statistic represents a huge amount of hurt and distress that could potentially have been avoided.

## Data summary: 1980-2012

### All divorces

Year	Total	Median age: husband	Median age: wife	Median duration of marriage	Divorces per 1000 of the married population
1980	148,301	35.2	32.9	10.1	12.0 (1.20%)
1981	145,713	35.4	33.2	10.1	11.9 (1.19%)
1982	146,698	35.6	33.4	10.1	12.1 (1.21%)
1983	147,479	36.0	33.7	10.1	12.2 (1.22%)
1984	144,501	36.4	34.0	10.1	12.0 (1.20%)
1985	160,300	35.7	33.1	8.9	13.4 (1.34%)
1986	153,903	36.2	33.6	9.4	12.9 (1.29%)
1987	151,007	36.4	33.7	9.5	12.7 (1.27%)
1988	152,633	36.7	34.0	9.7	12.8 (1.28%)
1989	150,872	36.7	34.0	9.7	12.7 (1.27%)
1990	153,386	36.8	34.1	9.8	13.0 (1.30%)
1991	158,745	37.0	34.3	9.8	13.5 (1.35%)
1992	160,385	37.2	34.5	9.9	13.9 (1.39%)
1993	165,018	37.3	34.7	9.8	13.8 (1.38%)
1994	158,175	37.6	34.9	9.8	14.2 (1.42%)
1995	155,499	37.9	35.3	9.6	13.7 (1.37%)
1996	157,107	38.1	35.6	9.9	13.6 (1.36%)
1997	146,689	38.4	36.0	10	13.0 (1.30%)
1998	145,214	38.7	36.3	10.2	12.9 (1.29%)
1999	144,556	39.2	36.9	10.5	12.9 (1.29%)
2000	141,135	39.7	37.3	10.7	12.7 (1.27%)
2001	143,818	40.0	37.7	10.9	12.9 (1.29%)
2002	147,735	40.4	38.2	11.1	13.3 (1.33%)
2003	153,065	40.9	38.7	11.3	13.9 (1.39%)
2004	152,923	41.4	39.2	11.5	14.0 (1.40%)
2005	141,322	42.0	39.8	11.6	12.9 (1.29%)
2006	132,140	42.4	40.1	11.6	12.1 (1.21%)
2007	128,131	42.7	40.5	11.7	11.8 (1.18%)
2008	121,708	43.0	40.8	11.5	11.2 (1.12%)
2009	113,949	43.2	40.9	11.4	10.5 (1.05%)
2010	119,589	43.4	41.1	11.4	11.1 (1.11%)
2011	117,558	43.8	41.6	11.5	10.8 (1.08%)
2012	118,140	44.1	41.8	11.5	10.8 (1.08%)

I looked at a number of web sites and found these reasons as being the most commonly cited as grounds for divorce. The list below is fairly typical and the reasons stated are credited to and slightly adapted for clarity from [www.singleparents.org.uk](http://www.singleparents.org.uk)

### **Adultery**

*While adultery is certainly a valid motive for divorce, if the divorce isn't filed within 6 months of the applicant discovering their spouse's adulterous behaviour, then it's no longer valid.*

*Adultery is one of the most common reasons given for divorce in the UK with 55 per cent of all those seeking a divorce citing it contributed to their breakup.*

### **Lack of Preparation**

*Like any other major decision in life – buying a house, having children, etc – marriage requires a great deal of thought and preparation. There's a lot more to marriage than romance and passion, and many couples will jump into marriage before they are financially or emotionally ready.*

*Couples don't realise that 'Marriage' is a legal procedure as much as it is a representation of companionship, and it has consequences that can't be avoided or ignored.*

*Couples often marry while they're still in the 'honeymoon phase', and then begin to feel overwhelmed and consumed when reality overtakes their initial optimism and hopes for their fairy tale future.*

*This state of disappointment often leads to arguing, instability, isolation and general unhappiness.*

### **Excessive Arguing**

*Excessive arguing is highly destructive. In most circumstances it's due to a lack of understanding or appreciation.*

*These reasons alone are not enough to legally grant a divorce; however, they will often lead to other more serious issues. For example, couples who are unhappy in their relationship and don't get along are more prone to committing adultery or other unreasonable behaviour.*

### ***Unreasonable Behaviour***

*From a legal point of view, "unreasonable behaviour" is considered to be heavy drinking, drug taking, physical abuse and verbal assault. Unreasonable behaviour is always viable grounds for divorce and is usually quicker to resolve due to the emotional and physical damage it can cause. In addition, those who seek divorce due to violence will often be entitled to some form of compensation if they can provide adequate proof.*

### ***Lack of Equality***

*Over 44% of all divorcees state that lack of equality was a contributing factor to their split. This occurs when one person feels as though they are taking on most of the work, either earning or housework/childcare. Sadly, there is still a significant level of gender inequality in society, which can heavily contribute. For example, men often feel like they're doing all the providing, while women often feel trapped and depressed at losing their independence.*

*Money is often a focal point for arguments in marriage, and when children are involved these arguments can be volatile.*

*It's common for couples to go through rough periods and in most circumstances discussing problems, listening and making an effort to change (on both sides) is all that's required to get through them. That said, sometimes problems are, quite simply, impossible to solve. Fundamentally, the decision to marry should never be taken lightly.*

*Divorce can be both time consuming and costly, both emotionally and financially. If you have children, it can be very destructive and emotionally damaging for them, leaving deep scars that do not heal.*

## Does cohabitation affect views on marriage?

I have picked out one study on the topic of cohabitation and its effect on marriage as an institution. One of the concerns I have is that cohabitation as a means to assess suitability of partners for marriage is essentially a flawed process circumventing any real preparation and thought. It is a pretend marriage, all of the convenience without any of the commitment.

The following was taken from [jrank.org](http://jrank.org) and is a study on the consequences of cohabitation. It makes a challenging and uncomfortable read in places but we should take note.

*Cohabitation, sometimes called consensual union or de facto marriage, refers to unmarried heterosexual couples living together in an intimate relationship. Cohabitation as such is not a new phenomenon. It has, however, developed into a novel family form in contrast with conventional marriage. Part of this change is associated with the absolute rise in cohabitational relationships. Since the 1970s, many countries, particularly those in North America and Europe, have experienced rapid growth in their cohabitation rates. Although these numbers generally remain small relative to families composed of married couples, the absolute numbers of cohabiting couples have increased dramatically. Cohabitation was obscure and even taboo throughout the nineteenth century and until the 1970s. Non marital unions have become common because the meaning of the family has been altered by individualistic social values that have progressively matured since the late 1940s. As post war trends illustrate, marriage is no longer the sanctified, permanent institution it once was. The proliferation of divorce, remarriage, stepfamilies, and single parenthood has transformed the institution of the family. With these structural changes, attitudes toward non marital unions have become increasingly permissive.*

*Because cohabitation involves a shared household between intimate partners, it has characteristics in common with marriage. Similarities include pooled economic resources, a gender division of labour in the household and sexual exclusivity. However, even though the day-to-day interaction between cohabiting couples parallels that of married couples in several ways, important distinctions remain.*

*While some argue that cohabitation has become a variant of marriage, the available evidence does not support this position. Kingsley Davis (1985) points out that if cohabitation were simply a variant of marriage then its increased prevalence vis-à-vis marriage would lack significance. Sociologists treat cohabitation as a distinct occurrence not just because it has displaced marriage, but also because it represents a structural change in family relationships.*

*Cohabitational relationships are distinct from marital ones in several crucial ways. Although these differences have become less pronounced with the increase in cohabitation (and could thus eventually vanish), the following characteristics define the essential boundaries between cohabitation and marriage.*

- 1. **Age**. People in cohabitational relationships tend to be younger than people in marital relationships. This supports the argument that cohabitation is often an antecedent to marriage. The majority of cohabitational relationships dissolve because the couples involved get married;*
- 2. **Fertility**. Children are less likely to be born into cohabitational relationships than they are into marital relationships;*
- 3. **Stability**. Cohabitational relationships are short-lived compared to marital relationships. In Canada, only about 12 percent of cohabitations are expected to last ten years. By comparison, 90 percent of first marriages are expected to last this long (Wu 2000). The majority of cohabitational relationships terminate within three years. Although many of these relationships end because of marriage, the lack of longevity in cohabitations as such illustrates that these relationships have yet to develop into a normative variant of marriage;*
- 4. **Social acceptance**. Even with its numerical growth and spread throughout society, cohabitation is not as socially acceptable as marriage. Cohabitation is socially tolerated in part because it is expected that cohabiting partners will eventually become married. Indeed, according to U.S. data, about three-quarters of never married cohabitators had definite plans for marriage or believed they would eventually marry their partner (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin 1991). The youthful profile of cohabitation shows that marriage is still the preferred choice of union for most couples.*

*If cohabitation were a variant of marriage, it would have a larger prevalence in older cohorts. Although many people have chosen to delay marriage, most have not rejected it completely. A major reason cohabitations have lower fertility than marriage is because couples tend to abandon cohabitation when children are in the immediate future (Manning and Smock 1995). In most countries, marriage is perceived as the most secure and legitimate union when children are involved;*

5. **State recognition.** *Unlike marriage, cohabitation is not sanctioned by the state, and persons in non-marital unions do not necessarily acquire specific legal rights and obligations through their union. Without a formal ceremony and legal documentation, a couple is not married even if they have lived together for many years. However, after a set period of time (usually one or two years), cohabiting couples are recognized as common-law partners in some countries. In such instances, common-law partners can have similar rights and obligations as they would in a legal marriage. Common-law marriage can parallel legal marriage in terms of child support and custody, spousal maintenance, income tax, unemployment insurance, medical and dental benefits, and pensions. The degree to which cohabitators are treated like legally married couples usually corresponds to the degree non-marital unions are socially accepted. But even where cohabitators do have rights, these are often unknown to cohabitators and more complicated to exercise than they are for married persons. In many cases, the rights that cohabiting couples possess have been established by court decisions rather than by state law, as they are for married couples. Perhaps the most crucial legal distinction between these unions is the absence of shared property rights in common-law relationships. Married couples acquire shared property rights upon establishing their union, but cohabiting couples must do so through the courts. In sum, no uniform and guaranteed set of rights applies to cohabitation. This deficiency shows that in most countries, cohabitation is not yet perceived as a legitimate variant to marriage from the perspective of the state.*

<http://family.jrank.org/pages/279/Cohabitation.html>

[Unmarried.org](http://Unmarried.org) cites different reasons why couples cohabit. Here is an extract which considers the reasons for cohabiting:

- *They're in love, and they want to spend more time together.*
- *They want to make sure they're compatible before they make a lifetime commitment to each other. Many people we talk to say they couldn't imagine marrying someone if they hadn't lived together first.*
- *They're engaged to be married, and decide to move in together before the wedding.*
- *They're saving money for a wedding, and figure they'll live together in the meantime.*
- *They're spending most nights together anyway and don't want to pay two rents.*
- *They don't want to get married, or can't marry.*
- *They know their partner isn't a good match for a long-term relationship, but want to stick with this person for now.*
- *They would lose significant financial benefits if they were to marry. This predicament is especially common among senior citizens (who would sometimes lose a pension from a deceased spouse if they married) and disabled people.*

What you will notice about this set of responses is that they are less theoretical, far more pragmatic, down to earth, and probably more honest in reality. I will leave it to you to decide whether the reasons given are 'acceptable' and to make your own judgements as to just what the most likely motives behind the stated responses are.

Remember that often people will give a plausible reason for their actions but it may not be the 'real' reason.

On the following page are the figures for cohabitation in England and Wales for 2011 which give a guide to the extent of the practice. It is useful to be aware of the actual figures involved.



## Sex, age and cohabitation prior to marriage, 2011

### England and Wales

Age and previous marital status	All marriages		Civil marriages		Religious marriages	
	Total	Cohabit prior to marriage	Total	Cohabit prior to marriage	Total	Cohabit prior to marriage
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%

### Age of male partner

<b>All ages</b>	<b>249,133</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>174,681</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>74,452</b>	<b>77.4</b>
Under 20	850	58.9	567	66.9	283	39.7
20-24	19,318	71.9	12,445	77.3	6,873	59.1
25-29	62,456	82.2	38,675	84.8	23,781	76.7
30-34	59,579	87.4	39,163	89.4	20,416	82.3
35-39	35,785	89.2	25,760	91.1	10,025	82.8
40-44	24,380	88.9	18,996	90.3	5,384	82.1
45-49	17,274	87.9	14,165	89.4	3,109	78.9
50-54	11,346	87.7	9,560	89	1,786	78.2
55-59	7,327	86.4	6,260	88	1,067	73.2
60-64	5,342	86	4,621	88.3	721	66.2
65-69	2,805	83.1	2,355	85.6	450	65.8
70-74	1,436	81.7	1,158	86.3	278	55.9
75 and over	1,228	73.5	956	78.7	272	50
Age not stated	7	100	0	0	7	100

### Age of female partner

<b>All ages</b>	<b>249,133</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>174,681</b>	<b>87.6</b>	<b>74,452</b>	<b>77.4</b>
Under 20	2,924	61.6	2,141	67.4	783	42.5
20-24	34,154	76.4	21,885	80.7	12,269	66.3
25-29	74,927	84.8	46,803	87.3	28,124	79.4
30-34	53,944	88.6	36,503	90.6	17,441	83.2
35-39	28,862	88.4	22,034	90.2	6,828	80.8
40-44	19,519	88.1	15,859	89.3	3,660	81.3
45-49	14,293	86.9	12,019	88.4	2,274	76
50-54	9,308	86.3	8,036	88	1,272	72
55-59	5,205	87.3	4,505	88.7	700	75.2
60-64	3,085	85.8	2,588	88.1	497	69.1
65-69	1,640	81.4	1,369	85.2	271	55.8
70-74	759	76.4	564	82.8	195	54.4
75 and over	500	71.4	374	77.5	126	49.5
Age not stated	13	77.8	1	100	12	75

Note:

Single men and single women are those who have never been married or formed a civil partnership.

Cohabitation at marriage is derived from whether the bride and bridegroom gave identical addresses before marriage.

Source: Office for National Statistics

The real question is what to do with this information. Change is clearly needed.

Here are some of my reflections on matters I feel that do need our attention as priests. They are not in any particular order.

1. 'Getting married' (i.e. having a wedding) and 'being married' are two completely different things.
2. Having a civil ceremony precludes a couple from being 'married' in the eyes of God as faith or religion plays no part in it. It is however a legal process that gives them certain rights and protection. It is essentially a verbal civil contract recorded by Registrars. 'Being married' in this sense is being able to jointly maintain that contract.
3. Whilst intended to be for the duration of the couple's lives, this civil contract can be dissolved by legal means in the divorce process. This is frequently summed up in the statement, 'if it doesn't work out then we/they can always get divorced and start over again'. This simply devalues the value and integrity of marriage from the outset.
4. Divorce is enormously damaging, especially where children are involved.
5. Having a religious service (a wedding in church or other sacred space 'in the eyes of God') is no guarantee that a couple will be 'married' in the true sense of the word either. Christian marriage is an on-going process and is not defined by a single event.
6. The divorce statistics clearly show in either respect that couples are not being properly prepared by either society or the church. The church in particular has failed couples and society in not maintaining a gold standard and model for marriage, and as the figures show, has become increasingly irrelevant in its approach to marriage.
7. The average current cost of a wedding is £28,500 per couple. The average cost of a divorce is apparently around £36,000 without maintenance being taken into account. With this in mind, cohabitation seems a good, logical and safe alternative to marriage.
8. However, most cohabiting couples see 'marriage' as their long term goal, especially when considering starting a family.

9. We as Christian communities need to take greater pastoral and spiritual responsibility and not only prepare couples but guide them through the process of 'getting married' and then 'being married', and even perhaps 'being parents'. We also need to make it clear that 'marriage' is intended 'till death do us part', and although help can be given if needed, that part is not an optional extra but an integral part of the package.
10. There is no single, 'one size fits all' solution. Every couple has different needs and expectations.
11. We do need clarity and consensus as a Christian community as to what marriage 'is' and re-establish that clear definition of expectation and behavioural standard so everyone is clear.
12. We need to be clear on gender issues and maintain clear lines of differentiation, the current proposals to allow people to legally define their own gender is flawed beyond belief and will have a massive impact on the stability of Christian marriage. We need to be constant in our watchfulness and quick to react as defenders of the faith we have been entrusted with. That does not mean we are to be judgemental or act without sensitivity in our responses but that does not mean we should accept what is unacceptable to God and incompatible with Holy Scripture.

#### **The Gender Recognition Act 2004:**

With regard to item 12, you may wish to look at the current Scottish proposals to amend the Gender Recognition Act 2014 under [the review of the gender recognition act 2004](#)

It is worth looking at simply because, if it were to be implemented, it would cause considerable problems for the church's position on marriage, create insurmountable problems for some couples in civil partnerships (see section 5 of the review's proposals), and would allow young people under 16 to legally change their gender with their parents' support, or without if they are over 16 (see section 4) without the need for medical or other evidence. These proposals are not without criticism and have already brought the more main stream churches in Scotland into head on conflict with the Scottish government.

If the review is successful in Scotland, then we need to be aware that it will likely be mooted in our own parliament, and we know if the past is anything to go by that some less scrupulous politicians will jump on any bandwagon if they think there are votes to be had.

**Best advice:**

Be vigilant.

If something seems wrong, listen to your heart, your head and your conscience, and then act.

Make sure you have all the relevant facts before committing to action.

Don't make assumptions. Check, check and check again.

Don't leave it for someone else to do. If something has come to your attention, then it's your responsibility to deal with it.

Respond responsibly, appropriately and prayerfully. Treat people the way you would like to be treated.

Resorting to anger and throwing your teddy out of the pram is never a good idea. You will look stupid and you might not get your teddy back. Keep cool and keep your teddy.

(Strangely, these are some of the same 'rules' as for maintaining a successful marriage!)

**Gospel – Luke 24 verses 36b – 48**

Unice Brearley, OSJ

Here we read of how Jesus came to his own when they were gathered in the upper room, In this passage certain great notes of the Christian faith are resonantly struck.

Luke was writing to the Greek speaking world. He wanted them to know that Christ's message of God's love and forgiveness should go to all the world.

We must never ignore the worldwide scope of Christ's Gospel. God wants all the world to hear the Good News of Salvation.

Have you ever been really surprised? Perhaps a party was arranged, your friends and family gathered and no-one had breathed a word to you? Or someone unexpectedly presented you with a gift or brought good news.

I had a wonderful surprise on my birthday in October. The family had arranged a meal at a restaurant, this I knew about. I thought nothing of it when our middle daughter and her husband walked in from Hexham, David is very tall and broad, and he always had to bend down for a hug, or stay on the lower doorstep. This time though he stepped aside and behind him was my friend from the South of France whom I hadn't seen for 15 years, due to her having to look after her mother, and a serious illness of her own.. They had persuaded her to visit them especially for the occasion. It certainly was a very happy shock.

The disciples must have felt like that when Jesus appeared, they had been despairing after Jesus crucifixion. They must have been flabbergasted and unable to speak immediately, finding it difficult to comprehend that it really was Jesus and not a ghost. Nothing in the Scriptures has really prepared them for this although the Old Testament points to it constantly. They had not really taken in Jesus words when he told them that he would suffer, die and rise again.

It stresses the necessity of the cross. It was to the cross that all the Scriptures looked forward. The cross was not forced on God, it was nor an emergency measure when all else failed and when the scheme of things had gone wrong, It stresses the secret of power.

They had to wait in Jerusalem until power from on high came upon them.

3. It stresses the urgency of the task. The call to repent had to go out to all the people with the offer of forgiveness. The Church was not left to live forever in the upper room, it was sent out into the world. After the upper room came the worldwide mission of the Church. The days of sorrow were past and the tidings of joy must be taken to everyone. It stresses the secret of power. They had to wait in Jerusalem until power from on high came upon them. There are occasions when the Christians may seem to be wasting time, waiting in a wise passivity. Action without preparation must often fail. There is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God.

Many days had elapsed between verses 43 and 44, because Jesus and his followers traveled to Galilee and back before he returned to heaven. In his second book Acts, Luke make it clear that Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples between his resurrection and ascension. All the while stressing and teaching the importance of his resurrection and what it meant to the world and their future mission.

Jesus opened these people minds to understand the Scripture. The Holy Spirit does this in our lives today when we study the Bible. Have you ever wondered how to understand a difficult bible passage. Besides reading surrounding passages, asking other people and consulting reference books, pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind to understand giving you the needed insight to put God's word into action in your life.

It is easy to make assumptions about how God works.

Those of us brought up in the Church can easily assume there are certain ways to understand the Bible, to approach God in prayer, and to live our lives. But perhaps God wants to meet us in unexpected ways challenging our presuppositions.

The law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms is a way to describe the entire Old Testament. In other words the entire Old Testament points to the Messiah. For example his role as prophet was told in Deuteronomy 18 v 15 – 20, (The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people) His sufferings were prophesied in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, (He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering and acquainted with grief.) His resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16 v 9 –11 and Isaiah 53 10-11

If we have not been brought up in the church we bring fresh eyes to the stories. Nevertheless we may have pre-set ideas about what is spiritual. We too need to meet God in new ways.

Peter's sermon to the people in today's Acts passage challenges assumptions. They had crucified Jesus, believing that they were doing God's will. Peter asks them to rethink their understanding of Scripture, and see what God was doing. Sometimes the passage is used to justify anti-Semitism but it challenges all especially Christians, who think they are doing God's will.

A chilling extract from the diary of the terrorists after 9.11 attack on the World-Trade Centre, reveals his absolute certainty that his actions were God's will. As do all the terrorists of the Muslim faith who deliberately blow themselves up to cause as many deaths as possible.

As Christians we cannot point an accusing finger we have only to look back through history. The Crusades, Slavery apartheid, the Holocaust, the denial of rights to women, violence and abuse against children have all been justified in God's name. It is 200 years since William Wilberforce had a law passed condemning slavery, but it was stated in the newspapers recently that there are in fact more people in slavery today than ever before. Prophetic voices have challenged and still challenge us to rethink our assumptions, and to prepare to meet God in new ways.

However we understand the resurrection stories for the first followers of Jesus they were life-changing. Moving through fear, wonder and disbelief, they recognize God at work in unexpected ways. We too need to move out of pre-set ways to see God at work - in unexpected people, places and times – in ways that will change our thinking and redirect our lives.

Where do you expect to meet with God? In Church? In personal prayer? In the beauty of creation? In the love of family and friends? When prayers are answered? These are always in which we encounter God's presence. Today's story challenges us to meet God in unexpected ways.

As I have said previously the disciples were confused and bewildered. They had witnessed the traumatic events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion and heard the bewildering rumors of resurrection. They were discussing what had happened. In their confusion they encounter the risen Christ who says "Peace be with you"

Words are not enough to convince them. All their senses come into play. They see Jesus standing before them, he invites them to touch, they give him fish to eat –



and presumably the smell fills the room. Only as they begin to take his presence seriously in an embodied way does he use the words and reason to convince them, of the significance of what is happening.

Encounters with God often occur in every day life. Kathy Galloway tells of Joyce a single parent, an artist on Income Support, who in her sense of life and creativity embodies, the glory in the gray. enabling other to see God. Many of us know people who bring God to us – in their care for others their creativity, their ability to make a welcoming home, their gift of fun. They embody the presence of the risen Christ...

Sometimes it is not the achievement that speaks of God, but the struggle. what moves people is not only their achievement but the story of someone who has struggled and won through. We may know people who inspire us by their struggles, who have survived abuse or trauma to build their lives of confidence and trust, who battle daily against pain, who are resilient and resourceful in the face of poverty, unemployment or prejudice. Whether they know it or not they embody the trust of resurrection

Being convinced of the reality of Christ's presence is only the beginning. The disciples are called to be witnesses- to hear and see and touch and do., We too are witnesses – convincing others not only by our words, but by our lives, by sharing food, by the touch of loving hands. We the Church are called to embody the risen presence of Christ

Fay Inchfawn, writes of the days when life is a losing contest, with a thousand little things. She says

*I wrestle, how I wrestle, through the hours  
Nay not with principalities and powers – Dark spiritual foes of Gods and man's –  
But with antagonistic pots and pans, With footmarks on the hall, With smears upon  
the wall, with doubtful ears and small unwashed hands. And with a babe's  
innumerable demands.*

And then even in the busyness, she lays aside her work to be for a moment with  
God.

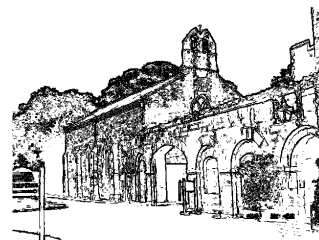
With leisured feet and idle hand, I sat, I, foolish, fussy, blind as any bat, Sat down  
to listen. And to learn. And lo, My thousand tasks were done the better so.

The quiet times in which we wait on God are never wasted for it is in these times  
when we lay aside life's tasks that we are strengthened for the very tasks we lay  
aside.

Do you spend time in prayer and meditation before tackling a difficult task?



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.  
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.  
All are very welcome and all may receive.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James</b> <b>Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">June 2018: The Year of Marriage</p>	
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## **What the Bible says about Love, Marriage and Sexual Immorality.**

There are several kinds of Christians and they are not defined particularly by denomination but by their attitude towards the Bible. There is general agreement, at least in principle, that the Bible represents the infinite and dynamic Word of God and that its truths and teachings are permanent and immutable, but in practice, this is often not the case.

There are those Christians who see the New Testament as the fulfilment of the Old Testament.

There are those Christians who see the New Testament as a new beginning.

There are those Christians who see the Bible as social history with some mythology thrown in for good measure to help them live a good life.

There are those Christians who see the Bible as being largely irrelevant after they have come to faith.

There are those Christians who cherry pick which bits they think apply to them.

There are even those Christians who use and abuse the Bible to justify their own selfish and wayward passions and behaviour.

Whatever the Bible is, it can't be ignored and getting any kind of consensus on what it teaches and its authority will always be subject to criticism and

contention. It remains a challenge and there are deep truths contained within it that cannot be ignored. It is an immensely powerful book and its spirituality is at constant odds with the base and selfish nature of mankind. It's not an easy read nor offers an easy path.

So on the continued theme of 'marriage' I have selected some texts from the Bible, from both the Old and New Testament, and offer them without comment to see what you make of them.

Some texts will not lie well with current changes to the civil law regarding issues of equality, inclusion, gender and discrimination. Each person will have to come to find their own truth and balance the demands of their faith against the changes in society.

Put another way, if the Bible is the true Word of God, just how are we to respond? It can't be ignored and it needs acting upon if it challenges us as Christian.

## **Love:**

[1 Corinthians 16:14](#)

Let all that you do be done in love.

[1 John 4:8](#)

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

#### [John 13:34-35](#)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

#### [Colossians 3:14](#)

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

#### [1 Peter 4:8](#)

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

#### [John 15:13](#)

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

#### [Mark 12:29-31](#)

Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

#### [Matthew 22:36-40](#)

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

#### [1 Corinthians 13:13](#)

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

#### [1 John 4:18](#)

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

[1 John 4:7](#)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

[Proverbs 10:12](#)

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.

[Ephesians 5:25](#)

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

[John 14:15](#)

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

[Ephesians 4:2](#)

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

[Romans 12:9](#)

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

[Proverbs 17:17](#)

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

[Luke 6:35](#)

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

[1 John 4:16](#)

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

[Romans 13:8](#)

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

[Romans 12:10](#)

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour.

[1 John 3:18](#)

Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

[Ephesians 5:33](#)

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

[Romans 13:10](#) ESV / 357 helpful votes [Helpful Not Helpful](#)

Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

[Galatians 5:22](#)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

[Luke 6:31](#)

And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

[Matthew 6:24](#)

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

[Romans 8:28](#)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.



[1 John 4:20](#)

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

[Matthew 5:44-48](#)

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

[James 2:8](#)

If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing well.

[Matthew 5:22](#)

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

[Philippians 2:2](#)

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

[Galatians 5:22-23](#)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

[1 John 4:21](#)

And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

[Galatians 5:13](#)

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

[Ephesians 4:2-3](#)

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[1 John 4:16-19](#)

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the Day of Judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us.

[John 13:34](#)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

[1 Peter 1:22](#)

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

[Ephesians 4:32](#)

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

[1 Corinthians 10:24](#)

Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbour.

[John 15:12-13](#)

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

## **Marriage:**

### **[1 Corinthians 7:1-40](#)**

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ...

### **[Ephesians 5:22-33](#)**

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ...

### **[Hebrews 13:4](#)**

Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

### **[Ephesians 5:25-33](#)**

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.

### **[Proverbs 18:22](#)**

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favour from the LORD.

#### [Genesis 2:24](#)

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

#### [Proverbs 21:9](#)

It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

#### [Matthew 19:2-9](#)

And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ...

#### [Proverbs 19:14](#)

House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.

#### [1 Corinthians 7:39](#)

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

#### [Malachi 2:13-16](#)

And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favour from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

#### [2 Corinthians 6:14](#)

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

#### [Mark 10:8-12](#)

And the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

#### [1 Peter 3:1-5](#)

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,

#### [1 Peter 3:7](#)

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

#### [Ephesians 5:25](#)

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

#### [1 Corinthians 7:12-15](#)

To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

### [Ephesians 5:33](#)

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

### [Matthew 5:32](#)

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

### [Hebrews 13:1-25](#) ESV / 220 helpful votes [Helpful](#) [Not Helpful](#)

Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

### [1 Corinthians 11:11](#)

Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman;

### [Mark 12:21-25](#)

And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife." Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

### [Matthew 19:4-8](#)

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

#### [Leviticus 21:13-15](#)

And he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman who has been defiled, or a prostitute, these he shall not marry. But he shall take as his wife a virgin of his own people, that he may not profane his offspring among his people, for I am the LORD who sanctifies him.”

#### [Colossians 3:18-19](#)

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

#### [Proverbs 21:19](#)

It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.

#### [Romans 7:1-3](#)

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

#### [Proverbs 31:10](#)

An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

#### [1 Corinthians 11:12](#)

For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

#### [Exodus 22:16](#)

“If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife.

### [1 Corinthians 11:9-12](#)

Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

### [1 Peter 4:8](#)

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

### [2 Corinthians 6:14-18](#)

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

### [1 Corinthians 7:24-40](#)

So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. ...

### [Luke 16:18](#)

"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

### [Colossians 3:18](#)

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.



[1 Timothy 5:14](#)

So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.

[Proverbs 12:4](#)

An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones.

[Romans 7:2](#)

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.

[1 Corinthians 7:3](#)

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

[1 Corinthians 7:2](#)

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

[Ephesians 5:21](#)

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[Matthew 22:30](#)

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

[Colossians 3:14](#)

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

### [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](#)

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

## **Sexual Immorality:**

### [1 Corinthians 7:9](#)

But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

### [1 Corinthians 7:2](#)

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

### [1 Corinthians 6:18](#)

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

### [1 Corinthians 10:13](#)

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

### [Genesis 2:24](#)

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

### [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice

homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

[Galatians 6:3](#)

For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

[1 Corinthians 6:13](#)

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

[Leviticus 20:13](#)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

[1 Corinthians 11:1-34](#)

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

[Deuteronomy 22:5](#)

"A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.

[Hebrews 13:4](#)

Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

[1 Timothy 1:9-10](#)

Understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

### [Galatians 5:19](#)

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,

### [1 Corinthians 7:1-2](#)

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

### [Exodus 20:14](#)

"You shall not commit adultery.

### [Titus 2:11-15](#)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

### [1 Timothy 5:2](#)

(Consider, respect and treat) older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

### [Ephesians 5:3](#)

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

### [1 Corinthians 5:1](#)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

### [Romans 1:24-27](#)

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and

worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameful acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

[Genesis 1:27](#)

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

[Leviticus 18:22](#)

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

[Revelation 21:8](#)

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death."

[1 Timothy 1:10](#)

The sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

[1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

In all of these things, we are not called to be the judge and juries of other people's actions, just to deal with what we need to deal with in our own lives.

+Ian, OSJ

*“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth. That he might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.*

*My dear brothers take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God demands. Therefore get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you*

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*

*If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts and pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by this world.*

The letter of James is a collection of practical instructions, written to all God's people scattered over the whole world.

The writer uses many vivid pictures of speech, and gives many instructions for the guidance of Christians everywhere.

He deals with topics such as riches, poverty, temptation and good conduct. Of wisdom pride quarrelling, judging others, boasting, patience and prayer.

This reading is in his section on hearing and doing. He speaks of the law of liberty and of pure undefiled religion, echoing Jesus' concern in Mark 7 for true purity. James doesn't reject the purity laws, he strongly emphasizes practical care and purity of heart, he introduces us to key themes, the idea of perfection or completeness verses 17 – 25 give the concept of God's wisdom as a gift from above, and an understanding that Christians must show concern for the poor and needy

James is addressing Christians who are questioning whether God has the power to help in life's struggles.

James doesn't say that IF we face trials, but WHEN we face trials and that it is possible to profit from them. We cannot really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure, it is easy to be kind to others when everything is going well, but can we still be kind when others are treating us unfairly.

God wants us to make us mature and complete not to keep us from pain. Instead of complaining of our struggles we should see them as opportunities for growth. Thank God for his promise to be with us at all times.

To believe and not doubt means not only believing in the existence of God and expecting that he will hear and answer when we pray.

We must put away our critical attitude when we come to him. God doesn't grant every thoughtless or selfish request. We must have confidence that God will align our desires with His purpose

To keep ourselves from being polluted by the world, we need to commit ourselves to Christ's ethical and moral system not the world's

To begin with we have Connections

Everyone knows the value of good connections, knowing the right people at work or in society, but James is showing the value of being connected to God.

As children of this world we are rooted in God's creative process. Everything in us that shows generosity and goodness demonstrates that the love, beauty and passion that formed the heavens and the earth somehow influence and shape our living. Creation, in its vast array of colour and species, speaks to us of God's imagination and openness in making what is wonderful.



Through this rootedness we recognize what is good and of God.

But we also have other tools to aid us. The heart of this is in listening to the implanted word that had power to save our souls. James assures these believers that they hold a spirit and a wisdom to which they should pay attention.

Listen to the word passed on by Moses, a word that should make people wise and discerning. We are heirs of the experience of generations of people of faith. And their struggles to live in harmony with God can enlighten our living now

Listen when we gather for worship. We may hear the words yet fail to listen, too tired or troubled to switch off from the world outside and really attend to what is happening.

Even God, after all the efforts of creation, returned to a still centre from which creativity and love flow. In our time of rest we tap into that creative stillness, reconnect with God and are enabled to live more fully in the week to come. We listen to God's wisdom and seek out the generosity and kindness that lies within

Listen to one another. In a world of perpetual noise and instant constant communication, the command to be still and pay attention to what another says is ever harder to follow.

Failure to listen breeds disharmony, anger and trouble.

Everyone knows the value of a friend in time of need and all of us at some point require someone to listen to us.

We are also called upon to listen to the needs and hurts of others, to listen even when we are being criticized, to listen and respond not just in words but in actions that make a difference.

Then we have Respect.

The Respect agenda was launched in 2005, a time when society was seeing much anti-social behaviour; violence in the streets and bullying in schools and work places. What this means to people politically and socially varies greatly – and mixing morals and ethics with politics can be muddy. How do we show respect for one another?

In a highly individualized consumer society, how do we hope to see people respect one another without being bound up in rules, regulations and curfews?

Politicians have different views on the extent to which laws influence personal behaviour, and different attitudes about our responsibility for one another, but James is quite clear that sordidness and wickedness are not an option, nor is denying the needs of widows and orphans (the marginalized of his day)

In the political realm, respect may be about curbing anti-social behaviour and in some areas progress has been reported.

In schools many pupils are involved in writing the rules that they should follow.

Involvement is the key here but as a Church how ready are we to become involved in political and social issues.

James sets us a challenge to be doers of the word that speaks of God's passion for the poor and the suffering, and at the same time, to remain unstained by the world.

In fact he says, religion that is pure and undefiled is that which cares for the marginalized in their distress.

Is the world of politics and social activism not a world of compromise of getting hands dirty in the complex problems of our age?

To feed the hungry, the well-fed must have less. To care for the poor, the rich must take less for granted, and the political persuasion to make these things possible ranges from protest and petition to war and the gun.

How do we immerse ourselves in the needs of the world and remain clean and untainted by it.

James says we will be blessed by our doing. It is never enough to hear and not act. To find the perfect law, the law of liberty, we must look at what God demands of us.

More and more rules govern every aspect of our lives, displaying a lack of trust and confidence. So many laws and rules these days it seems to me we are getting like the Jews of Jesus' time, laws upon laws, many of which seem to have no relevance to our Christian beliefs and commandments

Where there is more trust, there are fewer regulations. Law alone will not change things, but doing that which is of God WILL make a difference. The Chinese proverb says. "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember, I do and I understand." Fear may hold us back, but in going beyond hearing God's word TO DOING IT, we understand more fully the Gospel message..

Through being connected to God those who listen are able to bear fruit with their lives – and that fruit may lie in being better connected to one another. How carefully are we listening?



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.  
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.  
All are very welcome and all may receive.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James</b> <b>Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">July 2018: The Year of Marriage</p>	
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## **Sex and Marriage**

I have reproduced the article below in its entirety because it is so well written and it is without doubt thought provoking even if the theology or thinking behind it may be different from your own.

Having articles like this where the topic is seen from a different perspective is often of great help to our formation as Christians. I am not a Roman Catholic although I am familiar with its theology and thinking. It sometimes takes me out of my comfort zone and makes me rethink the things I have often accepted perhaps a little too willingly and thoughtlessly.

The article is all the more interesting as it is written by a lay person rather than an ordained one. You may not agree with all or any of it but it should leave us with our own reasoned thoughts on the subject and help us come to a better and more rationalised understanding of the relationship between God, sex and marriage, and society's misappropriation and misunderstanding of this relationship.

I have added my own notes and questions where necessary to the article. They appear in bold italic.

## **Sex and Marriage:**

Pete Jerman

Marriage requires sex.

***A marriage requires consummation and it is not a marriage until it is consummated. Whilst sex is a part of marriage, it is not the whole. A lack of sexual activity in marriage in later life does not mean there is no marriage or it has 'died', rather it has transcended the need and desire for the physical act.***

This seems to be the *sine qua non* of marriage even in a world where the definition of marriage has been broadened in ways never imagined even a generation ago. And indeed marriage does require sex because sex is unitive in a unique way and marriage is about union. (*sine qua non*-‘without it’)

A shake of the hand, a pat on the shoulder, or a kiss on the cheek are not simply different degrees of contact on the same scale as a truly sexual act. They are different in kind and quality.

***Question: is a sexual act defined by intent rather than by action?***

The unitive nature of sex is a quality over and above its procreative nature. In the love that renders our sexual acts truly human, a man and woman unite beyond their biological natures. But is that love rooted in the physical warmth and intimacy of the sexual act or is it rooted in its biologically creative purpose? Understanding the unitive nature of our sexuality dovetails with an understanding of ourselves as the lovers we are meant to be. To live our sexuality fully is to see that its unitive nature completes us as persons, as couples and as a people. Likewise, to live it incompletely renders us incomplete and divided.

***Question: is the sexual act driven by selfishness and/or by hormones?***

***Question: how is it 'unitive'?***

***Question: what has sex to do with love?***

***Question: what has love to do with sex?***

*Humanae Vitae* recognized that sexual relations between married adults could be both unitive and procreative, clearly indicating that sex had value beyond simple procreation. But in recognizing the unitive nature of sex as different from its procreative nature *Humanae Vitae* did not separate the two. The encyclical declares that the doctrine taught within it "... is based on the inseparable connection ... between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act" (article 12). Yet, despite clearly asserting their unity, the popular mind, in its rush to embrace contraception,



separated the two, claiming the unitive nature of sex remains unaffected when removed from the procreative. Many of us, including most Catholics, both lay and clerical, grabbed the “unitive” and ran. We ran away from *Humanae Vitae* as fast as we could, leaving its procreative link behind.

Perhaps we should have asked before we cut and ran, can sex that is not open to procreation, sex that is shut off from its very nature, be unitive? We need only look about in a hyper-sexualized world to see there is no inherent unitive value in sex divorced from its natural end. With a fifty percent chance that a marriage will end in divorce, with non-marital live-in arrangements coming and going, and with myriad sexual relationships never meant to last more than a single evening, to postulate sex as inherently unitive would be absurd. Perhaps *Humanae Vitae* was right in connecting the unitive nature of sex to its procreative nature. A marriage that accepts in every conjugal act the possibility of a child with its own needs, changes the nature of a relationship into something larger than its two participants. In considering the yet to be conceived child, a man and wife subordinate their lives to another. Their love for each other is no longer solely about themselves but a gift to their child not yet conceived. It is this love, rooted in the creative nature of the sexual act, that makes it unitive.

Separating the procreative nature of our sexuality from its unitive nature destroys the very thing that makes it unitive. The simple act of contraception radically changes the sexual act transforming it into something completely different, much as a trip to the moon with all its joys, thrills and perils is different from a computer simulation of the same. Those sharing a small capsule to the moon

share a real experience in a real way with a real achievement. They become different people united in a unique way. They are true travellers. The participants in the computer simulation share no more than the thrill of a video game, a moment rather than a journey. They are faux travellers. Likewise creative sex and purposely sterile sex are not two variations on a continuum. They are completely different acts. Our own language deceives us in using the word “sex” to refer to both. Sexuality open to creation truly embarks upon a journey in life, one with joys and sorrows, one that changes the lives of its participants beyond their will, and one that requires a continual openness to the life of another.

Sexuality divorced from its nature is a faux sexuality. In its best sense (one that ignores abortion, the pain of children unwanted and love lost) it is a simple high between two people. Like our simulated lunar excursion its experience can be intense and, certainly shared, but there is no true journey, only moments, moments closed to a possible other. To assert a unitive nature in faux sexuality is to claim a relationship with truly creative sexuality where none exists. The one is no more the other than a lunar excursion to a real moon is to a digital simulation, one with no moon at all. To describe both as “sex” is a contradiction. A word that mocks itself renders itself meaningless.

The meaning of “sex,” however, is foundational to who we are as men and women. When it becomes meaningless, we break unity with our own selves. If “sex” has no real meaning then neither does “male” or “female.” These terms have no concrete meaning without the words “mother” and “father.” Sex, independent of creation, divorces “mother” and “father” from “male” and “female.” Because its definition is no longer anchored to a tangible reality, a

sexuality divorced from parenthood requires only the illusion of being male and female. In progressive modern terms to be a male or female no longer pertains to an empirically and visually verifiable observation. Rather, it is a decision subjectively made by each person regardless of biological fact. A surgeon can now remove a person's sex organs, add some cosmetic alterations, and insist all buy into the illusion that a person's sex has been changed, when it has actually been removed. Only in a world cut loose from sexual reality could this be seen as therapeutic rather than barbaric. In such a world "male" and "female" truly mean nothing at all.

***Question: what is the real purpose of the definition of 'male' and female' and 'father' and 'mother'?***

***Question: where the definitions become blurred by society, is it ultimately a rejection of God, family and the nature of creativity?***

***Questions: likewise does it reject individuality?***

Nor are the terms "mother" and "father" anchored to any reality when no longer tied to our creative sexual natures. When cut adrift from the concept of male, being a father retains no inherent connection to the sexual act. For many women, a full time, resident father is now optional. He is someone unnecessary if inconvenient. Yet a father diminished is only the beginning of sex that is no longer procreative. Both the high divorce rate and the number of fluid family relationships among those never married not only reduced the concept of the father as a basic part of a family, but also the concept of either or any natural

parent as being particularly necessary for a child's wellbeing. It followed naturally that children were disposable, portable, and endlessly adaptable according to the perceived need of their ever-changing parents. When to be a man no longer includes fatherhood, his maleness becomes a simple biological attribute, a part separable from his humanity. Rather than a father he becomes a sperm donor. With men so reduced women can only suffer a similar fate. Already on the horizon the signs read, "Womb for Rent."

With gender succumbing to the devastation of sex rendered meaningless, nothing remains to define marriage. But true marriage does have meaning and it is inherently unitive. Marriage is a true union of complements. To marry two things is to make them one. Two metals married become a single something else, a real, physical something else. Copper and tin melted together become brass, not two things, but one new unique thing with its own unique properties.

But marriage is more than the simple pairing of complements.

Marriage requires a unitive or marital act. Copper and tin require fire and cauldron to marry the two into brass. In the creative sex act two physically distinct and complementary people become organically one for the purpose of creating life. But as humans we are more than just animal natures. We exist as body and soul.

Marital union requires both.

In addition to being biologically complete the sexual act must also be spiritually complete. The biological must have the full consent of the spiritual. Such an act is not only unitive within the individual, mating body and soul, tying male to father and female to mother, but also unitive between two individuals who unite as one and submit their will to a creative purpose larger than themselves.

A true marital act is an integral part of a lifetime journey and not an occasional day trip.

Marriage is a real union of two people that truly results in a relationship bonding a man and woman to each other and to their children, uniquely and physically. A marriage license does not validate the sex in a relationship; rather it is the sex, fully assented to in its true creative meaning that validates the marriage. Wedding vows simply build a covenant to protect the marriage and the family it creates. A marriage without a true marital act is beyond definition, requiring neither complements nor true union. The vows preceding such a marriage simply affirm shared sentiments.

***Question: what is marriage, its purpose and its goal? What defines it and makes it different from a long term relationship where sex is (and resulting children may be) present?***

Marriage undefined and based on sentiment undermines the naturally unitive nature of the family. Instead of the loudly proclaimed diversity modern society yearns for, each family becomes less than unique. Marriage undefined requires a family undefined, a family whose natural and unique bonds have no value.

In a family without definition the pieces of the family puzzle can no longer be individual, curvilinear pieces that neatly and uniquely fit each other. Instead the pieces must be crushingly reshaped as identical squares, pieces that can be readily interchanged from family to family.

Instead of the complexity of a molecular world of infinite combinations, the new family requires the simplified uniformity of the periodic table of elements. No longer do men love men as men, women love women as women, and men and women love each as the complements they are, but all are required to love interchangeably as faux men and faux women, engaging in faux sex. All relationships must seemingly mock the truly married rather than be special in their own way. Families are no longer uniquely constituted and inviolable but endlessly fungible according to the varying personal needs of their component parts.

Into this dissonant morass of words without meaning the term “same-sex marriage” is no longer an oxymoron. In a world where words have no sense it makes perfect sense. A self-sterilized society cannot credibly deny full participation to relationships sterile by their very nature. Though its more optimistic supporters proclaim it the medicine marriage needs to restore its fortunes, same-sex marriage is the natural culmination of sex torn from its creative roots. It would be wrong to blame its proponents for creating a crisis. Like most of us they simply accepted a sexuality already rendered meaningless as the new normal, a normal into which same-sex marriage naturally fit.

***Question: is same sex marriage purely and selfishly indulgent as there is no procreative element?***

A sexuality without definition, one into which anything fits, can no more be unitive than discord can be melody. Separating the unitive nature of sex from its procreative nature removed the glue that truly bonds a man and woman into the unity of husband and wife. Without that bond the unity of mother, father and child cannot hold. By itself the unitive no longer unites but undertakes the mundane task of engendering good feelings between two people. By itself the procreative stands by ready for duty when it conveniently conforms to our plans. In breaking our sexuality into separate components we subordinated the “other” to our desires. A love restricted for the benefit of its exclusive participants challenges the very meaning of love. In breaking the bond between the unitive and the procreative we broke a part of ourselves that teaches us selfless love.

Like a child who breaks a vase and re-assembles the pieces to create the illusion of a vase still complete, we hid the breakage behind good words, words like “sex,” “marriage,” “male,” “female,” “husband,” “wife,” “father,” “mother,” and, most critically, “love.” We still use these words as they have been used for a seeming eternity before, but now they are façades covering the emptiness behind them.

Like the guilty vase-breaking child we cannot bring the breakage into the light of day. Though a vase broken is readily renamed a pile of shards, we cannot name the pieces of our broken sexuality without admitting ourselves broken. In speaking empty words about things that matter we suffer the ultimate disunity.

Rather than conversation that unites us as fellow travellers, we talk past each other with words that are empty boxes, boxes that each speaker and each listener fill with a meaning of choice. Instead of a people uniting, it is the chaos of Babel we approach. When we separated the unitive and procreative natures of our sexuality we lost both. Instead of unified and fertile, we find ourselves sterile and divided.

Ultimately, love is the foundation for all Catholic theology.

In Church teachings on sexuality many of us have missed the love, preferring to see prohibitions that stand between us and the good life. But we need to see the love, because seeing it and living it will make us better lovers.

Our sexuality is foundational to how we love, but a foundation without definition is no foundation at all.

***Question: does love have to be sexual or is this an inescapable consequence of our sexuality and need to procreate?***

Words are important because we use their meanings to define who we are. When those words lose meaning, our lives lose meaning also. The language of love and sexuality is broken. Thinking it whole and knowing no better, good people now form their lives around this broken thing, hurting themselves on its broken, jagged edges.

We need to have a real conversation about real love with real words that have real meaning. Our sexuality lived in its truly creative meaning is a gift to another.



That other is one who we know nothing of and who may never be. It is, however, one who depends on us completely to do the right thing. Living our sexuality for the child not yet conceived challenges us to be true lovers. Living it is not easy. In fact, it is incredibly difficult. But to live it rightly, to even fail repeatedly while trying to live it rightly, will only increase our love. The Catholic Church does not teach to condemn to hell but to elevate to heaven. Its teachings on sexuality are not a proclamation of sin but an invitation to people striving to love, an invitation that beckons, “Do you want to love more?”

***Question: when does making love stop or move beyond simply being a sexual act?***

***Question: or is the Church trying to spiritualise something that is nothing more than a base human instinct?***

***Question: If the latter is the case, then what is the purpose of ‘marriage’?***

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### ***HUMANAE VITAE (Encyclical letter for reference)***

The transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator. It has always been a source of great joy to them, even though it sometimes entails many difficulties and hardships.

The fulfilment of this duty has always posed problems to the conscience of married people, but the recent course of human society and the concomitant changes have provoked new

questions. The Church cannot ignore these questions, for they concern matters intimately connected with the life and happiness of human beings.

**I.**  
**PROBLEM AND COMPETENCY**  
**OF THE MAGISTERIUM**

**2.** The changes that have taken place are of considerable importance and varied in nature. In the first place there is the rapid increase in population which has made many fear that world population is going to grow faster than available resources, with the consequence that many families and developing countries would be faced with greater hardships. This can easily induce public authorities to be tempted to take even harsher measures to avert this danger. There is also the fact that not only working and housing conditions but the greater demands made both in the economic and educational field pose a living situation in which it is frequently difficult these days to provide properly for a large family.

Also noteworthy is a new understanding of the dignity of woman and her place in society, of the value of conjugal love in marriage and the relationship of conjugal acts to this love.

But the most remarkable development of all is to be seen in man's stupendous progress in the domination and rational organization of the forces of nature to the point that he is endeavouring to extend this control over every aspect of his own life—over his body, over his mind and emotions, over his social life, and even over the laws that regulate the transmission of life.

***New Questions***

**3.** This new state of things gives rise to new questions. Granted the conditions of life today and taking into account the relevance of married love to the harmony and mutual fidelity of husband and wife, would it not be right to review the moral norms in force till now, especially when it is felt that these can be observed only with the gravest difficulty, sometimes only by heroic effort?

Moreover, if one were to apply here the so called principle of totality, could it not be accepted that the intention to have a less prolific but more rationally planned family might transform an action which renders natural processes infertile into a licit and provident control of birth? Could it not be admitted, in other words, that procreative finality applies to the totality of married life rather than to each single act? A further question is whether, because people are more conscious today of their responsibilities, the time has not come when the transmission of life should be regulated by their intelligence and will rather than through the specific rhythms of their own bodies.

### ***Interpreting the Moral Law***

**4.** This kind of question requires from the teaching authority of the Church a new and deeper reflection on the principles of the moral teaching on marriage—a teaching which is based on the natural law as illuminated and enriched by divine Revelation.

No member of the faithful could possibly deny that the Church is competent in her magisterium to interpret the natural moral law. It is in fact indisputable, as Our predecessors have many times declared, that Jesus Christ, when He communicated His divine power to Peter and the other Apostles and sent them to teach all nations His commandments, constituted them as the authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel but also of the natural law. For the natural law, too, declares the will of God, and its faithful observance is necessary for men's eternal salvation.

In carrying out this mandate, the Church has always issued appropriate documents on the nature of marriage, the correct use of conjugal rights, and the duties of spouses. These documents have been more copious in recent times.

### ***Special Studies***

**5.** The consciousness of the same responsibility induced Us to confirm and expand the commission set up by Our predecessor Pope John XXIII, of happy memory, in March, 1963. This commission included married couples as well as many experts in the various fields pertinent to these questions. Its task was to examine views and opinions concerning married life, and especially on the correct regulation of births; and it was also to provide the teaching

authority of the Church with such evidence as would enable it to give an apt reply in this matter, which not only the faithful but also the rest of the world were waiting for.

When the evidence of the experts had been received, as well as the opinions and advice of a considerable number of Our brethren in the episcopate—some of whom sent their views spontaneously, while others were requested by Us to do so—We were in a position to weigh with more precision all the aspects of this complex subject. Hence We are deeply grateful to all those concerned.

### ***The Magisterium's Reply***

**6.** However, the conclusions arrived at by the commission could not be considered by Us as definitive and absolutely certain, dispensing Us from the duty of examining personally this serious question. This was all the more necessary because, within the commission itself, there was not complete agreement concerning the moral norms to be proposed, and especially because certain approaches and criteria for a solution to this question had emerged which were at variance with the moral doctrine on marriage constantly taught by the magisterium of the Church.

Consequently, now that We have sifted carefully the evidence sent to Us and intently studied the whole matter, as well as prayed constantly to God, We, by virtue of the mandate entrusted to Us by Christ, intend to give Our reply to this series of grave questions.

## **II.**

### **DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES**

**7.** The question of human procreation, like every other question which touches human life, involves more than the limited aspects specific to such disciplines as biology, psychology, demography or sociology. It is the whole man and the whole mission to which he is called that must be considered: both its natural, earthly aspects and its supernatural, eternal aspects. And since in the attempt to justify artificial methods of birth control many appeal to the demands of married love or of responsible parenthood, these two important realities of married life must be accurately defined and analysed. This is what We mean to do, with special reference to what

the Second Vatican Council taught with the highest authority in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today.

### ***God's Loving Design***

**8.** Married love particularly reveals its true nature and nobility when we realize that it takes its origin from God, who "is love," the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."

Marriage, then, is far from being the effect of chance or the result of the blind evolution of natural forces. It is in reality the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect in man His loving design. As a consequence, husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.

The marriage of those who have been baptized is, in addition, invested with the dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, for it represents the union of Christ and His Church.

### ***Married Love***

**9.** In the light of these facts the characteristic features and exigencies of married love are clearly indicated, and it is of the highest importance to evaluate them exactly.

This love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfillment.

It is a love which is total—that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and not thinking solely of their own convenience. Whoever really loves his partner loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's own sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself.

Married love is also faithful and exclusive of all other, and this until death. This is how husband and wife understood it on the day on which, fully aware of what they were doing, they freely vowed themselves to one another in marriage. Though this fidelity of husband and wife sometimes presents difficulties, no one has the right to assert that it is impossible; it is, on the contrary, always honourable and meritorious. The example of countless married couples proves not only that fidelity is in accord with the nature of marriage, but also that it is the source of profound and enduring happiness.

Finally, this love is fecund. It is not confined wholly to the loving interchange of husband and wife; it also contrives to go beyond this to bring new life into being. "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the procreation and education of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute in the highest degree to their parents' welfare."

### ***Responsible Parenthood***

**10.** Married love, therefore, requires of husband and wife the full awareness of their obligations in the matter of responsible parenthood, which today, rightly enough, is much insisted upon, but which at the same time should be rightly understood. Thus, we do well to consider responsible parenthood in the light of its varied legitimate and interrelated aspects.

With regard to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means an awareness of, and respect for, their proper functions. In the procreative faculty the human mind discerns biological laws that apply to the human person.

With regard to man's innate drives and emotions, responsible parenthood means that man's reason and will must exert control over them.

With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time.

Responsible parenthood, as we use the term here, has one further essential aspect of paramount importance. It concerns the objective moral order which was established by God, and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter. In a word, the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society.

From this it follows that they are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator. The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out.

### ***Observing the Natural Law***

**11.** The sexual activity, in which husband and wife are intimately and chastely united with one another, through which human life is transmitted, is, as the recent Council recalled, "noble and worthy." It does not, moreover, cease to be legitimate even when, for reasons independent of their will, it is foreseen to be infertile. For its natural adaptation to the expression and strengthening of the union of husband and wife is not thereby suppressed. The fact is, as experience shows, that new life is not the result of each and every act of sexual intercourse. God has wisely ordered laws of nature and the incidence of fertility in such a way that successive births are already naturally spaced through the inherent operation of these laws. The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life.

### ***Union and Procreation***

**12.** This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act.

The reason is that the fundamental nature of the marriage act, while uniting husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also renders them capable of generating new life—and this as a result of laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman. And if each of these essential qualities, the unitive and the procreative, is preserved, the use of marriage fully retains its sense of true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called. We believe that our contemporaries are particularly capable of seeing that this teaching is in harmony with human reason.

### ***Faithfulness to God's Design***

**13.** Men rightly observe that a conjugal act imposed on one's partner without regard to his or her condition or personal and reasonable wishes in the matter, is no true act of love, and therefore offends the moral order in its particular application to the intimate relationship of husband and wife. If they further reflect, they must also recognize that an act of mutual love which impairs the capacity to transmit life which God the Creator, through specific laws, has built into it, frustrates His design which constitutes the norm of marriage, and contradicts the will of the Author of life. Hence to use this divine gift while depriving it, even if only partially, of its meaning and purpose, is equally repugnant to the nature of man and of woman, and is consequently in opposition to the plan of God and His holy will. But to experience the gift of married love while respecting the laws of conception is to acknowledge that one is not the master of the sources of life but rather the minister of the design established by the Creator. Just as man does not have unlimited dominion over his body in general, so also, and with more particular reason, he has no such dominion over his specifically sexual faculties, for these are concerned by their very nature with the generation of life, of which God is the source. "Human life is sacred—all men must recognize that fact," Our predecessor Pope John XXIII recalled. "From its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God."

### ***Unlawful Birth Control Methods***

**14.** Therefore We base Our words on the first principles of a human and Christian doctrine of marriage when We are obliged once more to declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun and, above all, all direct abortion, even for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as lawful means of regulating the number of children.



Equally to be condemned, as the magisterium of the Church has affirmed on many occasions, is direct sterilization, whether of the man or of the woman, whether permanent or temporary.

Similarly excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means.

Neither is it valid to argue, as a justification for sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive, that a lesser evil is to be preferred to a greater one, or that such intercourse would merge with procreative acts of past and future to form a single entity, and so be qualified by exactly the same moral goodness as these. Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good," it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it—in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general. Consequently, it is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong.

### ***Lawful Therapeutic Means***

**15.** On the other hand, the Church does not consider at all illicit the use of those therapeutic means necessary to cure bodily diseases, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreation should result there from—provided such impediment is not directly intended for any motive whatsoever.

### ***Recourse to Infertile Periods***

**16.** Now as We noted earlier (no. 3), some people today raise the objection against this particular doctrine of the Church concerning the moral laws governing marriage, that human intelligence has both the right and responsibility to control those forces of irrational nature which come within its ambit and to direct them toward ends beneficial to man. Others ask on the same point whether it is not reasonable in so many cases to use artificial birth control if by so doing the harmony and peace of a family are better served and more suitable conditions are provided for the education of children already born. To this question We must give a clear

reply. The Church is the first to praise and commend the application of human intelligence to an activity in which a rational creature such as man is so closely associated with his Creator. But she affirms that this must be done within the limits of the order of reality established by God.

If therefore there are well-grounded reasons for spacing births, arising from the physical or psychological condition of husband or wife, or from external circumstances, the Church teaches that married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and engage in marital intercourse only during those times that are infertile, thus controlling birth in a way which does not in the least offend the moral principles which We have just explained.

Neither the Church nor her doctrine is inconsistent when she considers it lawful for married people to take advantage of the infertile period but condemns as always unlawful the use of means which directly prevent conception, even when the reasons given for the later practice may appear to be upright and serious. In reality, these two cases are completely different. In the former the married couple rightly use a faculty provided them by nature. In the later they obstruct the natural development of the generative process. It cannot be denied that in each case the married couple, for acceptable reasons, are both perfectly clear in their intention to avoid children and wish to make sure that none will result. But it is equally true that it is exclusively in the former case that husband and wife are ready to abstain from intercourse during the fertile period as often as for reasonable motives the birth of another child is not desirable. And when the infertile period recurs, they use their married intimacy to express their mutual love and safeguard their fidelity toward one another. In doing this they certainly give proof of a true and authentic love.

### ***Consequences of Artificial Methods***

**17.** Responsible men can become more deeply convinced of the truth of the doctrine laid down by the Church on this issue if they reflect on the consequences of methods and plans for artificial birth control. Let them first consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards. Not much experience is needed to be fully aware of human weakness and to understand that human beings—and especially the young, who are so exposed to temptation—need incentives to keep the moral law, and it is an evil thing to make it easy for them to break that law. Another effect that gives

cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.

Finally, careful consideration should be given to the danger of this power passing into the hands of those public authorities who care little for the precepts of the moral law. Who will blame a government which in its attempt to resolve the problems affecting an entire country resorts to the same measures as are regarded as lawful by married people in the solution of a particular family difficulty? Who will prevent public authorities from favoring those contraceptive methods which they consider more effective? Should they regard this as necessary, they may even impose their use on everyone. It could well happen, therefore, that when people, either individually or in family or social life, experience the inherent difficulties of the divine law and are determined to avoid them, they may give into the hands of public authorities the power to intervene in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife.

### ***Limits to Man's Power***

Consequently, unless we are willing that the responsibility of procreating life should be left to the arbitrary decision of men, we must accept that there are certain limits, beyond which it is wrong to go, to the power of man over his own body and its natural functions—limits, let it be said, which no one, whether as a private individual or as a public authority, can lawfully exceed. These limits are expressly imposed because of the reverence due to the whole human organism and its natural functions, in the light of the principles We stated earlier, and in accordance with a correct understanding of the "principle of totality" enunciated by Our predecessor Pope Pius XII.

### ***Concern of the Church***

**18.** It is to be anticipated that perhaps not everyone will easily accept this particular teaching. There is too much clamorous outcry against the voice of the Church, and this is intensified by modern means of communication. But it comes as no surprise to the Church that she, no less than her divine Founder, is destined to be a "sign of contradiction." She does not, because of

this, evade the duty imposed on her of proclaiming humbly but firmly the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical.

Since the Church did not make either of these laws, she cannot be their arbiter—only their guardian and interpreter. It could never be right for her to declare lawful what is in fact unlawful, since that, by its very nature, is always opposed to the true good of man.

In preserving intact the whole moral law of marriage, the Church is convinced that she is contributing to the creation of a truly human civilization. She urges man not to betray his personal responsibilities by putting all his faith in technical expedients. In this way she defends the dignity of husband and wife. This course of action shows that the Church, loyal to the example and teaching of the divine Saviour, is sincere and unselfish in her regard for men whom she strives to help even now during this earthly pilgrimage "to share God's life as sons of the living God, the Father of all men."

### **III.**

#### **PASTORAL DIRECTIVES**

**19.** Our words would not be an adequate expression of the thought and solicitude of the Church, Mother and Teacher of all peoples, if, after having recalled men to the observance and respect of the divine law regarding matrimony, they did not also support mankind in the honest regulation of birth amid the difficult conditions which today afflict families and peoples. The Church, in fact, cannot act differently toward men than did the Redeemer. She knows their weaknesses, she has compassion on the multitude, she welcomes sinners. But at the same time she cannot do otherwise than teach the law. For it is in fact the law of human life restored to its native truth and guided by the Spirit of God. Observing the Divine Law.

**20.** The teaching of the Church regarding the proper regulation of birth is a promulgation of the law of God Himself. And yet there is no doubt that to many it will appear not merely difficult but even impossible to observe. Now it is true that like all good things which are outstanding for their nobility and for the benefits which they confer on men, so this law demands from individual men and women, from families and from human society, a resolute purpose and great endurance. Indeed it cannot be observed unless God comes to their help with the grace by which the goodwill of men is sustained and strengthened. But to those who consider this

matter diligently it will indeed be evident that this endurance enhances man's dignity and confers benefits on human society.

### ***Value of Self-Discipline***

**21.** The right and lawful ordering of birth demands, first of all, that spouses fully recognize and value the true blessings of family life and that they acquire complete mastery over themselves and their emotions. For if with the aid of reason and of free will they are to control their natural drives, there can be no doubt at all of the need for self-denial. Only then will the expression of love, essential to married life, conform to right order. This is especially clear in the practice of periodic continence. Self-discipline of this kind is a shining witness to the chastity of husband and wife and, far from being a hindrance to their love of one another, transforms it by giving it a more truly human character. And if this self-discipline does demand that they persevere in their purpose and efforts, it has at the same time the salutary effect of enabling husband and wife to develop to their personalities and to be enriched with spiritual blessings. For it brings to family life abundant fruits of tranquillity and peace. It helps in solving difficulties of other kinds. It fosters in husband and wife thoughtfulness and loving consideration for one another. It helps them to repel inordinate self-love, which is the opposite of charity. It arouses in them a consciousness of their responsibilities. And finally, it confers upon parents a deeper and more effective influence in the education of their children. As their children grow up, they develop a right sense of values and achieve a serene and harmonious use of their mental and physical powers.

### ***Promotion of Chastity***

**22.** We take this opportunity to address those who are engaged in education and all those whose right and duty it is to provide for the common good of human society. We would call their attention to the need to create an atmosphere favourable to the growth of chastity so that true liberty may prevail over license and the norms of the moral law may be fully safeguarded.

Everything therefore in the modern means of social communication which arouses men's baser passions and encourages low moral standards, as well as every obscenity in the written word and every form of indecency on the stage and screen, should be condemned publicly and unanimously by all those who have at heart the advance of civilization and the safeguarding of

the outstanding values of the human spirit. It is quite absurd to defend this kind of depravity in the name of art or culture or by pleading the liberty which may be allowed in this field by the public authorities.

### ***Appeal to Public Authorities***

**23.** And now We wish to speak to rulers of nations. To you most of all is committed the responsibility of safeguarding the common good. You can contribute so much to the preservation of morals. We beg of you, never allow the morals of your peoples to be undermined. The family is the primary unit in the state; do not tolerate any legislation which would introduce into the family those practices which are opposed to the natural law of God. For there are other ways by which a government can and should solve the population problem—that is to say by enacting laws which will assist families and by educating the people wisely so that the moral law and the freedom of the citizens are both safeguarded.

### ***Seeking True Solutions***

We are fully aware of the difficulties confronting the public authorities in this matter, especially in the developing countries. In fact, We had in mind the justifiable anxieties which weigh upon them when We published Our encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*. But now We join Our voice to that of Our predecessor John XXIII of venerable memory, and We make Our own his words: "No statement of the problem and no solution to it is acceptable which does violence to man's essential dignity; those who propose such solutions base them on an utterly materialistic conception of man himself and his life. The only possible solution to this question is one which envisages the social and economic progress both of individuals and of the whole of human society, and which respects and promotes true human values." No one can, without being grossly unfair, make divine Providence responsible for what clearly seems to be the result of misguided governmental policies, of an insufficient sense of social justice, of a selfish accumulation of material goods, and finally of a culpable failure to undertake those initiatives and responsibilities which would raise the standard of living of peoples and their children. If only all governments which were able would do what some are already doing so nobly, and bestir themselves to renew their efforts and their undertakings! There must be no relaxation in the programs of mutual aid between all the branches of the great human family. Here We believe an almost limitless field lies open for the activities of the great international institutions.

### ***To Scientists***

**24.** Our next appeal is to men of science. These can "considerably advance the welfare of marriage and the family and also peace of conscience, if by pooling their efforts they strive to elucidate more thoroughly the conditions favorable to a proper regulation of births." It is supremely desirable, and this was also the mind of Pius XII, that medical science should by the study of natural rhythms succeed in determining a sufficiently secure basis for the chaste limitation of offspring. In this way scientists, especially those who are Catholics, will by their research establish the truth of the Church's claim that "there can be no contradiction between two divine laws—that which governs the transmitting of life and that which governs the fostering of married love."

### ***To Christian Couples***

**25.** And now We turn in a special way to Our own sons and daughters, to those most of all whom God calls to serve Him in the state of marriage. While the Church does indeed hand on to her children the inviolable conditions laid down by God's law, she is also the herald of salvation and through the sacraments she flings wide open the channels of grace through which man is made a new creature responding in charity and true freedom to the design of his Creator and Savior, experiencing too the sweetness of the yoke of Christ.

In humble obedience then to her voice, let Christian husbands and wives be mindful of their vocation to the Christian life, a vocation which, deriving from their Baptism, has been confirmed anew and made more explicit by the Sacrament of Matrimony. For by this sacrament they are strengthened and, one might almost say, consecrated to the faithful fulfilment of their duties. Thus will they realize to the full their calling and bear witness as becomes them, to Christ before the world. For the Lord has entrusted to them the task of making visible to men and women the holiness and joy of the law which united inseparably their love for one another and the cooperation they give to God's love, God who is the Author of human life.

We have no wish at all to pass over in silence the difficulties, at times very great, which beset the lives of Christian married couples. For them, as indeed for every one of us, "the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life." Nevertheless it is precisely the hope of that life which, like a brightly burning torch, lights up their journey, as, strong in spirit, they strive to live

"sober, upright and godly lives in this world," knowing for sure that "the form of this world is passing away."

### ***Recourse to God***

For this reason husbands and wives should take up the burden appointed to them, willingly, in the strength of faith and of that hope which "does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us ~} Then let them implore the help of God with unremitting prayer and, most of all, let them draw grace and charity from that unfailing fount which is the Eucharist. If, however, sin still exercises its hold over them, they are not to lose heart. Rather must they, humble and persevering, have recourse to the mercy of God, abundantly bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance. In this way, for sure, they will be able to reach that perfection of married life which the Apostle sets out in these words: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church. . . Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church. . . This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

### ***Family Apostolate***

**26.** Among the fruits that ripen if the law of God be resolutely obeyed, the most precious is certainly this, that married couples themselves will often desire to communicate their own experience to others. Thus it comes about that in the fullness of the lay vocation will be included a novel and outstanding form of the apostolate by which, like ministering to like, married couples themselves by the leadership they offer will become apostles to other married couples. And surely among all the forms of the Christian apostolate it is hard to think of one more opportune for the present time.

### ***To Doctors and Nurses***

**27.** Likewise we hold in the highest esteem those doctors and members of the nursing profession who, in the exercise of their calling, endeavour to fulfil the demands of their Christian vocation before any merely human interest. Let them therefore continue constant in



their resolution always to support those lines of action which accord with faith and with right reason. And let them strive to win agreement and support for these policies among their professional colleagues. Moreover, they should regard it as an essential part of their skill to make themselves fully proficient in this difficult field of medical knowledge. For then, when married couples ask for their advice, they may be in a position to give them right counsel and to point them in the proper direction. Married couples have a right to expect this much from them.

### ***To Priests***

**28.** And now, beloved sons, you who are priests, you who in virtue of your sacred office act as counsellors and spiritual leaders both of individual men and women and of families—We turn to you filled with great confidence. For it is your principal duty—We are speaking especially to you who teach moral theology—to spell out clearly and completely the Church's teaching on marriage. In the performance of your ministry you must be the first to give an example of that sincere obedience, inward as well as outward, which is due to the magisterium of the Church. For, as you know, the pastors of the Church enjoy a special light of the Holy Spirit in teaching the truth. And this, rather than the arguments they put forward, is why you are bound to such obedience. Nor will it escape you that if men's peace of soul and the unity of the Christian people are to be preserved, then it is of the utmost importance that in moral as well as in dogmatic theology all should obey the magisterium of the Church and should speak as with one voice. Therefore We make Our own the anxious words of the great Apostle Paul and with all Our heart We renew Our appeal to you: "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."

### ***Christian Compassion***

**29.** Now it is an outstanding manifestation of charity toward souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ; but this must always be joined with tolerance and charity, as Christ Himself showed in His conversations and dealings with men. For when He came, not to judge, but to save the world, was He not bitterly severe toward sin, but patient and abounding in mercy toward sinners?

Husbands and wives, therefore, when deeply distressed by reason of the difficulties of their life, must find stamped in the heart and voice of their priest the likeness of the voice and the love of our Redeemer.

So speak with full confidence, beloved sons, convinced that while the Holy Spirit of God is present to the magisterium proclaiming sound doctrine, He also illumines from within the hearts of the faithful and invites their assent. Teach married couples the necessary way of prayer and prepare them to approach more often with great faith the Sacraments of the Eucharist and of Penance. Let them never lose heart because of their weakness.

### ***To Bishops***

**30.** And now as We come to the end of this encyclical letter, We turn Our mind to you, reverently and lovingly, beloved and venerable brothers in the episcopate, with whom We share more closely the care of the spiritual good of the People of God. For We invite all of you, We implore you, to give a lead to your priests who assist you in the sacred ministry, and to the faithful of your dioceses, and to devote yourselves with all zeal and without delay to safeguarding the holiness of marriage, in order to guide married life to its full human and Christian perfection. Consider this mission as one of your most urgent responsibilities at the present time. As you well know, it calls for concerted pastoral action in every field of human diligence, economic, cultural and social. If simultaneous progress is made in these various fields, then the intimate life of parents and children in the family will be rendered not only more tolerable, but easier and more joyful. And life together in human society will be enriched with fraternal charity and made more stable with true peace when God's design which He conceived for the world is faithfully followed.

### ***A Great Work***

**31.** Venerable brothers, beloved sons, all men of good will, great indeed is the work of education, of progress and of charity to which We now summon all of you. And this We do relying on the unshakable teaching of the Church, which teaching Peter's successor together with his brothers in the Catholic episcopate faithfully guards and interprets. And We are convinced that this truly great work will bring blessings both on the world and on the Church. For man cannot attain that true happiness for which he yearns with all the strength of his spirit,

unless he keeps the laws which the Most High God has engraved in his very nature. These laws must be wisely and lovingly observed. On this great work, on all of you and especially on married couples, We implore from the God of all holiness and pity an abundance of heavenly grace as a pledge of which We gladly bestow Our apostolic blessing.

*Given at St. Peter's, Rome, on the 25th day of July, the feast of St. James the Apostle, in the year 1968, the sixth of Our pontificate.*

**PAUL VI**

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For theological balance, I include the following comparative viewpoint extracted from 'onfaith'.

## **10 foundational truths that inform the traditional, orthodox Christian belief.**

[Glenn T. Stanton](#)

### **1. All humans are simultaneously sinful and loved.**

All people, regardless of their story, are deeply and unconditionally loved by God, each created with profound dignity and worth, not one more than another. This is more than mere religious happy talk — it's truth whether one is gay, straight, or otherwise. But, all people are also stricken with a terminal illness: sin. *Everyone. No exceptions and to the same degree.* Our sin demands our repentance and needs forgiveness, and God's love and grace are where we find both. This is basic Christianity and the great equalizer of all people.

## **2. Jesus wasn't silent on homosexuality.**

Some claim Jesus never said anything about homosexuality and therefore is neutral on the topic. Not true. Jesus was unequivocal in saying that to understand marriage and the sexual union, we must go back to the beginning and see how God created humanity and to what end. (See Matthew 19 and Mark 10.) Jesus holds up the creation story in Genesis not as a quaint Sunday school lesson, but as authoritative — reminding us that God created each of us male and female, each for the other. And the sexual union that God created and ordains is for husband and wife to come together in physical union, one flesh.

## **3. There is only one option.**

Both Jesus and all of scripture approve of no other sexual union than that between a husband and wife. This is the uncontested historical teaching of Judaism and Christianity, and it is not something that true Christianity is free to adjust with the times. Yes, concubines and multiple wives are found in the Bible, but doesn't make them "biblical." In fact, they violate the Genesis narrative Christ points us to.

## **4. Male and female complete God's image on earth.**

It is not just mere "traditionalism" that makes sex-distinct marriage the norm for Christians. It is a common grace God has given to all peoples at all times that is rooted in deeper theological reasons. The first chapter of the Jewish and Christian scriptures tells us that humanity is uniquely created to show forth the image of God in the world — to make visible the invisible. God does this not just in generic, androgynous humanity, but through two very similar but distinct types of humans: male and female. They are human universals, not cultural constructs.

When God said that it “is not good that the man be alone” (Genesis 2:18) he wasn’t lamenting that Adam didn’t have a buddy or was just lonely. He was saying that the male could not really know himself as male without a human “other” who equally shared his humanity but was meaningfully distinct right down to every bit of her DNA. The same is true for her in Adam. Taoists understand this in that the Yin cannot be Yin without its corresponding and contrasting Yang. In both Jewish and Christian belief, both male and female become fully human in their correspondence and contrast with one another. This does not happen solely in marriage, but it does happen most profoundly and mysteriously in marriage.

## **5. Sex is indeed about babies.**

It is a new and culturally peculiar idea that human sexuality is all about intimacy and pleasure, but not necessarily babies. Babies and reproduction matter. And sure, while not every male/female sexual engagement is toward the end of procreation — intimacy and pleasure matter as well — it has been the overwhelming norm and desire in nearly all marital relationships throughout time. That some couples are infertile either by age or incapability does not diminish or challenge this reality. Infertility is the vast exception for male/female couples. It is the fact of same-sex unions, a human cul-de-sac. Heterosexual union reaches into and creates the next generation. To establish a sexual relationship without any interest in or openness to babies is contrary to God’s intention for such relationships.

## **6. Children have a right to a mother and father.**

Every person ever born can track his origin to a mother and a father. There are no exceptions, including those artificially produced. This was the first command God gave to the first two humans: to come together and bring forth the coming

generations of new divine image-bearers. Nearly all cultures in all places in the world at all historical times hold as fundamental that every child should be loved and raised by a mother and father. The [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) recognizes a mother and father as a basic right of every child.

## **7. Same-sex attraction is not a sin.**

To be human is to have a disordered sexuality. You do. I do. Everyone does. We all have some manner of sexual drive that compels us to disobey God's design for sexuality. But, while temptation is universal, it's different from sin.

Scripture tells us that Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are, but did not sin (see [Hebrews 4:15](#)). Sexual sin is giving in to that desire in either mind or body. Faithful Christian discipleship cannot avoid temptation, but it strives to resist and master it with God's help. Doing so is not sin, but obedience and dependence upon Christ.

Many are indeed same-sex attracted, but live obediently within a Christian sexual ethic. It can be difficult, as it is for heterosexuals who are required to live in celibacy. Christianity requires that we each subjugate our sexual (and many other) desires to our faith commitment — and countless same-sex attracted believers do so willingly and joyfully.

## **8. Sexual intimacy is not a right.**

Every Christian has limitations placed on his sexuality. For married Christians, it is exclusive to one's spouse. For single, engaged, and divorced Christians, it is abstinence, no exceptions. Is it unfair for so many to be forced into a life that cannot know the wonder and beauty of physical intimacy just because marriage is not an option for them? Is it fair for a Christian to be stuck in a loveless

marriage? Christians have long understood that fairness is not really the question. Sex is not a right, but a gift — and the giver knows what is best for us.

## **9. Rewriting God's rules is never an option.**

One of the marks of a Christian is his or her desire to be obedient to Christ's teaching. Certainly most of us would like to rewrite the scriptures to make life easier. I would change where Christ says that lust is the same as doing the deed. Christianity is a demanding faith. The scriptures define and change us, not the other way around. A biblical sexual ethic does not, indeed cannot, change with the times.

## **10. People are more than their sexuality.**

To identify people by their sexuality is to reduce people to their sexuality. Every individual is so much more. A person's inherent and undeniable value is rooted in his membership in humanity, not his particularity, sexual or otherwise. To advocate for extending rights to someone based in particular and occasionally mutable desires, relationships, and behaviours — as important as they might be to the individual — is actually a violation of the principle of universal human rights.

-oOo-

### **Comment:**

#### **What is the difference between lust and love?**

My experiences of counselling brides and grooms-to-be leads me to think the younger they are, the less they can distinguish the difference. After all, both words start with 'L' and have four letters each so they are very nearly the same as they both involve sex. This is not entirely their fault.

Part of the problem is that we are hard wired for reproduction. It would be a fairly basic design error to create a creature that did not have this drive to reproduce and sustain its kind. But when hormones kick in and wake up this drive in us the results can be pretty devastating and confusing. Normality ceases.

Hormones certainly affect our ability to think straight and act rationally and we often find ourselves being very confused by the quite intense and overwhelming feelings that hormones create within us, particularly when we are young adults.

That is part of the problem that young couples face. The words, 'I love you,' often simply mean, 'I want to have sex with you.' When couples realise they have been 'in lust' rather than 'in love' and they see their partner for what they really are, it can be a traumatic revelation from which there might be no recovery.

Hormones have a lot to answer for.

But then so does society, the media, parents and the churches. They each should have had a role in preparing young men and women for this onslaught. Generally there is no preparation and young men and women are subjected to inconsistent and mixed messages that make finding their way forward even more difficult.

Society has given its approval to an anything goes kind of life regarding standards of sexual behaviour and gender values are becoming increasingly blurred, the churches have lost the moral and spiritual high ground, and parents are no longer able to teach their children about sex and relationships without contravening a range anti-discrimination/equality/hate crime laws and various Human Rights Acts and Charters.



The media needs particular attention because it largely promotes an escapist and unrealistic view of life and promotes a whole range of unachievable expectations. This shows itself most clearly in the 'must have now' and the 'happy ever after' based panaceas that abound in modern life. They are inherently about 'self-gratification' and 'self-indulgence'. All it ultimately leads to is disappointment with more of the same to take away the pain.

Lust is purely about 'self'. Lust will never be satisfied and it is destructive because it can't see beyond its own needs. It uses and abuses and pretends to be 'love'. After all it begins with an 'L' and has four letters and can easily be mistaken for the genuine item especially if hormones have anything to do with it. Sometimes we want to be loved so much that we will convince ourselves that 'love' and 'lust' are the same and allow ourselves to be abused in the hope the lie we live will somehow become the truth. Lust is a deceiver intent on having its own way and it leaves a trail of empty and broken promises (and hearts) behind it.

Love is massively different. Love does care and puts the needs of others above its own needs. Love offers a long term future and increases in depth and wisdom over time.

Lust offers nothing more than a temporary satisfaction and takes everything without offering anything in return. It has no future but it is a wonderfully convincing con artist and promises the earth until it has taken what it wants.

'Sex' and 'marriage' do supportively go together but marriage is not dependent on sex alone. There is a lot more to it than that.

'Sex' outside of the bonds of marriage is a massive gamble and is no promise of achieving a stable, balanced and long lasting relationship.

A relationship built solely on 'sex' is essentially selfish and the reality is that the partner is entirely disposable if they fail to satisfy or something better comes along.

Sad to say that even within marriage, sex can be selfish and one sided. This is not the way God intended it to be and in the long term it is destructive of the relationship.

As has been said in previous articles, 'sex is not a right but a gift' and taking it as 'a right' is highly dangerous. Forced sexual intercourse, however you look at it, is rape, even within a marriage, and it is not the act of a genuinely loving and caring person and one of betrayal of the marriage vows.

(Likewise, 'thinking' of another person whilst making love is adultery in reality.)

Maybe it's time to step back and get a timely reminder of what is expected within Christian Marriage. Remember these words from the marriage service:

*The Scriptures teach us that **marriage is a gift of God in creation** and a means of his grace.... It is God's purpose that, as **husband and wife give themselves to each other in love** throughout their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.*

*Marriage is given, that **husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully together** in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy.*

*It is given, that **with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love,** and, through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives.*

*It is given, **that they may have children** and be blessed in caring for them and bringing them up in accordance with God's will to his praise and glory.*

***In marriage husband and wife belong to one another** (note: but do not own one another or have rights over one another), **and they begin a new life together in the community.***

*It is a way of life that all should honour; and **it must not be undertaken carelessly, lightly, or selfishly, but reverently, responsibly, and after serious thought.***

There is a huge amount of theology in those few lines and much to be learned and applied regarding marriage. These points are not optional or negotiable and to accept anything less is to accept something that is not fully a marriage. They are a 24/7 foundation on which to build.

Both husbands and wives have biblical and spirit driven responsibilities towards one another based on a real love which draws together all aspects of their relationship including the creative physical intimacy which exists between them.

Quite simply, those responsibilities cannot be ignored or set aside or be re-negotiated without damaging the marriage, their relationship with one another, and their relationship with God. Neither can they be assumed.

The consequences of damaged marriages are damaged lives, damaged families and damaged communities. They all interlink and are interconnected. Damage one, damage all. Equally, build up one, build up all.

+Ian, OSJ.

**Suggested further reading:** [focus on the family - sex and intimacy.](#)

### **Other news:**

From 'Coalition for Marriage', the following report which may be of interest:

*'The US Supreme Court has ruled in favour of a baker who declined to create a cake celebrating a same-sex marriage.'*

*Jack Phillips said that providing the cake would have violated his beliefs, but was sued by the gay couple involved.*

*A Colorado court said he had unlawfully discriminated and told him he had to provide such cakes, as well as give comprehensive anti-discrimination training to his staff.*

*But the US Supreme Court overturned that on Monday. In a 7-2 verdict, judges found that Mr Phillips' rights had been violated. The decision was written by Justice Kennedy, who wrote the judgment that legalised same-sex marriage throughout the US in 2015.*

*The ruling applies only to Mr Phillips' case, and doesn't affect similar cases involving florists and photographers that are already on their way to the Supreme Court. But this was the first of these cases to be heard at the highest level, so it's so far, so good.*

*The UK Supreme Court is still considering the Asher's case, involving the Northern Irish bakers who turned down an order for a cake with a same-sex marriage campaign slogan.'*

Good to know that the right of Christians to hold different values from the LGBT community and act upon them is now being recognised in part under law, but all these kinds of decisions, and those built on them, will have knock on effects that can't always be predicted or anticipated, however well intended. Taken to an extreme for example, I wonder how we would react when, because of this ruling, we could not buy food from people because they say it is against their religion.

In our Gospel reading this the words written in Luke certainly come as a shock, with this speech Jesus certainly grabs our attention.

**“Do you think that I have come to bring peace on earth?**

**No, I tell you, but division.”**

It's not exactly what most of us go to church hoping to hear.

Jesus at this time was speaking to his disciples not the unbelieving crowds. They had been learning to regard Jesus as the Messiah the Anointed one of God. They regarded the Messiah as Conqueror and King. He himself had gone about preaching peace and understanding.

The Jews firmly believed that God would judge other nations by one standard and themselves by another, the fact that they were Jewish would be enough to absolve them. He does not promise peace and security but points to trouble ahead, Jesus disturbs there's and our complacency making us uncomfortable in a world that wants and offers easy answers, quick fixes simple solutions , this statement is a challenge we must face. Wont God fix it. Surely God will make everything right in the end?. Then Jesus comes out with this statement

To a large extent our families are what make us who we are, where we learn the difference between right and wrong, where we develop the basic framework of the outlook on life that we will carry with us always. For many of us, our families are where we first learned about Christ and his church. Good, bad, or indifferent, family ties are some of the most significant relationships in our lives. We read about family conflict in the newspaper, watch it on TV, and struggle with it in our own homes. The Bible too? Since when is Jesus a advocate of family discord?

Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the Bread of Life, the Living Water.

In this passage, shouldn't Jesus be saying, "Do you think I have come to bring peace on earth? Yes! I have come to comfort families. I have come to bridge the chasms of silence that separate fathers and sons. I have come to heal the wounds of regret that drive apart mothers and daughters."

It would make sense for the passage to say this. Luke's Gospel has all sorts of miracle stories about Jesus healing individuals and restoring family relationships.

Perhaps that's what the passage should say. Perhaps that's what many of us would like the passage to say. But it doesn't. Like it or not, this passage talks about division, not reconciliation.

In this passage, Jesus is not talking about the small and large rifts in the fabric of the family that happen as a result of the natural wear and tear or the unexpected trauma and tragedy of life—situations where his reconciling love and grace and forgiveness have been known to work miracles.

No, in this passage, Jesus is talking specifically about the division that happens as a direct result of a decision to follow him.

It's still a hard word to hear. It doesn't sound like good news. Especially since Jesus doesn't simply imply that division can occur as a result of him, but he emphatically states that division will occur because of him.

We only need to look back over history to find that in every generation since Jesus was born there has been conflict and strife - people taking up Jesus' word and

following him have put their lives at risk, many were killed for their beliefs, and still are being in some countries we only need to look at Iraq, and Nigeria where girls were kidnapped and nothing has been heard of them since. In England at the present time it is too easy to follow Christ, which makes me wonder if it makes us slightly apathetic and not prepared to let non-believers know the power of prayer and understanding which comes when we give our lives to Christ and follow him.

With this speech, Jesus certainly grabs our attention. But is it a new word? Has Jesus suddenly turned up the intensity of the message?

If Jesus' mother was in the crowd that day, I don't think she would have been surprised by his words. She knew from the beginning that he would be controversial. Before Jesus was even born, Mary knew that he was the key to God's plan to bring down the powerful from their thrones and lift up the lowly, to fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. (Luke 2:52-53)

And there was that day in the temple, when Jesus was just a little baby. Old man Simeon holding the infant Messiah in his arms, relishing the moment that he had waited for so long. Then he had looked Mary in the eye and said, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." (Luke 2:34-35)

And Mary had heard all about his first sermon, confirming her fear—her expectation—that her son would have a turbulent ministry. Luke's account of Jesus' ministry begins in his home town synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah that day, and the congregation was so astounded by his words that they drove him out of town and tried to throw him over a cliff. (Luke 4:16-30) The preaching and teaching of Jesus, Prince of Peace, routinely brought about division.

No, Mary would not have been surprised at Jesus' dramatic words or his apparent lack of regard for family loyalties. He had already denied her, his own mother, in public on at least one occasion. You remember the time Mary and Jesus' brothers came to see him. The press of the crowds around him prevented them from reaching him. When he was told that they were waiting to see him, he responded, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the God's word and put it into practice." [Luke 8:19-21] Already Jesus was redefining family. Already Jesus was demonstrating, in his own life, the primacy of the call to discipleship over any other relationships—even family relationships.

Jesus came to bring fire to the earth! To make all things new! Friction is inevitable when the New Creation encounters and confronts the same old world.

The Gospel has the potential to turn the world upside down – to comfort the disturbed but also to disturb the comfortable. There is a tension between Christ the prince of peace, and Christ who brings the sword and fire of judgement. As the Church lives out its vision, it is also sometimes the place of conflict. It is called upon to deal with frustration – of leaders, groups and individuals within congregations , structures and institutions. It is called to leave the path of comfort and security to take risks and to journey into unsafe and uncharted territory.

What are the issues facing our worshipping community today? Are there areas where differences are not faced, where the possibilities of conflict are swept under the carpet? Are there hurts and wounds from the past that have never been dealt with? Do issues sometimes give rise to anger that seems quite unrelated or disproportionate?



Even in our community there may be points of tension based on prejudice and misunderstanding. It is up to us as a Church to express a voice and stand alongside those who are in need, many purely because they are different.

Our interpretation of the signs of the times in v 56 is in the light of our experience and identity in Christ – who we are! what we are! and where we are. Our discipleship is rooted in a specific context in particular circumstances not separate from social economic, political and cultural reality.

The signs of the times are all round us on TV cinema and computer screen, the internet and the mobile communication and conversation, statements and spin. Where is the truth that we see and hear? Who am I? Who are we? Does it matter? What matters? Do I matter? What must be seen through to its conclusion if we are truly to be who we are/? Sometimes the Church is not a comfortable place.

Hard questions are asked and challenges are faced by the disciples and all who would interpret the signs of the times, is this the kind of Church we are part of? Are we willing to address such issues sensitively and honestly? How do we handle them so that we are open to change without compromising our integrity.

Dallas Willard writes that the world “thinks of justice, peace, and prosperity in negative terms. Justice means that no one’s rights are infringed. Peace means no war or turmoil. Prosperity means no one is in material need.” (Willard, Dallas, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Harper Collins, 1988.)

Defined in this way, peace is pursued through violent means. Internationally, conflict is avoided or delayed by the threat of war. In our communities, harmony is sought by building walls—gated communities for some sectors of the population and more and more prisons for other sectors of the population.

In the New Creation, peace is defined, not as the absence of conflict, but as the fulfilment of the promise of the Kingdom.

In a book called 'The Blue Mountains of China',\* Rudy Wiebe put it this way:

"Jesus says in his society there is a new way for [people] to live:

you show wisdom, by trusting people;  
you handle leadership, by serving;  
you handle offenders, by forgiving;  
you handle money, by sharing;  
you handle enemies, by loving;  
and you handle violence, by suffering.

In fact, you have a new attitude toward everything, toward everybody. Toward nature, toward the state in which you happen to live, toward women, toward slaves, toward all and every single thing.

Because this is a Jesus society, and you repent, not by feeling bad, but by thinking different."

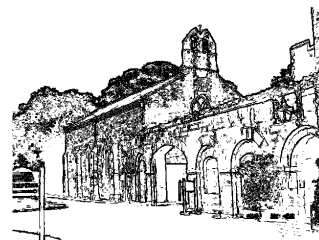
Are we working towards Gods true kingdom, or just worshipping him on a Sunday and not going out working in the community to bring about his true kingdom?

Only we in our hearts know the answer to this question.

\* Completed in 1970, '*The Blue Mountains of China*', presented a saga of the Mennonite people dispersed yet enduring in Russia, Paraguay and Canada.



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.  
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.  
All are very welcome and all may receive.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">August 2018: The Year of Marriage</p>	
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Russia has been in the world news quite a lot recently and I was prompted to do some research on the Russian Orthodox Church as I know so little about it.

Here are a couple of articles posted on [www.pravmir.com](http://www.pravmir.com) to give you some background information if you know as little as I do. I believe that the articles are not indicated as being copyright and are posted in our newsletter on that basis.

The first is an outline explanation of marriage and sexuality and the second is a charmingly intuitive letter from a father to his son soon to be married. I include them both because the first article is about 'theory' and the second is about 'practice', and they can be two very different things as we all know.

+lan

### **Marriage: a Russian Orthodox view**

The Orthodox Church understands marriage as a holy mystery (sacrament); the union of two human persons, one male and the other female, as a sign of the love of Christ for the Church, fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

There can be no such thing as a homosexual marriage.

## **1 Introduction**

Christian theologians do not seem to have paid very much attention to marriage in the past. There have not been such clearly worked out dogmatic definitions for marriages as there have been, for example, in Christology.

In Christology, however, until the First Ecumenical Council (Nicaea, 325) there were also not such clearly articulated dogmas concerning the nature of Christ. It was only when the divinity of Christ was questioned by Arius that the need was felt for a clearer statement, and it was one of our own African bishops, St Athanasius the Great, who helped to formulate the Nicene Creed that was produced by the council. And it took several more councils before we had the doctrinal statement, the Symbol of Faith we have today.

As in the time of Arius and Athanasius, the nature of marriage is being questioned today, and so there needs to be a more carefully-worded and clearly worked out statement of the theology of marriage. This paper is not such a statement. This paper is merely an attempt to draw together some strands of what the Orthodox Church has taught about marriage up till now.

## **2 The theology of marriage**

The Orthodox Church's understanding of marriage is primarily ontological and sacramental, not juridical.

The Orthodox sacrament of holy matrimony does not carry the meaning of a legal contract. By considering the institution of marriage as a legal contract, one begins

the process of transforming the whole sacrament into a juridical issue, and transforming the Church into a mundane legislator.

Consequently, it eliminates the principles of love and grace which make love grow immeasurably. It also emphasizes the concept of ownership, which is encompassed in the concept of contract.

Though marriage often has a legal and juridical aspect, that is not the starting point for a discussion of what marriage is.

## **2.1 The anthropology of marriage**

The starting point for understanding marriage can be seen in Mark 10:27, when the Pharisees came to our Lord Jesus Christ and asked him about the lawfulness of divorce. In other words, it was a juridical and legal question. But Jesus does not answer the question in a juridical and legal manner, but rather in an ontological one: “But from the beginning God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ was referring to two passages from the beginning of Genesis. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen 1:27) and “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen 2:23-24).

According to the Scriptures, therefore, God did not start by making an individual, but a community, a marriage. “It is not good for man to be alone” so God made

man male and female. There is a Zulu proverb that illustrates this: '*Umntu ungumuntu ngabantu*' — 'a person is a person because of people'.

In making man male and female, God deliberately creates sexuality. The author of Genesis knew the difference between a cow and a bull, but did not see fit to mention this sexual difference when describing the creation of cattle. This is because man can debase sexuality in a way that cattle cannot. Man can treat sexuality as something alien and hostile, as an invention of demons, as many gnostics did. It is also noteworthy that having made the sexual distinction in man at creation, God makes no other distinction. There is no distinction between Greek man and Jewish man, black man and white man. There is only man, male and female.

Male and female are not interchangeable. There is a unity and a difference; male man is incomplete without female; female is incomplete without male. Western culture tends to deride and devalue this complementarity and the need for community. There was a saying that was common a few years back that illustrates this: "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle". This rejects the idea of "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh". Denying the complementarity, however, is like saying that having two left feet is the same as having a left foot and a right foot.

In all this we are considering marriage from an ontological and anthropological point of view. This is what human beings are. This is what God made man to be; not alone, but longing for the other, different yet the same.

In human history, marriage has taken many forms. In some societies there have been polygamous marriages, and polygamy has been seen as normal.

This has very often been caused by the mode of production. When economic circumstances change, the pattern of marriage changes. But in discussing creation the authors of Genesis, even though they themselves lived in polygamous societies, described the ideal of marriage, the God-intended form of marriage, as the marriage of one male person with one female person.

## **2.2 Marriage as a sacrament**

The anthropological and ontological view of marriage looks at what marriage is, as a human institution. There have been various laws and customs in different societies that have applied to marriage. But the legal and social dimensions of marriage do not determine what marriage is.

What of Christian marriage?

Or a specifically Christian understanding of marriage?

*We do not even remember today that marriage is, as everything else in “this world,” a fallen and distorted marriage, and that it needs not to be blessed and “solemnized” – after a rehearsal and with the help of the photographer – but restored. This restoration, furthermore, is in Christ and this means His life, death resurrection and ascension to heaven, in the pentecostal inauguration of the “new eon,” in the Church as the sacrament of all this. Needless to say, this restoration infinitely transcends the idea of the “Christian family,” and gives marriage cosmic and universal dimensions (Schmemmann 1982:82).*

The Christian understanding of marriage, therefore, is primarily in relation to the Eucharist, which is the sacrament of all these things. In the early Church there was no separate marriage ceremony.



Married couples brought their life together into the Church by participating together in the Eucharist. The development of a separate marriage service is basically an extension of this.

### **2.2.1 The marriage service**

The Orthodox marriage service is in two parts: the Betrothal and the Crowning.

The Betrothal, in which the main feature is the exchange of rings, normally takes place in the narthex of the temple. It represents the natural marriage, marriage as a human institution. Even in Western Christian marriage rites, in the past the custom was for marriage to take place at the church door or porch.

The prayers mention the betrothal of Isaac and Rebecca, and the priest, after blessing the rings, makes the sign of the cross over each of the parties three times, saying that "The servant of God N is betrothed to the servant of God M, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The priest then puts the bride's ring on the bridegroom's right hand, and the bridegroom's ring on the bride's right hand.

This concludes the betrothal. Unlike Western marriage services, there is no exchange of vows, no legal contract that is ended by death "till death us do part".

The priest then leads the couple into the nave of the church, to the singing of a psalm, and the crowning service takes place in front of the royal doors, with more prayers.

The crowns are placed on the heads of the bridegroom and bride, and, in some traditions, exchanged between them either by the priest or by the best man.

The crowning expresses the distinctively Christian and sacramental aspect of marriage. The priest says “Crown them with glory and honour”, which recalls Psalm 8, and also Hebrews 2, in which the Psalm is quoted. This refers to fallen man restored to fellowship with God in Christ, and restored to rightful dominion over the earth. The couple are to be king and queen to each other, and their life together is to be a witness (martyria) to the kingdom of God, a little kingdom, and a little church, a cell of the Body of Christ. And so the crowns are also martyrs crowns, and this is referred to in the song that is sung as they circle the analogion three times anticlockwise:

*Rejoice O Isaiah, a virgin is with child*

*And shall bear a Son Emmanuel*

*He is both God and man*

*And Orient is his name.*

*Magnifying him, we call the virgin blessed.*

*O holy martyrs*

*Who fought the good fight*

*and have received your crowns*

*entreat the Lord God*

*that he will have mercy upon our souls.*

*Glory to Thee, O Christ God*

*The apostles' boast, the martyrs' joy*

*Whose preaching was the consubstantial Trinity.*

Christian marriage, therefore, is to be a sign and a witness of the restoration of marriage, and of mankind and all creation from their fallen state, and to be restored to fellowship and communion with God.

The love of the married couple for each other must overflow as a witness of the love of God. So Christian marriage, as expressed in the crowning, is to transform the fallen human institution of marriage itself, and also to participate in the transformation of the fallen world.

The marriage is not simply between the couple themselves, but there is a third person present, Christ Himself. If their life together is to be a “little church”, then it cannot be without Christ who said “without me you can do nothing”.

So everything in the service is done in threes: the rings and crowns are blessed three times, and the Dance of Isaiah is a triple circling of the analogion. And their marriage is a preaching without words, a preaching whose content, like that of the apostles and martyrs, is the consubstantial Trinity.

One of the primary features of their witness (martyria) will be that if God blesses them with children, they will bring up their children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

Holy Matrimony is a sacrament indeed, because through marriage the Kingdom of God becomes a living experience, in the midst of the Eucharistic community.

In the Body of Christ the husband and wife can become the flesh of each other in a way unique to the measure of the unity of Christ and His Church. Sacramental marriage is like other marriages, but it does not belong to this world in its content and experience. Holy matrimony is a testimony to God and a way toward theosis, a way toward eternity (Fr. Michel Najim).

Fr Alexander Schmemmann (1982:88) also points out what marriage is not:

*We can now understand that its true meaning is not that it merely gives a religious “sanction” to marriage and family life, reinforces with supernatural grace the natural family virtues. Its meaning is that by taking the “natural” marriage into “the great mystery of Christ and the Church,” the sacrament of matrimony gives marriage a new meaning; it transforms, in fact, not only marriage as such, but all human love...*

*For the Christian, natural does not mean either self-sufficient – a “nice little family” – or merely insufficient, and to be, therefore, strengthened and completed by the addition of the “supernatural.” The natural man thirsts and hungers for fulfillment and redemption. This thirst and hunger is the vestibule of the Kingdom: both beginning and exile.*

### **2.3 Marriage, virginity and celibacy**

We have seen that the sexual distinction in man is one made by God in creation. God made man male and female, and sexuality is therefore not something intrinsically evil. But, like many other things, it has been debased, abused, and distorted since the Fall.

One of the ways in which sexuality has been abused is by idolising it, by turning it into a little god, and then claiming that anything and everything that impedes or hinders the acting on any sexual urge is bad. For Christians, such a belief is an error, as is the opposite error (propounded by many Gnostics) that sexuality and sexual urges are bad in themselves.

For this reason Orthodox Christians practice fasting on certain days and seasons, restraining not just sexual urges, but restraining other bodily appetites as well. Fasting is, of course, primarily the abstention from food, or certain kinds of food. According to Genesis 3, it was failure to abstain from certain kinds of food that led to the Fall in the first place.

In addition to saying that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, our Lord Jesus Christ also said that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30). And so there are those whom God calls to forgo the blessings of marriage, and to live the angelic life on earth. And this too is a witness; a witness that we do not need to be slaves to our bodily desires, that sex or food are not the last word in human fulfilment.

Thus for Orthodox Christians marriage and monasticism go together. Marriage and monasticism are two different ways of manifesting the mystery of our communion with Christ.

As one monk put it, the monasteries are the lungs of the church. The world is enemy-occupied territory, enveloped in a mantle of pollution. But Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. But in order to participate in that work of salvation the Church needs to

be able to breathe the pure air of heaven, and so we need monasteries as the lungs. But we also need to descend into the muck and pollution in order to be able to participate in Christ's saving work.

In both of these ways, however, we cannot expect unbroken success in this world. Some marriages fail, and end in divorce. Some that do not end in divorce are nonetheless marred by the adultery of one or both partners, or by violence or cruelty. As Schmemmann (1982:89) puts it,

*This is what the marriage crowns express: that here is the beginning of a small kingdom which can be something like the true Kingdom. The chance will be lost, perhaps even in one night; but at this moment it is still an open possibility. Yet even when it has been lost, and lost again a thousand times, still if two people stay together, they are in a real sense king and queen to each other. And after forty odd years, Adam can still turn and see Eve standing beside him, in a unity with himself that in some small way at least proclaims the love of God's Kingdom.*

And so too with monasteries. One monk said that monastic life was not for the faint-hearted, because more people went to hell from monasteries than from anywhere else. It was so easy for a monk to lose his nipsis (watchfulness) and to fall into sin.

### **3 Legal and social dimensions of marriage**

It should be clear by now that in the Orthodox view marriage is not primarily a legal contract, and the ontological and sacramental meaning is far more significant.

Nevertheless, marriage does have legal and social dimensions, and these may or may not be compatible with the Church's understanding of marriage.

### **3.1 The social dimension of marriage**

The sacramental dimension of marriage is not something that the Orthodox Church would wish those who are not members of the Church to follow, though there have at times been problems with this. In the past, for example, the Greek government would not recognise the marriage of Greek citizens unless it was performed by an Orthodox priest, even if both were atheists.

But natural marriage is something given by God to the whole human race. It may be fallen, but even in its damaged form it can, through human love, reflect something of God's love.

In South Africa, however, this natural marriage suffered almost irreparable damage from the ideology of apartheid and its implementation. Migratory labour and influx control meant that in many areas 90 percent of first babies were born to unmarried mothers. And the effects are felt even today, years after the end of apartheid.

A large proportion of those coming to baptism from non-Orthodox families do not know who their fathers were.

Even from the point of view of African traditional religion, they cannot venerate their ancestors, because they have no idea who those ancestors were. Thus the very concept of marriage is alien to many people in our country.

### **3.2 The legal dimension of marriage**

The Constitutional Court of South Africa found in *Minister of Home Affairs vs Fourie & Bonthuys* (CCT 60/04) that by restricting marriage to couples of different sexes, the Marriage Act and the common law definition of marriage infringed the constitutional rights of those who wished to marry someone of the same sex.

In its judgement the Court referred to Discussion Paper 104 of the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC), which had suggested three possible alternatives:

1. Amending the Common Law definition of marriage and the Marriage Act to include same-sex couples.
2. Separating the civil and religious elements of marriage so that the Marriage Act will only regulate the civil aspects of marriage.
3. Providing a “marriage-like” alternative of civil unions with the same legal consequences of marriage.

Before being heard in the Constitutional Court the matter was heard in the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA), where Farlam JA pointed out, in a minority judgement, that in the Roman Empire marriage was not a concern of the State at all and even after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire this did not change.

One way of avoiding the difficulties arising from conflicting understandings of marriage might be to combine proposals 2 and 3 of the South African Law Reform commission in the light of the observations of Farlam JA and repeal the Marriage Act altogether, and for marriage to cease to be a concern of the State.



As the State registers commercial partnerships, it could replace the Marriage Act with legislation for the registration of social and domestic partnerships, which could include, but not be limited to marriage, regardless of what form such partnerships might take. Such partnerships could have similar legal consequences to those of marriage today, and clarify the legal rights and responsibilities of partners (I have said more about this here: Notes from underground: The State should get out of the marriage business).

#### **4 Conclusion**

The Orthodox Church believes that marriage is intrinsically and ontologically based on the union of two human beings, one male and the other female. Though this has become distorted in human society as a result of the fall, the aim of Christian sacramental marriage is to express and make present the promise of its restoration. Natural marriage has the potential of being restored in this way, as shown in the dual rite of Betrothal and Crowning.

There is, however, no way that a “marriage” between two persons of the same sex can be seen in this way. In the view of the Church such a union is not a marriage at all.

#### **5 Bibliography**

Schmemmann, Alexander. 1982. For the life of the world: sacraments and Orthodoxy. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

## **Marriage: A letter to a Son**

My Dearest Alexandre:

Congratulations! My heart felt and fiercely loyal love to both you and Anastasia on your upcoming wedding. It brings me tremendous joy and a sense of great expectations. As your father, I want to offer some thoughts for your consideration as you travel through life together, whether you are here in Ukraine or elsewhere. Experience shows that it is no easy task to fulfil the promises of marriage. As a general matter, keeping one's wedding vows demands fidelity, truthfulness and self-sacrifice – no small matters. I know what I'm talking about since I've been married for 50 years! Your mother and I celebrated our golden wedding anniversary last month.

I write this letter so that you may reflect upon the meaning of marriage as seen through the eyes of your father who is quite savvy in these matters. It's been a wonderful 50 years, I say, but a period filled with challenges and sorrows and delights and difficulties; a cocktail of "ups and downs" that leads to happiness if understood and approached properly. Tolstoy expressed the truth of this struggle in Chapter 14 of *Anna Karenina* when he said of Levin, the protagonist, at a moment of seeming intense crisis in the marriage: "He felt now that he was not simply close to her, but that he did not know where he ended and she began." Marriage is not a contract but rather a covenant, which means becoming one with the other as a result of a bond strengthened through the joy of self-sacrifice. There is nothing temporary about marriage. How might you strengthen your covenant with Anastasia? I provide you with a few reflections.

Alexandre, when you were growing up, your mother and I communicated with each other more often through deeds, winks and example than through lots of words or warnings. We whispered rather than shouted. In our capacity as teachers, we rarely employed arguments based on authority to convince you and your siblings of the goodness or merit of something. You should do the same. At times, we invoked a higher order – such as the teaching of the Church or Holy Scripture – to convey the importance of an issue or moment. But that was rare. We wanted to turn you into a thinking man who could use your freedom in accordance with right reason and the realities of human nature.

In this respect, we followed Cardinal John Henry Newman's advice: "When the intellect has once been properly trained and formed to have a connected view or grasp of things, it will display its powers with more or less effect according to its particular quality and capacity in the individual. In the case of most men it makes itself felt in the good sense, sobriety of thought, reasonableness, candor, self-command, and steadiness of view, which characterize it. In all it will be a faculty of entering with comparative ease into any subject of thought, and of taking up with aptitude any science or profession."

As you know, a permanent commitment means fidelity and steadfastness in the face of adversity. It goes without saying that life-long commitments are extremely difficult to keep given a person's tendency to be fickle or simply short-sighted. There are many factors that can undermine a person's ability and resolve to remain faithful over an entire lifetime, and you, my dear Alexandre, are not exempt from the effects of the insanity of many of the forces and ideologies that afflict the modern world.

At different times throughout life, you may experience confusion and uncertainty about Anastasia – get to the bottom of those feelings. At other times, let me speak frankly, your tendency to be lazy, self-seeking or absentminded may cause you to lose sight of marriage as a calling or vocation. There is nothing unusual about these thoughts and emotions because we are human beings and not angels. But the point I want you to understand is that, despite the many problems, some real, most imaginary, fidelity in marriage is possible – it really is! So the first thing you need to always keep in mind is that a life-long commitment to one person is possible to keep. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. In this sense, don't confuse the temporary nature of a contract like in a business relationship with the reality of a perpetual enduring marriage covenant.

More thoughts. Anastasia must know that, as far as you are concerned, *she is the only girl in the world*. She must know that no other girl exists. That sounds simple now, because you just got married, but in 25 years, the picture may be quite different. Let everyday of your lives together be like the first day of your marriage, and let her know that. Let her know that you care about the things that she likes, be with her when she is tired and be with her when she is joyful. If she senses loneliness, discover why. If she is anxious about something, find out why. It is that process of discovery and sharing that unites your hearts, thus, solidifying that bond between the two of you. It worked for me, and it should work for you, just as it has for many others throughout the ages.

Also keep in mind that one of the most serious threats to a person's marriage bond or covenant, in my opinion, is the tendency to convert "minor" difficulties, or inconveniences, into excuses to justify one's own selfishness at the expense of one's spouse or children.

That is why you must work hard to get to know yourself better – to get to know your own failings and limitations; to get to know when you make a mountain out of a molehill. When you find out what “sets you off”, you need to employ means to combat those annoying tendencies that may upset Anastasia. She must do the same. It’s a two way street.

Show Anastasia that you love her with deeds. This often simply means listening or remaining silent on matters of little importance. You will notice in time that human nature itself confirms that self-sacrifice, i.e., thinking and acting for the sake of others, is a key to long-lasting happiness, and in your case, to a wonderful marriage. That may sound odd but it really is true. You see, shifting gears slightly, Jesus Christ, by suffering and dying on the cross for each one of us, showed us that life is more than pleasure, comfort, power, status, listening to ourselves speak, self-absorption and “selfies”. It is about life and living and the others. Moreover, if you struggle each day to carry your little crosses at home or wherever you are, the result will be a more robust interior peace of mind, which will deepen over time, despite the many difficulties and contradictions you run into. Let me give you some practical examples of what I mean about the need to “give” yourself to Anastasia as Christ gave himself to each one of us.

During the first year of my marriage, I used to play chess with my friends down at the park during long summer evenings – pretty typical: some guys liked bowling, others liked watching movies, and I liked chess. Your mother (you were not born yet) knew what I was up to. She never said anything. But after your older brother was born, I noticed that she was a little annoyed with me hanging out with my buddies down at the park as I would tend to return home quite late.

Bad move on my part. Well, after your mother and I talked about it, I immediately gave up playing chess – except on Saturday afternoons. She was so happy with my decision; the fact that she was happy made me happy. I can tell you from experience that family, wife and kids must come first. Little sacrifices like giving up chess, for example, will always turn into joys when offered up for the sake of the others.

More thoughts. It is critically important for you to do “little things” for Anastasia in order to maintain a strong bond of unity – to nurture the covenant. Let me try to explain. Doing “little things” means making the effort to smile when you don’t feel like it, making the effort to be mindful when you don’t want to be, making the effort to help around the house when you don’t feel like it. It means going for a walk, or to the movies or just sitting at home and talking. It means just being around. It even means eating rice when you prefer “*гречка*” (buckwheat) – which is the greatest stuff in the world but that’s another story. I highlight just a few examples of a near infinite field of possibilities during the course of the day which you may offer up as a spiritual offering for Anastasia and family. From a Christian perspective doing “little things” is accepting the small crosses (uncertainties and contradictions) of each day bearing in mind their eternal significance. Just like Christ carried his cross, we must carry our cross – and our cross is “sanctifying” our everyday life for the sake of the others – and in your case concretely, that means doing things *for* Anastasia.

Never lose sight of what you know so well: Always be optimistic and courageous, even when objective difficulties present themselves. Employ the same optimism and courage, which faithful parents have shown and continue to show around the world.

The fidelity of millions of people throughout the ages stands as a living witness to the generous and joyful surrender of one spouse to the other. History betrays the lie of those who whisper in your ear that to persevere in marriage is not possible, boring and a real drag. No. A joyful fidelity in marriage is indeed possible; God cannot ask the impossible from us. He has asked us to be faithful, and, if he is asking this of us, then it is certainly possible, or he wouldn't ask!

The ability to love in marriage magnifies our human dignity as human beings. We must choose to put more love where there is less love in order to find and draw out love in and through marriage. You and Anastasia must struggle to live in synch with our historical traditions and the dictates of human nature. In time you will see that I am right but you must work at it to see what I mean. And when raising children, keep in mind His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's words: "We know, including from the lessons of our own history, that a people that has lost its historical benchmarks, that has renounced the continuity of generations, is easily converted into an object of social and ideological experiments. And the cost of such experiments is too high."

You and Anastasia must help each other grow in love, in concrete and practical ways. Keep in mind that "love is patient, is kind; has no selfish aims, cannot be provoked, does not brood over an injury; takes no pleasure in wrong doing, but rejoices at the victory of truth; sustains, believes, hopes, endures, to the last" (1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8). Think about the wisdom behind these words which are a window into earthly happiness, heaven and a healthy marriage. Make the effort to pray together – oh, a couple of minutes each day would do for starters. "Be not forgetful of prayer. Every time you pray, if your prayer is sincere, there will be

new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education.” ([Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov](#))

I ask merely that you reflect on all these matters as you enter this new, beautiful, and exciting period in your lives. The marriage bond is a permanent covenant not a temporary contract.

Mom and I are very proud of you. We can barely contain our joy for you. Be assured that you are both constantly in our prayers and that you can count on us. As long as I am here, both of you have a father and friend. Call me whenever you like. Visit whenever you want to talk. I am always available to chatter about anything. If you need a hand, let me know. I wish you both much happiness. Once again, with ebullient sentiments of joy, I look forward to your wedding and centuries of happiness.

With profound love to the both of you,

Dad

-oOo-

## **The permanence of Marriage**

*Originally titled ‘A Christian theology of divorce and remarriage.’ Not indicated as being copyright and copied in full. This presents a more dogmatic theology of marriage, but we should remain aware this is just one of many selective scriptural interpretations. Compare it with the article following on from it. Marks out of 10?*

What is the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage?



Two instances, Matthew 19:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-15, give us clear direction on this issue.

### Matthew 19:1-12

In order to get to the heart of Jesus' teaching, it is necessary to follow the flow of the dialogue in this passage. Many who analyse the course of the passage tend to jump from verse 3 to verse 9, and forget that there is a logical progression to the discussion.

Jesus leaves Galilee on His final journey to Jerusalem. Some Pharisees approach Him with a question on the issue of divorce.

The Pharisees' question (19:3b). The question seems basic: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every reason?" On one level, it may seem as if the Pharisees are inquiring about legitimate grounds for divorce. However, as we look closely at the text, we see that the issue for the Pharisees is not whether there is any reason for divorce, but whether one could divorce for "every reason" (pasaian).

To understand the question, we must appreciate the social context of the inquiry. The Pharisees were attempting to engage Jesus in an ongoing rabbinic debate over the grounds and methods of divorce. Much of the discussion is recorded in Mishnah Gittin, which ends with the following statement:

A. The House of Shammai say, "A man should divorce his wife only because he has found grounds for it in unchastity,

B. Since it is said, Because he has found in her indecency in anything (Deut. 24:1)."

C. And the House of Hillel say, "Even if she spoiled his dish,

D. Since it is said, Because he has found in her indecency in anything."

E. Rabbi Aqiba says, "Even if he found someone else prettier than she,

F. Since it is said, And it shall be if she find no favour in his eyes (Deut. 24:1)."

It seems that the Pharisees were attempting to align Jesus either with the conservative position of Shammai, or the more liberal stance of Hillel, which is preserved in later tradition by Rabbi Aqiba.

*Jesus' initial response* (19:4-6). Although Jesus was almost certainly aware of the rabbinic debate, He responds by appealing to Scripture: "Haven't you read that the one who created from the beginning made them male and female? And said because of this a man shall leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. Therefore, they are no longer two but one flesh. That which God has yoked, let no person separate." In this Jesus constructs a logical argument that places Him in control of the discussion. He does not even attempt to engage in the legitimacy of rabbinic authority, but takes the issue back to Scripture.

By appealing to Scripture, Jesus upholds the divine ideal. He first refers to human creation in Genesis 1:27 and affirms marriage as a divine initiative. Then, He points to Genesis 2:24 as evidence that not only did God place the first couple together, but He is actively involved in solidifying the union of the marriage relationship. In some mysterious way, the married couple becomes "one flesh." Jesus uses the metaphor of "yoking" to describe the marital union.

With this in mind, if we reduce Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question to one word, it would have to be "No!" A person cannot secure a divorce for every reason stipulated in rabbinic tradition.

For Jesus, the Scripture is clear that marriage is a lasting institution in which God binds two individuals together. Constructing a list of escape clauses to unyoke what God has yoked is to trivialize the sacred and mystical nature of the union.

*The Pharisees' counter question* (19:7). Not satisfied with Jesus' answer, the Pharisees prod Him further: "Why then did Moses legislate that a husband could give his wife a divorce writ and put her away?" They have followed Jesus onto His turf and are willing to meet Scripture with Scripture. The Mosaic legislation is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In appealing to this text, the Pharisees are suggesting that Jesus is going against Moses.

*Jesus' second response* (19:8, 9). Jesus refuses to move from His position as He places the Mosaic stipulation in its social context. He answers, "Because of your hardheartedness Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." This is not so much an indictment against Moses as it is against the rebellious people who refused to submit to the divine ideal. Moses did not initiate the divorce law; he simply permitted (epetrepsen) it.

Notice that the purpose of the Mosaic legislation was not to establish grounds for divorce, but to discuss the issue of sexual defilement. The existence of the divorce law is taken for granted in Deuteronomy. There is no explanation concerning its origin; it simply existed. However, although it existed it was clear to Jesus that it was not a part of God's original plan.

Given the flow of the discussion so far, the interpretive task would have been a lot easier if Jesus had stopped here. If Jesus had ended His discussion at this point, much of the current controversy would have been alleviated.

However, Jesus ends His dialogue with a stern pronouncement: "I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for *porneia*, and marries another, commits adultery." Some manuscripts go even further: "and the one who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

What makes this statement in Matthew even more astounding is the fact that the parallel version in Mark 10:1-12 says absolutely nothing about an "exception" clause (except for *porneia*/adultery). Even Luke's brief reference is absolute (Luke 16:18). Matthew is the only one that provides an escape hatch.

The interpretation of *porneia* has challenged commentators for centuries. The normal biblical understanding of the term is "fornication," but the pre-marital connotation of "fornication" has led to obscure translations like "unchastity," "infidelity," "unfaithfulness," and even "adultery." I say even adultery because many hold that this is the unpardonable sin in marriage. However, if Matthew meant adultery, he would have used the correct term as he does further on in the verse and also in 15:19. Further, in 5:27, adultery includes not just the physical act, but the preceding act of the mind as well. This would mean that one had grounds for divorce even if a spouse thought about having an affair! So, what is the meaning of *pomeia*?

The term itself is related to the Greek word for a female prostitute (*pome*) and a male who solicits a prostitute ( *pornos*). However, it is not only used to describe

this ignoble profession, but also refers to other forms of sexually deviant behaviour, particularly premarital sex. The idea is that those who engage in premarital sex are behaving in the manner of prostitutes.

Is it possible that Jesus has this understanding in mind?

Could Jesus have been stating that the only ground for divorce is premarital sex?

This merits further explanation. Jewish marriages in the first century commenced at the time we today may call "engagement." However, the marriage was not consummated until twelve months after the engagement. If a woman were found to be pregnant during the time of the engagement, three questions would be asked:

(1) Was it the impatient fiancé?

(2) Was it another man after the engagement?

(3) Was it another man before the engagement?

If it were the fiancé, the marriage would commence immediately.

If it were another man after the engagement, the woman would be guilty of adultery and consequently executed (Deut. 22:23, 24).

If it were with another man before the engagement, she would be guilty of fornication and biblical law mandated that she be executed (Deut. 22:13-21).

However, for the third category, rabbinic law does not appear to be as harsh as biblical law. Although the Mishnah upholds execution for adultery, it permits a

man to divorce on the grounds of fornication (Mishnah Gittin, 9:10 a-b). Could Jesus be agreeing with the House of Shammai at this point?

This view is certainly worthy of careful thought. Matthew is the only Gospel that provides the real scoop behind the engagement of Joseph and Mary.

Matthew 1:18 tells us that while the two were engaged, Mary was found to be "with child from the Holy Spirit." Joseph's initial reaction was to "divorce her quietly." We are not sure at what point in their relationship Mary was chosen to be the mother of the Saviour, but we do know that when it was discovered that Mary was pregnant, Joseph thought of the option of divorce. Had the divorce gone through, Joseph's action would have indicated to the community that Mary had engaged in premarital sex. As such, she would have been guilty of *porneia*. It is only the intervention of the heavenly messenger that stopped Joseph from making a perfectly legal decision.

*The disciples' reaction* (19:10). While the case of Joseph and Mary does provide a likely context in which to understand Matthew's exception clause, the verdict is still out on the exact meaning of *porneia*. Whatever it means it certainly caused a stir among the disciples. Apparently after the Pharisees had left, the disciples told Jesus: "If this is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry!" This extreme reaction suggests that Jesus' statement seriously limited any grounds for divorce. The disciples in effect were saying that if a man was thus stuck with his wife for life, it was better to remain single.

The impact of Jesus' statement is even greater when seen in the light of the immediate rhetorical context.

Just before the encounter with the Pharisees, Matthew records Jesus' teaching on forgiveness (18:15-34). Could it be mere coincidence that the topic of marriage follows these important lessons on forgiveness?

I don't think it is.

If this contextual, rhetorical continuum is indeed a deliberate part of the way Matthew constructs his Gospel, the message is clear that no hurtful action perpetrated by a spouse is unforgivable—not even adultery. Thus the integrity of marriage may well remain intact, even when adultery is a reality.

*Jesus' concluding statement* (19:11, 12). Knowing the hyperbolic nature of the disciples' statement, Jesus retorts: "Not all can take this saying, but [only] those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who are that way from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to receive this let him receive it."

Jesus recognizes the disciples' impulsiveness and brings them home to reality. Not many people are willing to sacrifice the pleasures of marriage for a lifetime of celibacy. He also acknowledges that many people are unable to accept the seriousness of the divine ideal—"not all can take this saying." Nonetheless, despite the difficult challenges that arise in a lifelong marital commitment, God calls for His people to take the union seriously.

#### 1 Corinthians 7:10-15

Those who are still not convinced about the radical nature of Jesus' statement can look to Paul's parallel admonition in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11.

Surely any confusion over Jesus' admonition would have been resolved by the time Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

According to 7:1, Paul is responding to inquiries about marriage and sexual relations between Christians.

His teaching is clear: "To those already married I command (not I, but the Lord), that a woman is not to separate from her husband (if she separates, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife." Paul gets straight to the point: Christian partners are bound together for the rest of their natural lives. Christian husbands who have the power to initiate a divorce are prohibited from such action.

Similarly, Christian wives who want release from the relationship are not free to remarry but must remain single for the rest of their lives. And just in case Paul is accused of inventing this "difficult" saying, he makes it clear that he received it directly from the Lord Himself.

The only exception Paul makes is with marriages in which only one person has converted to Christianity while the other has not: "To the rest I say (I, not the Lord): if a certain man has an unbelieving wife and she agrees to live with him, he must not divorce her; and if a woman has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, she must not divorce her husband.... But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave; the brother or sister is not bound in such cases" (7:12, 13, 15).

Here Paul admits that he did not receive this advice from the Lord, but feels that it nevertheless makes sense. If a spouse does not profess Christianity, he or she



cannot be forced to share the values that are promoted in verses 10 and 11. A divine command means nothing to a person who does not recognize divine authority. In such cases, if the unbeliever chooses to separate, the Christian brother or sister is not "bound." In this Paul seems to be saying that only those Christians who fall in this category are free to remarry. However, those marriages in which both partners claim to be Christian are expected to last until the death of a spouse (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:1).

### Conclusion

From our investigation, the basic biblical teaching is clear. Jesus prohibits divorce for Christian couples. Instead, He promotes lifelong unions for those who unite together under God. For those couples who feel that they cannot live under the same roof—for whatever reason—the Bible suggests that they remain single until either reconciliation or the death of the other spouse. Thus, according to this line of thinking and interpretation, a Christian can only be released from the marriage relationship under two circumstances:

- (1) If it is discovered soon after marriage that the spouse has either impregnated or been impregnated;
- (2) If a married person becomes a Christian and the non-Christian spouse decides to desert him or her.

The rest of us are bound by the vows we made before divine and human witnesses: "Till death do us part."

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## **A Christian Perspective on Marriage and Divorce and Remarriage.**

The Scriptures allow both divorce and remarriage. Divorce is allowed for cases of marital infidelity and neglect. Remarriage of both parties is an assumed part of the context of Scriptures. This does not mean that the Bible encourages divorces, nor does it mean that remarriage is encouraged or always acceptable before God. The Bible strongly discourages divorce and even declares it to be caused by sin in every case. This is because of the reality of sin's presence in the world; sin causes the breakdown of marriage. To demonstrate that the Bible allows for divorce and remarriage this paper will first have to give a biblical theology of marriage. Next there will be a discussion of what the Bible describes as infidelity and neglect, and how these are grounds for divorce. Finally there will be a concluding section outlining the biblical grounds and theological conclusion for instances of remarriage. Marriage is God given and all cases of divorce are grievous, but the Gospel narrative is one of forgiveness and new life. God brings marriages together, and God also binds the hearts broken by disastrous marriages and divorces.

### **A Biblical Definition of Marriage.**

The Scriptures define marriage as a divinely orchestrated union of a man and woman.<sup>[1]</sup> This union is a marvellous mystery with dynamic implications. Scripture constantly discusses marriage, and in most cases uses marriage as a very positive example. Even inside of the negative examples of Scripture it is seen that marriage is meant to be a blessing to the man and woman involved, to the families involved, and to the surrounding community. This section of the paper will first look at the ideal marriage being a divinely created union of a man and woman. Second, this section will look at how marriage was created as a means for the provision of physical aide in accomplishing tasks, the provision of physical needs, and then how marriage is meant to be the provision of love and respect for all members of the family. Marriage is meant to be a blessing to the world. Fourth, it

will be seen that the biblical expectation is that a marriage is meant to last until death. Finally, it will be shown that marriage is closest picture given to show what it means to be part of the covenant people of God.

From the onset of Scripture the picture of marriage is a blessed union of a man and woman brought together by God. This is seen in the first marriage is one when God recognizes that there is no suitable mate for Adam and then puts him to sleep and crafts Eve from his rib (Gen. 2:20-22). After crafting this woman there is a handing over of her to Adam (2:22; 3:12). From there the writer of Genesis points out that the provision of a woman to a man is a creation of a new entity, a one-ness (24). This one-ness is a special place, for in a God ordained union there is a beauty of intimacy. It is a place where a man and wife have nothing to hide, for they are giving up their bodies and lives to the other, and it is a wonderful thing (Gen. 2:25; cf. Prov. 18:22; Song of Songs). This fact that marriage is a God provided union of a man and woman by Jesus Christ when he was tested on his knowledge of the laws of divorce (Mt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:6-9). Christ recognizes that the story of Genesis is the God given design and intent for marriage and states “what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9 NKJV). Marriage is not meant to be a frail human construct; marriage is meant to be a beautiful and lasting gift by God to a man and woman.

Scripture attests to marriage as being a rich relationship where physical aide, emotional comfort, and spiritual support are meant to be part of the very fabric of the relationship. God provided Adam with Eve because God saw that he could not fulfil the tasks of filling the earth, subduing it, guarding it, keeping it, and having dominion over all the animals (1:28; 2:15). This shows that the provision of a spouse is because God recognizes that no man or woman is capable of fulfilling these commands alone. Marriage was meant to provide and empower the individuals that comprised the union. This is further seen in Exodus 21:10 where

the second wife was not supposed to be brought into a marriage at the expense of the first wife, “If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish [the first wife’s] food, her clothing, and her marriage rights.” To understand this verse as simply food, clothing, shelter, and or sexual relationships misses out on the emotional aspects seen throughout Scriptures. A spouse is meant to be the very source of comfort in the midst of hardship (cf. 1 Sam 1:8; 2 Sam. 12:24). There is a reciprocal relationship of love and respect that builds up each spouse and this is also to be seen in the economic situation of a house. In Proverbs 31:10-31 a virtuous wife works hard and blesses the family, and the family in turn praises her “Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all” (31:29). It is because of her care and diligence in work that “her husband is known in the gates” (23). She is seen to be a provision to him “worth...far above rubies” (10). The husband is also to be practicing putting his wife first, and his kids before his own needs; and in doing so he receives greater honour and submissiveness from them (Eph. 5:21-33).<sup>[2]</sup> A biblically marked marriage is marked by the desire to provide for all the needs of the spouse.

Marriage, as described in Scripture is also meant to have an outward focus and blessing. God brought Eve to Adam in order that they could fill the world with offspring, and then to rightly subdue and rule the world (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). This union is then seen to be a powerful union of two people that is a blessing to those around it. The creation mandates are meant to be fulfilled in marriage, but it is ultimately in the marriage of God’s people to Jesus Christ that the creation mandate is fulfilled.

Marriage is to be until death, and this is part of the two becoming one flesh. Jesus emphasized this point to the Pharisees in Matthew 19:4-6 and the parallel passage of Mark 10:6-9. They were looking for ways to end marriage rather than keep it healthy or to reconcile a dissolving marriage, so Jesus declares

Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall no longer two but one flesh.’ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. (Mt. 19:4-9).

God gave marriage for a reason, and the two are to be building each other and blessing others. But more than that, it must be remembered that women in the biblical times were in need of a husband to provide protection for them.<sup>[3]</sup> Marriage gave social stability and financial provision. The divorce put a woman in a dire situation if a father or brother could not take her in.<sup>[4]</sup> This dire need existed because God had designed marriages to last, not to break.

God uses marriage as a picture of his relationship with his covenant people. The clearest examples of this would be the book of Hosea, Ezekiel 16, and Ephesians 5:22-33. Ezekiel 16 is the story of God’s relationship with Jerusalem. Jerusalem is metaphoric for the Israelites as the people of God. The Lord saw Jerusalem when it was a naked and abandoned child (16:1-5). God gave life to Jerusalem and made Jerusalem “thrive like a plant in the field” (7), and then after Jerusalem matured God states “I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine” (8). God then provides clothing, food, honour and splendour to Jerusalem (9-13). In recalling these blessings and his provision for Jerusalem he declares, “Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendour which I had bestowed upon you” (14). It is because God entered a marriage covenant with Jerusalem that he poured such love and provision upon it, and it is also because of this covenant that when Jerusalem sought after other nations for provision, protection that the Lord was infuriated (vv15-34). But despite all of this unfaithfulness and “lewdness and ... abominations” (58) the Lord God upheld his covenant and even promised “I will establish an everlasting

covenant with you” (60). God’s relationship is a covenant marriage. He provides for all the needs of his bride Jerusalem, is faithful, and the relationship is said to be established forever.

This is the same picture given in Hosea. The Lord tells Hosea “Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the Lord” (*sic* Hosea 1:2). God shows the kingdom of Judah that it is in a covenant relationship with God. By seeking out other nations and deities and by their offerings to them (2:8) it is spiritual adultery. The covenant has been broken by Judah, by the covenant people (2:2), yet the story is not that God is seeking divorce, but that there is a complete restoration of a relationship. God promises to restore not just a kingdom, but all of Israel (14:1). He promises to “heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (14:4), and that “Your fruit is found in Me” (14:8). God shows that this relationship he has with his people is one that he will keep, and that he will always provide for his people.

Ephesians 5:22-33 is the Pauline passage which points to marriage being a direct picture of what God is doing in, with, and to his people. It begins by discussing the requirement for respect and love that husbands and wives are to give one another (22-25). This love and respect is then directly turned to the picture of Christ and the church. The husband is to mirror the sacrificial love of Jesus, and this sacrificial love has the end goal of sanctification of the wife (25, 28). Paul declares “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (25b-27). It is seen here that marriage is meant to be a blessing to the spouse, for a husband does not simply care for himself but also his wife.

This is because they are one flesh. This mirrors how Jesus and the church are united together and that there is a reciprocal relationship that whenever Jesus pours into his people they are greater blessed, and when they are blessed he is honored more. Paul roots this logic back to the first marriage, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (31). Paul closes this discourse by explicitly stating that marriage is a parallel to the relationship of Jesus and the church (32). Marriage is a picture given by God to show what it is to be in relationship with him. It is a sacrificial union of two parties, and both parties are blessed by it “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it” (29). Marriage is a sign of a greater relationship.

Marriage is a beautiful and wonderful union of a man and a woman by God. This relationship is meant to be one of flourishing, blessing, growth, provision, love and honor. It pictures the greatest mystery of all time: that God would give himself to a people and be in an unbreakable relationship with them. Marriage is meant to be everlasting, just like God’s relationship with his people. This is the initial picture given in Scripture of marriage in Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:14-24), and it is also the ultimate picture given in Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33). Believers ought to learn this, embrace it, and teach it as what the ideal picture of marriage should be.

### Biblical Grounds for Divorce?

Divorce was not intended to happen, and it breaks God’s heart. As the above section laid out, it is meant to be a beautiful and lasting union created by God. But sin is real in this world, marriages break down, and divorce happens.

First, this section of the paper will first discuss Exodus 21:10-11 and divorce as means to protect a spouse from being neglected that which is necessary for life.

Second, this section will discuss sexual infidelity as a ground for divorce.

Third, there will be a discussion of divorce being allowed on grounds of abandonment by an unmarried spouse, as seen in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 15.

Finally, there will be a survey of how sinfulness is the core cause of divorce and that the Gospel of Jesus Christ declares that sin has been defeated. Divorce is a painful and heart wrenching reality, but it is the last option.

The rabbis have interpreted the passage Exodus 21:10-11 as the root passage for divorce on grounds of neglect of necessary provisions.<sup>[5]</sup> The Ten Commandments were just given in 20:1-17, and then not very long afterwards a discussion of a slave girl being taken as a second wife. “If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her (the first wife’s) food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three things for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money” (21:10-11). Marriage is a union which provided great protection and resources to the vulnerable female of the ancient Near East context. When a man brought in a second wife, it was expected that the first wife would not suffer a loss of provision because of the second woman. This showed that marriage is meant to be a source of provision. Most often this is physical provision of food and shelter, but it also was interpreted to extend to sexual relations and respect.<sup>[6]</sup> Due to the powerless position which many women had, this passage protected them from those instances when marriage becomes the opposite of its God given intentions. But there is a very slippery slope that develops from over interpreting this text. Emotional neglect, lack of provision, and sexual satisfaction are all very ambiguous lines. A better term should be used when interpreting this text. That term should be abandonment. Abandonment is a more understandable term in a modern culture where marriage is more universally recognized as an equilateral union.<sup>[7]</sup> In abandonment there is a clearer picture of a spouse actually leaving the other spouse to fend for his or herself. Marriage is meant to be both parties bringing their strengths, wills, and capabilities together in order to make the other



person, and the mysterious union of the two, to flourish. When one of the parties abandons their role it leaves the other person in an unnatural position, for the two had become one, and now one of the halves is no longer functioning. This passage allows that union to be recognized as dissolved, and declares that the abandoned party has become freed from fulfilling their duties. Abandonment is reason for a divorce.

Infidelity is the easiest grounds for divorce to define. Scripture recognizes the fact that when one person is joined sexually to another, there is a joining of the two souls, whether or not it is in a marriage covenant (1 Cor. 6:16). This union of two souls is meant for marriage, as Genesis 2:24 declares, and is echoed by Christ, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother.” God brings two people together to form a marriage, and in that marriage there is that union of heart, mind, body, and soul in sexual intercourse.<sup>[8]</sup> When one person in the marriage seeks out sexual relations with anyone other than the spouse it shatters the promise of the two becoming one. This is why Jesus declares “whoever divorces his wife for any reason except for sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery” (Mt. 5:32; cf. Mt. 19:9). The Pharisees were seeking to see how Jesus took the Old Testament laws to be interpreted, but he chose to be above the debate of interpretation and give adultery as grounds for divorce. Jesus turns the tables upon the Pharisees and makes divorce a last resort, and not about something that ought to be pursued. He does not command that adulterous spouses must be divorced, but he concedes that when one party is no longer keeping marriage as a blessed and flourishing unit, the victim is allowed to put away the spouse. This empowers the victim. This means that if one is in a marriage where the spouse is looking to another for sexual fulfilment, and in essence is abandoning the call to one-ness, and then the victim can say “you are no longer being faithful to this covenant, if you do not end your adultery then we must dissolve this marriage.” It also allows the victim to have

freedom to consent to a divorce that is being served to him or her. That victim is not in sin by allowing the adulterous partner to leave.

Paul is in the same line of thinking as Jesus when it comes to marriages dissolving. A marriage dissolves because one person in the union leaves. Paul states “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife” (1 Cor. 7:10-11). Paul pushes marriages to be reconciled. But not all marriages will reconcile, sometimes a spouse will leave. No cause is given for why this spouse leaves. It can be speculated that this spouse might be attempting to become single like Paul (cf. vv. 1-7), but that is only conjecture. The only things known for sure is that often times in a marriage, one of the parties dissolves the relationship by leaving. This is Greco-Roman terminology for divorce, since divorce in the culture that Paul worked with in Corinth was simply one party telling the other to leave, or one partner deciding to leave.<sup>[9]</sup> Paul is saying that this happens, but it is not to be the action, or even the desire of believers who are married. This is explicitly seen in the next verses when Paul addresses the situation of when an unbelieving spouse initiates divorce, or leaves the spouse who follows Jesus: “But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace” (15). Separation is not to be sought after since the spouse recognizes that “the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy” (14). So Paul sets up this framework that abandonment is understood to happen, but if it is by a believing spouse then reconciliation is a must (11). And in the case of an unbelieving spouse, when that spouse desires to leave that marriage, it is viewed as acceptable. In either case Paul seems to recognize and end of a union, but it is viewed as an understandable case of divorce if an unbelieving spouse deserts a believing spouse.

Marriage is an incredibly difficult relationship involving two sinful people who live in a sinful world. Scripture paints this picture clearly and often. Divorce's first explicit reference gives no cause for divorce. It simply says "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house" (Deut. 24:1). This "matter of uncleanness" is not clarified in the Hebrew, nor is it clarified in the Septuagint Greek. Then the passage continues and she marries another man, but "the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house" (3). There is an assumed divorce culture happening during the time of Deuteronomy. People will find ways out of promises, covenants, and deals. People will find ways out because people are sinful. Jesus gives this as the reason for divorce being allowed Sinfulness is core. In the Gospel of Mark he responds to the question about divorce by asking "What did Moses command you?" (Mk. 10:3). The Pharisees knew that Moses did not command for divorces to happen, so they responded that "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her" (4). It is at this moment that Jesus answers this response. It is not just that Moses permitted divorce, but that such passages as Deuteronomy 24 and Exodus 21:10-11 are "because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept" (5). This hardness of heart ties back to the long standing description of Israel in Exodus as being "stiff-necked."<sup>[10]</sup> God recognized that people are sinful and selfish, so he gave divorce in order to protect the victim. Jesus is angered that the discussion would be about ways out of marriage, rather than how to stay in a marriage and make it stronger. Paul echoes this cry too. He found that people were using the cause of Jesus to abandon marriages, or at least to abandon marital sexual obligations, yet he declared that the marriage relationship, and the other's best interest is to be pursued (1 Cor. 7:1-5, 11). Yet inside of this, there is a recognition that marriages dissolve. And the fact that marriages can, and sadly often do dissolve is because of sin.

In this section it is seen that divorce was a part of the Old Testament culture even though there are never clear grounds given for why a divorce should happen. Jesus and Paul follow in line with this trajectory and acknowledge that divorce happens, but they point to brokenness and sin. For Jesus it is explicitly that there is hardheartedness and that people abandon the one-ness of a union to have sexual relations with another. Paul on the other hand addresses the reality that the husband and the wife are only capable of controlling their own actions and that the spouse can desert them. Neither Jesus nor Paul says that divorce should be pursued, or even initiated by a follower of God. Paul explicitly states that reconciliation should be pursued and that marriage has a sanctifying affect upon the unbelieving spouse. But marriages do end, and sin does exist, and that is part of the biblical theology of marriage and divorce.

The Scriptures allows for remarriage for those who are divorced, but they teach that singleness may be the primary call for some who are divorced. The Bible does not require remarriage, nor does it give a recommendation for remarriage. It is actually difficult to see the clear teaching on remarriage in Scripture since the Old Testament passages are deeply couched in the ANE culture where women almost depended upon marriage to survive, and the New Testament passages are primarily indictments against the pursuit of divorce. This section will first discuss the biblical grounds for remarriage by looking at some select Old Testament passages which allow remarriage. Second, this section will look at the exception clause in the statement of Jesus on divorce and remarriage. Third, this section will look at Paul's statement about remarriage. Finally, a discussion on singleness as the Christian response will be given.

ANE backgrounds: writ of divorce; assumed availability to remarry; NT Greco-Roman separation.

The Old Testament assumes that remarriage is allowed. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 has the divorced woman being free to remarry to any man after she has been given a certificate of divorce. This falls in line with what is known in the ANE culture as the “writ of divorce” which was a declaration that one party in the marriage was declaring the other party free from the covenant oaths of marriage and thus consequently free to marry whomever.<sup>[11]</sup> The only stipulation is that this woman is not meant to remarry her first husband after she has had a sexually consummated marriage (4). But the reasons behind this are very obscure and hidden inside of holiness codes and the promise of a land inheritance to Israel. Most likely this law was set up in order to protect her from being tossed around marriages without having any stability.<sup>[12]</sup> Deuteronomy was during a context when remarriage was an assumed part of a culture as a means to protect a vulnerable woman. God provide remarriage as a means of protection and provision.

The teachings of Jesus seem to contradict the understood culture of the Old Testament. In Matthew 5:32 he declares that “whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” The remarriage clause in this verse seems to imply that remarriage of a divorced person is a sin. But the language needs to be carefully noted, and so does the context. This passage follows after Christ’s statement that “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (28), and in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is declaring what the ethics of those who follow God should look like (5:3-7:27).<sup>[13]</sup> Jesus is declaring that a stronger ethic should be followed regarding marriage and sexuality. But this divorce and remarriage clause seems to be pointing to fall in a context where Jesus is speaking against the pursuit of divorce in order to marry another wife. Jesus says that divorce is only allowed for cases of sexual immorality, but surely he does not mean that any man who looks lustfully after a woman gives a woman the rights to a divorce.

That goes against his own teachings in Mt. 18 on forgiveness. This adulterous remarriage is likely meant to warn against the remarriage to a woman with whom a man is having an affair. Adultery is legal grounds to break a marriage, and a man can only marry a woman who is divorced, so this passage teaches against marrying adulterers to one another. Rather, the church should emphasize reconciliation. In Matthew 19:9 the exception clause places more emphasis on the fact that pursuit of another woman when a man is married is adultery. This is gender inclusive in today's culture, and it needs to be expanded that Jesus is teaching that divorce done in order to marry another person is condemned and that union will not be blessed by God. Luke 16:18 is the most difficult passage when it comes to allowing remarriage, for it does not have a context of Jesus being tried by the Pharisees. But the language used is the same "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery." The fact that all of these passages begin with an instance of divorce shows that Jesus is speaking to the situations where men would be divorcing in order to pursue another woman. It is the pursuit of another woman that causes the remarriage to be unblessed. This is seen by the context of verse 15 where Christ says "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Jesus is saying that the system which had come into place in the Jewish laws where men could divorce women for any reason, or those men could think of pursuing divorce over loving their spouse, that that law system is an abomination. God is not amused by a system which belittles marriage and women. Divorcing an innocent partner is to sin against them. All of the statements of Jesus on remarriage must be read in light of the context of Jesus speaking against the unjust cause of divorce. Under the statements of Jesus adulterers are the only ones that are not allowed to be doing the remarrying.

Paul makes a weird statement that a believer is allowed to let an unbeliever go since “God has called us to peace” (1 Cor. 7:15). Context does not give many clues as to what this implies about whether or not the believer is allowed to remarry. In verse 11 it is stated that the woman who departs “let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.” This might seem to imply that no remarriage is permitted. But verses 10-11 ought to be taken as statements regarding believers who are in a marriage that might be ending. The fact that Paul uses the adjective “but” in verse 12 shows that the unbeliever is a separate situation. Without the guidance of verses 10-11 it is understandable to look at other Pauline literature regarding marriage, separation, and remarriage. The only other seemingly comparable passage is Romans 7:1-3, which is often used as an argument against remarriage. “For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man” (2-4). But upon review of the book of Romans it is seen that this passage is actually Paul’s use of a general law in order to show that there has been a transition from the law to Jesus Christ. The argument that Paul is doing has nothing to do with marriage. So 1 Corinthians 7:15 is shown to have to parallel or clear context to guide what it means for the divorced Christian spouse to be called to peace. This simply leaves the Greco-Roman culture of a spouse being allowed to remarry.

The Church must never rush to encourage a remarriage. Remarriages were primarily a case for the woman who was divorced and left helpless in the ANE context. This means that an assumed right of a person to be remarried does not necessitate a call to remarriage.

This is also seen in the fact that neither Jesus nor Paul is recorded as encouraging the divorced spouses to seek new spouses. In fact it seems that both Jesus and Paul put forth a different option altogether for the divorced person. Jesus says that some “are eunuchs who are born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (Mt. 19:12). The context of this statement is directly after Jesus states “whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (9). Jesus is warning very strongly against entanglements of improper divorce and unblessed marriages. The statement of verse 6 is also sharply ringing in the foreground “So the, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what god has joined together, let not man separate.” To remarry is not a simple question, and Jesus seems to be offering singlehood for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. This is also where Paul seems to land. He states that Christians need to be reconciled to their estranged spouse (1 Cor. 7:11), that the believer is allowed to let an unbelieving spouse Go, since they are called peace (15), but then he encourages those who are unmarried to consider staying unmarried (32-34). The unmarried Christian “cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord” (32), in contrast to those in marriage who must be diligent to deal with the economic, emotional, and physical needs of a spouse and family (33-34).

A Christian church must present this to divorcees, and must do so in a truly convincing manner. A church must provide a community that provides for the needs of a divorcee in a manner that does not leave that person lacking. That community must also disciple divorcees to show them how Jesus Christ is the source of all contentment (Phil. 4:11-13). Remarriage is not the only option.



Looking through Scripture shows that the questions as to what remarriages are allowed, and what the church should counsel shows that there is no easy answer. A church must know those who are seeking to be remarried very well before they declare God's blessing on a future union. This is not because the Bible condemns remarriage, but rather it is because God takes marriage seriously. God hates adultery, and he will never condone a marriage founded upon adultery. The church can offer service to God for a divorcee to consider, but it must be done with actual backing, support, and discipleship by that community or else it is an empty offer.

### Conclusion

God gave marriage as an amazing gift. Sometimes that gift of marriage breaks because a partner commits adultery or deserts their spouse. This is grievous and should cause people to mourn. But God allows for these marriages to end in divorce. The divorced spouse who is the victim is free to remarry. But this remarriage ought to be thoroughly thought through, and it must not be rushed. A life of singleness and celibacy is also an offer which Jesus and Paul give. Divorce and remarriage are allowed under Scripture, but divorce is never to be pursued. The first advice that should be given is advice that can strengthen the marriage. This is pointing it to the Gospel and encouraging both parties to imitate Christ rather than seek selfish ends. Next, the party who is in danger should be protected and provided for. If the marriage still does not succeed, the adulterous partner will not quit, or the deserter will not return, then divorce is an option. After this, celibacy and singlehood are an option for both parties involved in the divorce. Remarriage is also an option for the victim. All options must be done in community and in prayer.

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[1] Throughout this section of the paper this term “marriage” is shorthand for “marriages of Yahweh followers, i.e. Jewish marriages, Roman Catholic marriages, and Christian marriages. There is not enough space to dip into the modern concept of marriage and the separation of divine action and personal action. When discussing divorce and remarriage there will be some parsing out of marriages devoid of God, and civil unions.

[2] This passage will be covered more in depth later in the paper.

[3] Nancy J. Duff, “Singleness,” *DSE*, 733-4; Ruth Halteman Finger, “Widows,” 836-9.

[4] This is another place where Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of marriage. The Gospel commands people to take care of the disenfranchised and the disadvantaged.

[5] David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 99-117.

[6] Instone-Brewer, 103-110.

[7] Surely not all nations have equal rights for men and women in marriages. This paper is not long enough to discuss social constructs in various countries, but rather it is assuming a predominately western culture readership.

[8] It should be noted, and repeated, that this is only one of the facets of what it means for the two to become one flesh. As discussed in section 2 of the paper, the two becoming one also involves becoming of one mind and fulfilling the tasks God sets before them, becoming a reciprocal unit where the other looks out for the interests and care of the other, and are a joined financial and economic unit. When marriage is reduced to the sexual acts, it is taking away the very life and breath of a marriage.

[9] Instone-Brewer, 190-191.

[10] Ceslas Spicq, “σκληροκαρδια,” *TLNT*, 258-262.

[11] Instone-Brewer, 28-31.

[12] J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, (AOTS; Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 357-360; Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, (UBCS; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 255-56.

[13] David Turner, *Matthew*, (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 143-44.

*Article not marked as copyright and included on that basis. Author only identified as ‘deeplygrateful’ at source.*

**Comment:**

The trouble with articles 1,3 and 4 is that they rely very heavily on scriptural interpretation and that is largely determined by tradition and canon. There is an agreed orthodoxy – this is what we believe, what we have believed for many years and will continue to do so in the future – and also, this is the way we do things, the way we have always done them and always will.

This is when faith turns into religion and love and grace turn into legalism without compassion. This is when the academic theologian takes on more credibility than the healer and the prophet, where qualifications count more than a prayerful faith and God centred-ness. Knowledge is power, especially if you have a bit of paper to prove it so you can humiliate and beat those who disagree with you into submission.

What it does is cut out or limit the work of the Holy Spirit and that is a dangerous position for us to find ourselves in as priests. We are caught as priest between being 'orthodox' and serving the people in their need. If we take a hard line on the orthodox view of marriage as priests, who are we serving?

Is it our sponsoring denomination or God? I say this because there just might be a lingering and optimistic hope in all of us that in serving our sponsoring denomination we might just end up serving God with a bit of luck. Personally, I would rather we served God first and if that fits in with our denominational tradition, canon and practice then all well and good.

The well-argued scriptural basis for our positions on marriage are often quite academic and lack the compassion required to meet the needs of those seeking our advice and guidance.

Yes, marriage that lasts until the end of life is the ideal, but that takes no note of real life which constantly gets in the way. How can you say to a spouse who is regularly beaten up that they must put up with it or they will be denied their place in heaven because they failed to meet the expected grade? Or similarly, the spouse who finds their partner is regularly 'playing away from home'? Or even that the vows spoke on their wedding day were held with such disregard as to make them worthless? That doesn't even take into account those who find they have made bad decisions and choices or who have drifted into marriage without thinking things through properly. Or worse, married for power, position and what they can asset strip. Were those ever 'real' and 'valid' marriages?

Real life is messy and doesn't fit our tidy theologies and teachings.

There are some things that are immutable. Marriage is between a man and a woman, is ordained of God, and is intended to be for life and for the procreation of children, but it doesn't always work out like that. Sometimes it comes down to us as priests breaking the rules we have grown up with to meet the need and be the healer. Life is not perfect and 'rules' are there to guide but not dictate.

Sometimes 'the rules' have to be ignored for the greater good. It is not what I or the church or even the couple want that matters. It is what God wants and what

works for those in need. No two answers will be the same but they will be God centred. From experience, if they are not then they will not be lasting solutions.

Simply, if we bring people closer to a personal relationship with God then we have done all we can. If the 'rules' get in the way then they have to be removed or ignored or re-written. In my thinking, the requirements of 'the (man-made) law' are always outweighed by a prayerful grace and Godly love.

That doesn't mean anything goes in the name of 'love'. There are limits and Holy Writ makes that quite clear.

'Love' is a no justifiable excuse for any kind of immoral or perverted behaviour. As it is, most people have difficulty distinguishing the difference between 'lust' and 'love' in the early stages of a relationship at the best of times, as covered in the last newsletter. And not all 'love' is acceptable, as demonstrated by the public intolerance to and unacceptability of what is the sexual abuse of children and vulnerable people. 'Love' is becoming an excuse rather than a reason.

The same applies to 'consenting adults'. Just because they give their consent to different forms of sexual activity because 'they are in love' doesn't give them carte blanche to behave as they will or make things 'right' either.

Whilst I respect the right of people to make their own decisions and judgements about their own lifestyles, being Christian and having greater expectations placed on us because of our faith and understanding of Holy Writ certainly raises the bar.

The current state of affairs we find ourselves in regarding LGBT activities is quite simply because people have used the idea of 'love' being a justification for abnormal behaviour. I use the word 'abnormal' with caution – the majority of the population still think of heterosexual relationships as being the norm and this is statistically borne out by the number of heterosexual relationships as opposed to same sex ones. If it is not the norm then it is not 'normal' - it is 'abnormal'.

Passing any amount of legislation on this matter won't make it any different in the long term either. People genuinely know the difference between right and wrong and between good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable. It's whether they are prepared to do anything about it where the real problems begin.

That takes us neatly to the next article, the story of Jonah. It can be read and interpreted in many ways but it is mostly about what happens when people do not listen to God because they think more about themselves.

It has a message about marriage relationships too. Selfishness, pride and ignoring responsibilities will lead to bitterness and disappointment.

It also has a message about God's doggedness when it comes to showing people the right way forward. God gives us every chance to make things right rather than just pulling the plug on us. Husbands and wives take note. That is real love.

+Ian

It's not often we look at the Old Testament lessons but the one about Jonah it would seem that it has a great deal to tell us about our attitudes to the work God wishes us to do.

While on holiday in Cyprus a few years ago, we were with a Christian Tour group. Our leader in the second week took the story of Jonah, and broke it down into 5 evening sermons starting with Jonah trying to run away from God. I think we have to just recap on Jonah's adventures to understand this 1 chapter of the book of Jonah.

We had Jonah's adventures illustrated on a roll of wallpaper, the whole story laid out, I can still see the picture of Jonah, after God had told him to go to Nineveh, illustrated by a little man with a small suitcase haring down the road to catch the ship in the distance, trying to convince himself he could get away from the job God had asked him to do.

How often do we turn in the opposite direction when God asks us to do something we don't want to do or think we are not capable of doing, forgetting God never asks us to do anything that he is not prepared to help us through.

God does have a way of doing His work at times in spite of our disobedience, even Jonah on the ship, in the midst of the storm had the sailors praying to His God, whether they meant it or not remains to be seen.

Jonah has gone through all his traumas at sea repenting of his disobedience and eventually going to Nineveh to preach that they would all be destroyed if they didn't mend their ways and turn to God.

What do we find?

He was so effective that even the King dressed in sack cloth and repented as did all his people but was Jonah pleased.

No!

Jonah should have been pleased, but no here we find him sat out in the desert sulking and very angry with God. God had decided that because the people of Nineveh had repented he wasn't going to destroy them; Chapter 3 verse 10 says he had compassion on them. He was slow to anger and had great concern for these people.

Can you imagine how Jonah felt, he had been preaching destructions on the people of Nineveh and here was God forgiving them. Jonah wanted them to be punished he felt God had made a fool of him. He prays to God, a very sad prayer in which he blames God and tries to justify himself, but even that sort of prayer was better than running away again. Jonah had to get his prayers right and rejoice at what had happened and not complain.



How often do we have a tantrum or go off and sulk if things don't go our way, or we know we are in the wrong but we don't want to admit it. Can we take our anger to God? Can we be angry with God.

Jonah is really angry with God, from Jonah's limited perspective, he has been discredited and made to look a fool, his image is tarnished. It is God's forgiveness that Jonah finds so offensive. He wants the people of Nineveh to be punished, and he wants old fashioned justice 'an eye for an eye'

How dare God forgive!

Think how often Jonah's behaviour mirrors that of our own society.

We don't like people to be forgiven. Our media or our politicians often demand a justice system that is "tough on crime" but see this only in the length of prison sentence. Often we are still unforgiving once someone has served their sentence, so much so that rehabilitation into society is made still harder. For example Jonathan Aitken's story received huge amounts of press coverage not just during his trial and prison sentence but once also on leaving prison. Society doesn't like people to be forgiven and move on.

Jonah certainly had a wrong attitude. He needed to get his priorities right. He was concerned about his status - he said God had made a fool of him, replacing judgement with mercy to the people of Nineveh.

His pride was hurt.

As a Jew, and a prophet he found it very difficult to accept that God would receive and forgive Gentiles. They were the lowest of the low to the Jews. Do we think this about certain groups of people?

His sin - his lack of concern for people's salvation was inexcusable to God. At this point he was sat outside the city, away from where the blessings were. Waiting to see what God would do next, but not anxious to be part of it.

What lessons can we learn from Jonah?

It is quite possible for us to be in the midst of God's work being fulfilled and yet miss out on it, through pride, status or sin.

Do we think that if the work around us does not fit in to OUR idea of what God should be doing, we don't want to be counted in?

If it's not exactly according to our interpretation of scripture we run away as Jonah did. It is interesting to note what Paul has to say about this in Philippians chapter 1, verse 18, "It does not matter!

I am happy about it - so long as Christ is preached in every way possible, whether from wrong or right motives, and I will continue to be happy.

But this certainly wasn't Jonah's attitude as he sulked in the heat of the day waiting for God's wrath to fall on Nineveh.

God in his kindness provided a plant to give shade to Jonah, but it would come with a lesson. When things become more important than people there is a sharp lesson to learn. God let the plant die and there was no more shade. Jonah was very angry with God when this happened to him, but God spoke to Jonah and told him that people of Nineveh were just as important to Him as the plant was to Jonah that gave him shade. It was a matter of right perspective

What is our "plant" today? – it may be quite legitimate and important to us, but is it important for the smooth running of our services and the work God is asking us to do.

Do we get hung up on changes, instead of discussing and compromising?

Do we need to get our principles right?

Jonah felt uncomfortable without his plant, almost suicidal, God had made a fool of him, and he didn't want to do the job in the first place - does this apply to our attitude to the work God is asking us to do?

Jonah repented whilst he was in the fishes belly, but how long did it last. As Christians we can also be like Jonah fickle.

God has asked Jonah to convert 120,000 people, and he wanted them punished. Jonah's behaviour is outrageous but God doesn't argue back, he ignores the tantrum,. God uses a very visual aid quietly and firmly to put things back into perspective and Jonah gently back into place. Jonah has missed the opportunity to proclaim the good news of God's forgiveness to Nineveh and has lost face in the process.

It takes the post tantrum visual aid and conversation to restore the relationship.

Jonah is only a part of a much bigger picture - God is concerned for the whole of creation, not just about Jonah's image, or ours.

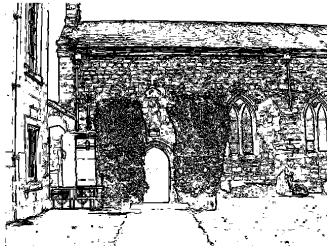
What visual aids does God use in our society to turn us gently around and bring us back into relationship with each other and with God?

Often it is the restoring of relationships that helps us to forgive.

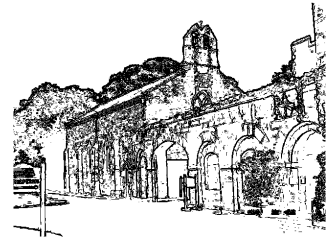
So how does the story of Jonah end?

It doesn't.

True story it may be, but it is also a parable, and it doesn't have a neat ending. Perhaps God wants us to write our own ending as we often behave just like Jonah. We are mirrored so much in his life that this could equally be our own story. So how will we react to God's warnings and how will we finish the story?



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

All are very welcome and all may receive freely if of good intent and need.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">September 2018: The Year of Marriage</p>	
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This month, there is a focus on marriage and infidelity but there have been some concerns expressed about whether OSJ or any other Christian organisations, churches, or even individual members, have the right to publicly express Christian teachings that are contrary to changing social and sexual lifestyles.

There are two areas constantly being quoted by opponents of orthodox Christian teaching and those are that they contravene individual ‘human rights’ and those that can possibly be construed as ‘hate crimes’.

The thing about both of these they are designed to protect all groups and individuals. They protect us as much as they protect others. The first article is on human rights and the second is a brief outline of what a hate crime is.

### **On Human Rights:**

There has been a lot of discussion about ‘Human Rights’ and what I do want to do is to spend a little time clarifying what they are and are not. Being a Christian organization, we need to know what our ‘human rights’ are when we come to practice our own beliefs and our rights to hold particular views. This is increasingly going to become a problem when we hold views which are contrary to very vocal minority groups, for example, feminist and LGBT groups.

So what is protected under the Human Rights Act?

## **Article 9: Freedom of religion**

The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion includes:

- the freedom to change religion or belief;
- the freedom to exercise religion or belief publicly or privately, alone or with others;
- the freedom to exercise religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance; and
- the right to have no religion (e.g. to be atheist or agnostic) or to have non-religious beliefs protected (e.g. philosophical beliefs such as pacifism or veganism).

Freedom of religion does not prevent there being a state church, but no one can be forced to join a church, be involved in its activities or pay taxes to a church.

The role of the State is to encourage tolerance and all religions or non-religions, if regulated, must be regulated with complete neutrality.

The right to exercise, or manifest, one's religion or belief will not generally be considered to be interfered with if a person is left with a choice as to whether or not to comply with his or her religious obligations.

However, there will be interference if restrictions make it practically difficult or almost impossible to exercise the religion or belief.

## **Limitations**

Article 9 is a qualified right and as such the freedom to manifest a religion or belief can be limited, so long as the limitation:

- is prescribed by law;

- is necessary and proportionate; and

- pursues a legitimate aim, namely:

  - the interests of public safety;

  - the protection of public order, health or morals; or

  - the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Note also section 13 of the HRA which emphasises the importance of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It provides that if a court or tribunal's decision might affect the exercise of the right by a religious organisation or its members, the court or tribunal must have particular regard to the importance of the right.

## **Article 10: Your right to freedom of expression**

Our freedom of expression – protected by Article 10 of the Human Rights Act – is fundamental to our democracy.

It means we're free to hold opinions and ideas and share them with others without the State interfering – which is crucial to keeping our Government accountable and transparent.



Article 10 protects your right to communicate and express yourself in any medium, including in words, pictures and actions. It's often used to defend press freedom and protect journalists' sources.

It covers:

- political expression – including peaceful protests and demonstrations
- artistic expression
- commercial expression – particularly when it also raises matters of legitimate public debate and concern.

The right to free expression would be meaningless if it only protected certain types of expression. So Article 10 protects both popular and unpopular expression – including speech that might shock others – subject to certain limitations.

### **Limitations**

Article 10 may be limited in certain circumstances. Any limitation must:  
be covered by law

- be necessary and proportionate

- for one or more of the following aims:

- national security, territorial integrity or public safety
- preventing disorder or crime
- protecting health or morals
- protecting other people's reputation or rights
- preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence
- maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

When considering whether free expression should be limited, courts will question whether doing so could have a 'chilling effect' on expression, the value of the particular form of expression and the medium used.

Limiting free expression usually involves restrictions on publication, penalties for publication, requiring journalists to reveal their sources, imposing disciplinary measures or confiscating material.

## **Article 12: Right to marry**

Article 12 guarantees the right to marry to men and women of marriageable age and the right to found a family, according to UK laws.

It is left up to other pieces of our domestic law to provide the detail and substance that gives effect to this right. So for example, rules concerning the appropriate marriageable age; issues of capacity and consent; the prohibition on bigamy and incest etc., can be detailed in other legislation.

However, laws and rules on marriage must not be arbitrary and must not interfere with the essence of the right – they must not deprive a person or category of person of full legal capacity of the right to marry or substantially interfere with their exercise of the right. So, for example, laws that impose unnecessary delays or restrictions that serve no legitimate purpose may breach this right.

The Courts have held that the right to marry includes a right for transsexuals to marry.\*

Gay marriage is now lawful under the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.\*

## **Article 14: No discrimination**

All of the rights and freedoms contained in the Human Rights Act must be protected and applied without discrimination.

Article 14 requires there be no discrimination in the application of human rights on any ground, and this includes (but is not exhaustive of) grounds such as:

sex	religion	national or social origin
race	disability	association with a national minority
colour	gender	property
language	political or other opinion	birth

or any other status (including, for example, sexual orientation or marital status)

Article 14 does not provide for a free-standing right to non-discrimination but requires that all other HRA rights be secured without discrimination. For Article 14 to apply it does not require that a breach of another right has to be made out, but the facts of the case must at least fall within the ambit of another HRA right. For example, this means that discrimination in the privacy sphere can only be found where the issue in question is held to engage the right to private life.

Discrimination occurs when a public authority, for no objective or reasonable reason:

- (1) treats a person less favourably than others in similar situations on the basis of a particular characteristic;
- (2) fails to treat people differently when they are in significantly different situations; or
- (3) applies apparently neutral policies in a way that has a disproportionate impact on individuals or groups.

It is not the case that all discrimination is unlawful. However for discriminatory law or treatment to be found to be lawful, weighty and objectively justifiable reasons must be advanced. In determining whether there is an objective or reasonable justification for the measures imposed a public authority needs to demonstrate that the measures were advanced to pursue a legitimate aim and there is a reasonable relationship of proportionality between that aim and the measures applied.

For discrimination to be justified on grounds such as race, sex, nationality, religion or sexual orientation there will need to be particularly strong or serious reasons to justify it.

Source: <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/human-rights>

So there you have it: in principle we as Christians have the right to express and live out our faith as we see fit, to have freedom of speech where our faith comes into conflict with society, and the right not to be discriminated against. That is of course providing we and others 'abide by the rules', and we need to be wary that those rules are applied even handedly and impartially by all.

*\*The use of the word 'marriage' as used here is not in the Christian sense but in a legal sense. We maintain that the use of this word is misplaced and that true marriage remains as 'between a man and a woman and is intended for the procreation of children'. We also maintain that to express it in anything less is detrimental to family life and is contrary to the Bible. We respect the right of people to make their own life choices but that does not mean we have to accept their choices as being generally applicable when they are contrary to our faith and religious practice.*

## **On Hate Crimes**

### **Indicative Breakdown of Police Recorded Religious Hate Crimes - 2015/16**

<b><u>Reports:</u></b>	<b><u>Total 4213 (100%)</u></b>		
Islam 2372 (56.0%)	No Religion 73 (1.7%)	Rastafari 5 (<1%)	Goth 1 (<1%)
Judaism 786 (18.6%)	Sikh 61 (1.4%)	Mormon 3 (<1%)	Scientologist 1 (<1%)
Unknown 513 (11.9%)	Hindu 46 (1.1%)	100 Pagan 3 (<1%)	Various 1 (<1%)
Christianity 316 (7.3%)	Jehovah's Witness 26 (<1%)	Buddhist 2 (<1%)	Zoroastrian 1 (<1%)

## **Context**

The data relates to 'recordable crimes' under Home Office recording rules and indicates those offences that have been perceived as 'religious' hate crimes by the victim or any other person. Crimes were recorded from 1st March 2015 to 31st March 2016 by police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **Hate Motivation**

‘Hate crimes and incidents are taken to mean any crime or incident where the perpetrator’s hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised’.

This is a broad and inclusive definition. A victim does not have to be a member of the group. In fact, anyone could be a victim of a hate crime.

## **Definition of a Hate Incident**

“Any non-crime incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person’s race or perceived race”,

or “Any non-crime incident which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person’s religion or perceived religion”

or “Any non-crime incident which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person’s sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation”

or “Any non-crime incident which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person’s disability or perceived disability”

or “Any non-crime incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender”

Any racial group or ethnic background including countries within the United Kingdom and ‘Gypsy & Traveller groups’.

Any religious group including those who have no faith.

Any person’s sexual orientation

Any disability including physical disability, learning disability and mental health

Including people who are transsexual, transgender, transvestite and those who hold a Gender Recognition Certificate under the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

### **The Agreed Definition of 'Monitored Hate Crime'**

A Hate Crime is any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race"

or "Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's religion or perceived religion"

or "Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation"

or "Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's disability or perceived disability"

or "Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender"

### **Hate Crime Prosecution**

"A hate crime prosecution is any hate crime which has been charged in the aggravated form or where the prosecutor has assessed that there is sufficient evidence of the hostility element to be put before the court when the offender is sentenced'

As I said before, these laws are here to protect the way we live out our faith and we should not be afraid of expressing understanding of scripture providing we refrain from passing any kind of judgment on any individual or group. As always, 'love the sinner, not the sin'.

### **On Marriage and Infidelity (Unfaithfulness):**

**Jesus** said: 'But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.' Matthew 5:28

**Pope John Paul II:** "The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom."

**J.R.R. Tolkien:** "Faithfulness in Christian marriage entails great mortification. For a Christian man there is no escape. Marriage may help to sanctify and direct to its proper object his sexual desires; its grace may help him in the struggle; but the struggle remains. It will not satisfy him--as hunger may be kept off by regular meals. It will offer as many difficulties to the purity proper to that state, as it provides easements. No man, however truly he loved his betrothed and bride as a young man, has lived faithful to her as a wife in mind and body without deliberate conscious exercise of the will, without self-denial."

"Those who see marriage as nothing more than the arena of ecstatic and romantic love will be disappointed. When the glamour wears off, or merely works a bit thin, they think they have made a mistake, and that the real soul-mate is still



to be found. The real soul-mate too often proves to be the next sexually attractive person that comes along."

**Job 31:1** 'I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman.'

**Proverbs 6:25** Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.

**Ezekiel 23:12** She too lusted after the Assyrians – governors and commanders, warriors in full dress, mounted horsemen, all handsome young men.

**Ezekiel 23:20** There she lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses.

As you can see in the latter quotations, the Bible can be quite explicit and pulls no punches. Infidelity or unfaithfulness is not just about the physical act. It's not just what a person does that makes them unfaithful, but what they think. Jesus was very clear about this. To be tempted is 'normal' but to dwell on temptation is highly dangerous and leads to wrongdoing.

The following article by marriage counsellors Mike and Trish Fox is a good starting point when looking at what infidelity is, even if there is no 'sexual misconduct'. An affair, with or without it, remains an affair.

## **Emotional Infidelity.**

*"Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny." ~Frank Outlaw*

Emotional Affairs are synonymously termed "affair," "unfaithfulness," "adultery" and "infidelity."

Webster's definition for an Affair is "A romantic or passionate attachment typically of limited duration." (Nothing about being only a sexual encounter)

Wikipedia defines Emotional Affairs as "An affair, which excludes physical intimacy but includes emotional intimacy."

A relationship between a person and someone other than their spouse that has an impact on the level of intimacy, emotional distance and overall dynamic balance in the marriage. In this view, neither sex nor physical affection is necessary to impact the relationship."

Psychology Today Magazine defines it this way, "Emotional infidelity refers to behavior that one partner engages in that fosters emotional intimacy in the here-and-now with someone else."

Dr. Gail Saltz on the Today Show explained the following, "An emotional affair is where there is a deep connection without physical affection, and can be just as damaging as the physical thing. Not every affair involves sex. Affairs are affairs."

Dr. Shirley Glass of Psychology Today says "Infidelity is that you took something that was supposed to be mine, which is sexual or emotional intimacy, and you gave it to somebody else." (Shirley P. Glass, PhD, "Shattered Vows: Getting Beyond Betrayal," Psychology Today July-August 1998.)

So, no matter how you slice and dice it, an Emotional Affair is just that: an affair. And, even despite the monumental research, facts, statistics and overwhelming evidence of Emotional Adultery being what it is, still there are Christians who naively believe that if the Bible does not spell it out word for word, character for character, it must not be.

Well, let's proceed, shall we?

### **The scripture pinpoints and defines adultery.**

The Bible is very clear that Adultery does NOT need to be sexual in nature. In fact, the sexual and physical act only proceeds what is already active adultery, unfaithfulness, and infidelity. And this is internal, emotional and starts in the heart, not the bedroom.

Matthew 5:28 tells us that simply lusting and desiring after someone other than your spouse is called, (are you sitting down?)... adultery. "...committed adultery in their heart..." Nothing about it being sexual in nature.

### **Is there any difference between sexual and emotional adultery?**

Yes... and no.

Dr. Floyd Covey, Doctorate of Theology in Collierville, Tenn., says that there's not really much difference in damage done between physical and emotional. In fact, most marital experts agree that emotional affairs can oftentimes be more hazardous to a marriage simply because they can last much longer due to it's lack of visible, external displays of unfaithfulness.

Obviously, sexual infidelity is a visible, destructive force that can easily destroy any marriage, but emotional infidelity is an equally destructive force that is destroying marriages ....., and I would say an epidemic within Christian circles.

Almost all research tells us that affairs happen when friendships occur to meet an unmet need in a marriage. An affair, just like most marriages, start with friendships.

### **Are there signs?**

Fortunately, there are some signs to watch for to either avoid or address Emotional Infidelity.

- You feel your spouse is not meeting your need for attention, approval or affection, so you start to seek it in others.
- You find it easier to open up and unwind with someone other than your spouse - sharing your day, problems, events, people ,etc.
- You talk to others, which include brothers or sisters in the Lord, about the problems you're having with your spouse.
- You rationalize the openness of sharing your heart and problems by saying it was "divinely orchestrated," and "God brought this person into your life."

- You look forward more to being with another person than your own spouse.
- You wonder what life would be like without the other person.
- You hide or minimize external friendships from your spouse.

## **Conclusion**

Whether you are in an external relationship defined as Emotional Infidelity or your spouse is, here is some great news. 80-90% of all couples that seek help will find it and save their marriage!

The worst thing you can do is to do nothing. We encourage you to allow God's healing and restoration for your marriage and know that you both can deal with this together and make your marriage stronger than ever!

Mike and Trisha Fox are Christian marriage coaches and authors of 'Marriage For Today: A Practical Guide for Couples.'  
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## **What are the possible signs of infidelity?**

*(An extracted summary of an article by Anne Bercht, Affair Recovery Specialist, and included to help members of OSJ identify potential problems when engaged in marriage counselling.)*

Affairs are not solely a problem of an unfortunate few with 'bad' marriages.

Extramarital affairs happen to good people in good marriages too.

Below is a synopsis of the possible indicators of infidelity. It is important to keep two very important facts in mind when reading this:

**Fact 1 – A partner may exhibit some or all of these indicators and may not be engaged in an affair. They are indicators, not evidence or conclusive proof.**

**Fact 2 – Equally, a partner may not exhibit any of these indicators and yet still may be engaged in an affair.**

There is no secret formula to know for sure that a person is cheating. The behaviours below could be taking place for other reasons than an affair.

Whatever the case, the signs of infidelity below are not good things. If they are present in your relationships it's time to pay attention to your marriage, get some help and make some improvements.

### **The top 10 possible indicators of infidelity:**

1. Number one on the signs of infidelity list is when a spouse **becomes emotionally distant**, withdrawn or depressed.

2. The second most prominently reported of the signs of infidelity was the fact that the unfaithful spouse became **angry, critical and even at times cruel**. 70% of those surveyed reported this sign often coupled with emotional and verbal abuse, constant put downs and little to no patience.

3. Third on the list of the signs of infidelity is the **issue of control** voiced by those who are cheating. Often they complain that their spouses are "controlling", yet they themselves are guilty of attempting to control.

4. Fourth on the list of the signs of infidelity was a **reported increase in working hours, after work meetings, business trips and a need to work out of town for prolonged periods of time.**

5. The fifth and cruellest of the signs of infidelity on the list of our survey results (reported by 50% of those who participated) was **illness of the one who is faithful.**

6. Number six on the list of signs of infidelity was **paying extra close attention to their appearance**, buying new clothes, losing weight, extra primping, working out at the gym and other sudden fitness endeavours.

7. The seventh of the signs of infidelity was showing **more energy and zeal for life**, doing things they've never done before or a sudden interest in a new hobby or sport.

8. Becoming **inappropriately defensive** when asked questions, was number eight on our list of the signs of infidelity.

9. Signs of Infidelity number nine was becoming **extra flirtatious with the opposite sex.**

10. The tenth of the signs of infidelity was an **obsessive need for 'private-ness'** and staying up late at night to work on the computer, the sudden need for a private email or bank account (which they become highly defensive about maintaining) and hiding credit card statements and phone bills are also among the signs of infidelity.

Other signs of infidelity included noticing something different in your sex life (better, worse or just different), not always wearing their wedding ring (which they give amazingly believable reasons for), unaccounted for time and being caught lying (which they will explain away with various other reasons).

For the full article click <https://beyondaffairs.com/suspicion-confrontation/signs-of-infidelity/>

### **Comment:**

When a marriage breaks down, there is no such thing as a completely innocent party – marriages are partnerships and each partner has a responsibility to the other to maintain the marriage and protect the exclusivity of the relationship it contains.

Turning a blind eye to the obvious is irresponsible, and of no use to anyone. It has to be dealt in a spirit of love and not condemnation.



It is human nature to blame, deflect or deny rather than take responsibility. All too frequently couples in conflict apportion blame for the other's actions without focusing on cause, reason or resolution. The fault always lies with someone else.

Whilst looking at the ten indicators of possible infidelity, the danger is that judgement is made on circumstantial evidence rather than the truth. Also making accusations can be a good cover for hiding one's own failings.

Accusations never cured anything although they might bring about the recognition of an absent sense of reality where there has actually been denial. Resolution comes by looking at the causes and dealing with them, not by ignoring them or hoping they will just fix themselves.

As an example, maybe the fact your partner doesn't talk to you any more just might be your partner can't get a word in edgeways, or that you can't stand them having a different opinion to yourself, or show little respect for what they (are trying to) say, or that you have to be 'right' every time!

No one is perfect, only God. It is worth remembering that you are not God and not perfect and might actually be wrong on occasion. If you are not familiar with this concept it is called 'humility' and when applied properly it stops us getting into all kinds of trouble.

In dealing with any marital problems the truth will always be uncomfortable and it has to be faced and be dealt with by both partners.

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## **The link between pornography and infidelity.**

*Extracted from smartloving.org – not indicated as being copyright and used on that basis is included as source material for those members of OSJ involved in pastoral counselling of married couples*

Another ... problem is the use of pornography. Pornography has been shown to stimulate the same neural pathways which are associated with other addictions. Like drugs or alcohol, a pornographic image loses its impact with repeated exposure leading to be an escalation in the amount and type of porn. Typically, porn addicts progress from soft porn (e.g. semi-naked women), to hard porn (e.g. group sex, rape, sex with animals and sex with children, violent sex).

Pornography also desensitises the viewer – initially they may be repulsed by what they see. With repeated exposure, they move towards acceptance and the belief that ‘everyone is doing this’.

Almost all sexual assault perpetrators are pornography users. The number of men in prison for sexual assault has doubled since 1988 and 2/3rds of sex crimes in Australia are against children. The advent of the internet has made pornography accessible to young children in their own homes. In 2003, 84% boys and 60% of girls aged 16-17 had been exposed to internet pornography.

While many people think that pornography is just a bit of harmless fun, there a number of unwelcome side effects including:

- **Erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation.** Contrary to popular belief, pornography use does not enhance sexual performance, but rather

undermines it. The unexpected popularity of erectile dysfunction medications (Viagra, Levitra, Cialis etc) can in part be explained by the dramatic increase in pornography use over the past decade.

- **Sleep deprivation and deterioration of general health.** Some pornography addicts spend hours on the internet, often while the family is sleeping. Sustained sleep deprivation will ultimately take its toll on the user's health.
- **Financial penalties.** A pornography habit will cost the addict financially. It can also have an impact on the user's earning capacity. It is estimated that 80% of internet pornography is accessed during business hours on work computers. This results in a loss of productivity leading to limited promotional opportunities and in some cases, to job loss.
- **Marital instability.** Pornography impacts negatively on the marriage in a number of ways. Pornography use often comes with, or is followed by, sexual infidelity. This may take the form of masturbation, internet sex, phone sex, prostitute sex or an affair.

All these forms of infidelity hurt the spouse and drive a wedge in their intimacy. Like all infidelity, the secrecy and deception involved destroys the spouse's confidence and trust in their partner. Pornography has a devastating impact on a couple's sexual intimacy. Two common outcomes have been noted:

1. **The pornography user loses sexual interest in the marriage,** because it seems 'tame' and unexciting, and their sexual energy is being absorbed by other sexual liaisons.
2. **Pornographic images are permanently imprinted on the user's brain and cannot be erased.** It generates unrealistic expectations of the spouse and

introduces impossible comparisons. One woman described their use of x-rated movies to assist with their sexual difficulties this way. “Initially it seemed to help – I felt more interested in sex. And then, one day, I noticed that as we were having sex, my husband was watching the couple on the TV and I realised he wasn’t making love to me. He was just masturbating inside my body”.

Other spouses report feeling demeaned and humiliated by their spouse’s demands for more extreme sexual practices. Pornography use is absolutely antithetical to deepening the intimacy and meaning in a couple’s sexual life. Treatment programs are available and can be accessed via the local Catholic (*and other*) counselling agencies.

<https://smartloving.org/pornography-and-infidelity/>

**Sexual fidelity:** *an edited secular overview from 2013 that is still relevant.*

If at this very moment, your loving husband or wife was trawling through your private texts and messages, how would you feel if?

Astonishingly, 44 per cent of spouses do this, according to a major research study, conducted by the Internet Research Institute at Oxford University.

There is a 65 per cent chance that if a husband’s messages are being read by his wife, he’s also reading hers. However you interpret these figures — and there may be some innocent explanations — there are clearly an awful lot of husbands and wives who are prepared to spy on each other. And what they are looking for and dread to find is evidence of an affair. (*Evidence of jealousy and paranoia?*)

Sexual fidelity is one of the most important symbols of commitment in a relationship. Yet it is increasingly under attack from new pressures, and few of us understand why people have affairs or how best to recover from them.

As a writer on relationships and family life for 20 years, I felt it was time to put attitudes to infidelity under the microscope if we want to strengthen our love lives and families.

For the past three years I have examined all of the research, interviewed hundreds of experts such as marital therapists, divorce lawyers and people working in 'the infidelity business' and talked to 45 men and women who have lived through the experience of an affair themselves.

The results were often surprising.

Although precise figures remain elusive, surveys in the UK and the U.S. suggest that between 25 and 70 per cent of women — and 40 and 80 per cent of men — have engaged in at least one extramarital sexual encounter.

Therapists told me that approximately three-quarters of men and one-quarter of the women they see individually in their consulting rooms are going through marital difficulties in part because of an affair.

Indeed, infidelity appears to be so common in Britain today that it's now more likely than not to occur at some point in a long relationship.

Yet all too often, it leaves a tsunami of desperation in its wake. It's more likely to lead to divorce than any other problem — such as aggressive, controlling behaviour

or drug and alcohol abuse. And the final parting is likely to be more acrimonious, even vengeful.

It's not even as if most adulterers end up with their exciting new lovers — in fact, quite the reverse. Studies have shown that roughly 90 per cent do not marry their lover. Of the remaining 10 per cent who do marry them, 70 per cent will eventually separate. *(A 3% long term survival rate is not good odds!)*

So why do so many people risk everything for the sake of a fleeting affair?

One major problem is that, over the past few decades, we've come to expect far more of marriage. Our husbands and wives now need to be not only our best friends, intellectual equals and co-parents but also sexual athletes who are constantly thinking of new ways to delight us.

However, if we expect to get everything we need from one person for a 'happy marriage', we are more likely to feel that our partner is failing us when we're not getting what we want.

A man whose partner puts on weight after the birth of their children and loses much of her 'go' and vigour for life may feel justified in satisfying his needs elsewhere.

A woman whose husband works extremely long hours to provide for his family may feel entitled to seek emotional solace from someone else.

Yet each betrayal also kicks their partner squarely in the gut for not being everything to them all of the time.

The trouble with the soul-mate notion of romantic love is that when a relationship begins to go wrong, we decide we must have chosen the wrong person. It wasn't 'true Love' after all, for surely with the right person, all of our dreams would have come true.

Romantic love also allows people to make excuses for their moral choices, avoiding responsibility for their actions: 'I fell madly in love with him/her,' they say. 'I couldn't help myself.'

At the same time, they tell their wives or husbands: 'I'm not in love with you any more' — which is rarely true, for the emotions associated with a committed relationship are seldom this cut and dried.

Nor does it help that we live in an 'I want, therefore I can have' culture where we are greedier, fatter and consume more than ever before. Just as we seem to need dozens of handbags and shoes, even several houses, to feel whole, so do we increasingly regard 'good sex' as a commodity.

At the start of a marriage or relationship, the early frenzy of extreme sexual passion has a drug-like, intoxicating quality that makes couples feel cut off from reality. Such excitement, however, cannot last because it is based on an idealised illusion rather than on the flawed and ordinary human being we love. The first passionate throes of eroticism cannot help but change into a very different kind of sex within a long, loving relationship, and many find this equally or even more nourishing.

But there are likely to be periods — perhaps after the birth of a child, or with illness — when desire wanes.

This is natural, yet rising numbers of men and women are going to their doctors, complaining of lack of sexual desire.

According to some studies, we are growing less satisfied with our sex lives. In one survey, for instance, couples who were interviewed over the space of ten years admitted they were less happy as time went on.

This wasn't because their sex lives had deteriorated; it was because their expectation of sex had risen.

Sexual boredom is now considered unacceptable — the sign of a failing relationship. To be truly happy, the unspoken message goes, we should all be enjoying the kind of sex we see in porn or in films. Not just occasionally but around three times a week.

This sense of sexual entitlement is new. In 1949, the Mass Observation survey found that only one-third of people believed that sex was crucial to a relationship. Most people never saw each other naked, and pornography still had to be hidden in brown paper bags.

Today, of course, pornography is increasingly seen as just another form of entertainment, to be consumed without consequences.

Accessible on every iPad and smartphone, and viewed by 66 per cent of men aged 18-34, it cranks up expectations of 'great sex', at the same time narrowing our understanding of erotic desire.



Pornography works by detaching sexual acts from loving relationship and real people. It's utterly unlike real sex, with its tenderness and capacity for joy that comes from giving pleasure to someone you love.

Predictably, those who complain about porn are labelled strait-laced prudes, hell-bent on ruining other people's fun.

But there's substantial evidence that watching it tends to make us not only feel inadequate about our own bodies but also less happy with the real-life bodies of our partners.

In one study, men and women exposed to non-violent porn in hourly sessions over six weeks ended up being less satisfied with their partners' appearance and sexual performance. In addition, both sexes who'd watched porn subsequently placed increased importance on sex without emotional ties.

What happens when we watch the sex acted out by porn stars, complete with fake orgasms, is that it invades our sexual fantasies. Meanwhile, thousands of self-help books, magazines and websites emphasise performance, techniques, novelty and spontaneity as the key to great sex, and offer instant solutions to problems we never knew we had.

Consequently, many of us have come to believe that as soon as the sex stops being good in a marriage, it's perfectly legitimate to seek it elsewhere — or at least understandable. This is not just a classic problem of middle age. Research carried out between 1991 to 2006 on 19,000 people found a rise in the number of both under 35s and over 60s having extra-marital liaisons.

That's partly because the older generation discovered sex with great abandon in the Sixties, and is therefore more likely not to want to give it up. And it's true that they enjoy better physical health than 'sixty-somethings' in previous generations.

Viagra also prolongs the time during which a man can be unfaithful, while Botox, HRT and cosmetic surgery help to prolong a woman's confidence in her sex appeal.

Whatever their age, an affair offers the ultimate halcyon, drug-like escape from the realities of daily life. Every emotion, including guilt, unhappiness and fear of loss, is pushed to the point where those involved feel truly alive.

There's the emotional roller-coaster of seduction and conquest, the thrilling snatched moments in unlikely places, the scary ride of secrets and cloak-and-dagger deceptions to cover give-away signs.

In our romanticised, sexualised culture, the escapist drama of an affair has become highly attractive. For a few hours, we are living in a romance, in which we are told we are beautiful, desirable and the best lover on God's earth.

This makes many feel omnipotent. They come to believe that they'll be able to maintain the duplicity of a double life — though this is rarely the case.

When they do eventually separate from their spouses, many come to regret that decision later.

There were, after all, so many other threads that united them as a couple that they wonder, with hindsight, whether they could have worked things out.

Some people try to regain the upper hand by becoming hyper-vigilant, monitoring their partner's every move with obsessive (*and often destructive*) jealousy.

The truth is that most of us share a primal urge for an exclusive bond with another person, and we thrive on consistency and continuity. In fact, commitment can be very sexy indeed.

Despite our sexualised culture, most of us still aspire to be monogamous — and we view fidelity as a symbol of our commitment. It requires sacrifice, renunciation and tolerance of disillusionment, all of which are good for us.

Being faithful to your spouse shows that you value their needs above your own by choosing not to hurt them. It means that you place someone else above your own desire for vicarious sexual gratification.

The alternative is to hope that it's possible to have a perfect romantic and sexual relationship with someone new — and to ignore the reality that 'honeymoon' periods never last.

Adapted and extracted from 'Our Cheating Hearts: Love And Loyalty, Lust And Lies' by Kate Figes.

### **Comment:**

It seems as if all is not lost and there are those elements within the secular society we Christians also inhabit who find agreements with Christian ideals and practices. One needs to remember that these people are not necessarily 'friends' and may generally be at odds with the Church whilst finding some areas of agreement for their own convenience, security and peace of mind.

Nevertheless, such agreement is welcomed in the face of general social moral decline, where anything is acceptable so long as consenting partners are 'in love'.

There is a lot in this article that points to a society that is purely based on self-gratification. Much is about 'me' and 'my feelings' and 'my rights' and getting what is 'rightfully mine'. Not to be allowed to have one's own way inevitably ends up becoming 'you don't love me any more....'

There is no thought or consideration regarding anyone else's feelings and rights.

In a nut shell, our individual wants have become much more important than the needs of the society we are a part of. We have become self-absorbed and self-obsessed and cannot see beyond our own needs. Self-image is more important than social reality. We have become a selfish people, disregarding the needs of others in favour of our own, and forgotten the very basics regarding 'real love'.

The article can be read in a number of ways, but I do see this article mainly as a personal cry for help and understanding whilst it presents some real social concerns. The matters covered are as much about the writer's personal needs, experiences and expectations as social ills. So much so that it becomes almost impossible to determine which the prime driving force is.

In this case, does it matter?

Perhaps not in the end.

Society is made up of people and they are shaped by society as much as they shape it. Maybe we can only judge society in the way it affect us as individuals and the way it shapes our behaviour and attitudes. Then again, maybe it's all too hard when it comes to taking responsibility, and living with a convenient excuse is easier than facing up to and living with or dealing with an inconvenient reality.

There is a lot in the article that makes good sense even if it is not overtly 'Christian' in nature. As Christians we do not have the rights on all morality and the Holy Spirit constantly challenges those who have yet to find their way to a loving and caring God. In this way God reminds us to behave with humility because we don't know it all and we may be 'of God' but we certainly 'aren't God'.

However, that does not mean we have to accept those things that do not sit easily with or contradict Holy Writ.

People have every 'right' to make their own personal life decisions but not when it comes to inflicting them on others and taking away their choices. We may not realise it but every action we take, every decision we make, every word we speak (whether spoken or not) affects someone else's life, whether for good or evil.

The greater good of society is just as important as individual freedom. Neither is greater or less than the other. It is a balancing act that has grave and lasting consequences.

There is great truth in the words that the 'sins (wrong doings/bad judgements/selfishness) of the fathers (those in authority or those who make decisions that affect others) will be visited on their children (those they have responsibility for) and their children's children, for many generations'.

A divorce or affair does not just affect the couple, but their children and their parents' families, and beyond. It destroys lives and trust. The damage it causes is uncontainable and spreads everywhere. It affects all of society in some form. Many of those who have experienced divorces would not have proceeded had they known the personal cost to themselves, to their children, to their relatives, to their friendships and those whose lives they shared. And all for what?

The statement, 'these things happen...', is no excuse for them happening. It is an abdication of responsibility. Society is as much responsible for a marriage failing as the couple involved, as are their families and friends and colleagues. Someone saw something/heard something/knew something and did nothing. 'It wasn't my place to say or do anything,' is not excusable. That's why small problems that can be easily sorted out grow out of hand and become almost impossible to deal with.

The Church has to admit responsibility too because it is just as guilty. It has seemingly forgotten the very reasons for its existence, the 'who it serves' and the 'why it serves', and has allowed what is ungodly and unacceptable so it can get 'bums on seats'. It is now reaping what it has sown and, putting it into its real context, the whole of society is suffering because of this.

In the context of 'the Year of Marriage', the church has failed pastorally regarding preparing people for marriage, and has also failed equally miserably in understanding, supporting and encouraging marriage\*. And as we are each a part of the Church, that makes us each corporately responsible.

Scapegoating is pointless other than it makes people feel better because someone else had been found to be at fault and has been given the blame and the punishment. That does not resolve or change things. The fact is they 'were allowed' to do this and people knew about it and did nothing. That makes us all culpable.

Society, the Church, the husband, the wife, the partner, the family, the colleague, the friend, all have to accept both individual responsibility and corporate guilt.

Saying nothing and/or doing nothing makes people part of the problem, not the solution. One wonders how many damaged marriages could have been avoided by a timely quiet word or intervention. Yes, it is your business.

Only when the individual reacts will society change, and that will be either for the good of society or the bad. Ignoring things doesn't make them go away.

Change starts with the individual. It starts with you. Don't make the mistake of thinking it is someone else's responsibility.

As we say in OSJ, 'If you see the need, deal with it.'

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*\*To be clear, marriage in a Christian faith setting is between a man and a woman and is intended for the procreation of children. It is intended to be for life. It is within the will of God and is ordained by God and is a sacrament in its own right.*

*However, I would suggest that those who came to be married without it being the will of God, and approached marriage unadvisedly and without due consideration, in reality were never 'married' in the eyes of God and actually live together in a state of sin. This position, if correct, has clear implications for the church community as it is as much at fault as the couple for permitting such a state of affairs.*

*If this is the spiritual case then I would also suggest, perhaps controversially, that the couple may have no need to divorce because they were never 'married' in the eyes of God. The sacrament of penance and reconciliation then may be the more appropriate route in the official dissolving of that relationship, not just for the couple, but for the church community as well.*

*Marriage is more than a formula of words. It is a recognisable long term process that a man and woman brought together by God grow into, where over a period of time each finds that neither is wholly fulfilled without the other and both become greater than the sum of their combined individualities. Without the other they find over time that they are incomplete in all senses - spiritually, physically, and emotionally. They may not ever agree or always like one another but their mutual interdependency and love is undeniably unmistakable. They fully understand and put into practice the concept of 'love the sinner, not the sin'.*



*Marriage is a simultaneous state of becoming and being, of service to the other, and is built upon a foundation of love, grace, forgiveness, and the certain recognition that neither partner is perfect and is flawed in many respects. That does not mean to say it is easy or comes without the risk of deep scars and wounds. Quite simply, if you have never been hurt, you have never truly loved.*

*Marriage is where each person's combination of gifts, talents and skills, whether spiritual or temporal, come together with the other's to fulfil the purposes of God, perhaps without each ever knowing why or how. There is often an indistinct recognition that something special has happened without being able to define exactly what it was. Sometimes couples 'just know' but can't explain.*

*Marriage is ministry, and both partners and their families are joint ministers in serving one another and the communities they are a part of. I would argue that marriage is a calling equal to the priesthood. I would also state that no two marriages are the same and that every marriage is different and is unique.*

*The failure of the Church and society to recognise this basic fact has been a major factor in the undervaluing of the sanctity and calling of marriage.*

*There is no 'one size fits all' preparation for marriage or any generic fixes for any problems that may surface. There are common observable patterns in marriages that occur but they do not define what a 'marriage' is or make up its wholeness. Every marriage is different but that does not mean 'anything goes' or everything is permissible, it should still fit God's scriptural template and be fit for purpose.*

*There are individuals and groups who work against God's will in an attempt to create moral chaos and deconstruct and destabilise society. Marriage is a clear target for those enemies of God who see it as something that stabilises and solidifies society, for within marriage and the family unit is the reflection of the eternal and infinite love that exists between God and all His children.*

*In coming to understand marriage (as imperfect as this understanding might be) we really do come to understand God's love, grace and forgiveness in a world that is in darkness and confusion. Equally, in coming to understand God's love we come to understand the purpose, power and significance of marriage. In all of its fullness, marriage may even be seen to be an earthly model of heaven.*

*To undermine God's version of marriage is in effect to undermine God's loving purpose for an imperfect and lost world. Marriage, despite all its problems, remains a powerful beacon of light and hope. It is a gift of God.*

*That, I sadly believe, is why marriage is under such vehement attack by some ungodly and lost sections of society, and why we need to fully understand and be clear about the whole concept of 'marriage' as intended by God.*

*We must be vigilant and not let this be subsumed and become devalued. We need to be very clear about what marriage is and its purpose, and be prepared to fight to the end regarding its spiritual sanctity, its social significance and the security it provides for the family unit. It's a battle we as Christians can't afford to lose.*

### **Legal Separation, Divorce and Annulment: the legal stuff.**

The one thing we must be is well informed when it comes to dealing with individual pastoral cases and we do need to be clear when it comes to helping couples make appropriate decisions about their future if push comes to shove.

Here is a simplified explanation of all three of the above in legal terms.

(The law relating to civil partnerships and same sex marriages is slightly different.)

### **Legal separation without divorce**

To get a legal separation, you need to fill in a separation petition and send it to the court.

A legal separation allows you to live apart, without divorcing or ending a civil partnership.

You can ask for a legal separation for the same reasons you could file for a divorce, for example adultery or unreasonable behaviour.

However, you don't need to show that the marriage has broken down irretrievably.

You may want a legal separation if:

- you have religious reasons against divorce
- you've been married less than a year
- you want time and space to work out if you want to end the marriage

### **Separation leading to divorce:**

#### **If you have been separated for more than 2 years**

You can apply for a divorce if you've been separated for more than 2 years and both agree to the divorce.

Your husband or wife must agree in writing.

You can be separated while living in the same home as long as you're not together as a couple (for example you sleep and eat apart).

#### **You've been separated for at least 5 years**

You can apply for a divorce if you've been separated for at least 5 years, even if your husband or wife disagrees.

### **Divorce:**

When you apply for a divorce you'll need to prove that your marriage has broken down. You'll need to give one or more of the following reasons (and 'separation' may be included – see above).

#### **Adultery**

Your husband or wife had sexual intercourse with someone else of the opposite sex.

(The law recognises the act of adultery as sexual intercourse between a man and a woman.)

You cannot give adultery as a reason if you lived together as a couple for 6 months after you found out about it.

### **Unreasonable behaviour**

Your husband or wife has behaved in such a way that you cannot reasonably be expected to live with them.

This could include:

- physical violence
- verbal abuse, such as insults or threats
- drunkenness or drug-taking
- refusing to pay for housekeeping

### **Desertion**

Your husband or wife has left you:

- without your agreement
- without a good reason
- to end your relationship
- for more than 2 years in the past 2.5 years

You can still claim desertion if you have lived together for up to a total of 6 months in this period.

### **Annulment.**

Annulment is a way of ending a marriage, like divorce.

Unlike divorce, you can get a marriage annulled at any time after the wedding (in a divorce, you have to wait at least a year). However, if you apply years after the wedding, you might be asked to explain the delay.

You may want an annulment if you have religious reasons for not wanting a divorce. However, you need to show that the marriage was either not valid in the first place, or is defective for one of the reasons given below.

You or your spouse must have either:

- lived in England or Wales for at least a year
- had a permanent home in England or Wales for at least 6 months

### **1. Your marriage is not legally valid - 'void' marriages**

You can annul a marriage if it was not legally valid in the first place, for example:

- you are closely related
- one or both of you were under 16
- one of you was already married or in a civil partnership

If a marriage was not legally valid, the law says that it never existed.

However, you may need legal paperwork to prove this - for example if you want to get married again.

### **2. Your marriage is defective - 'voidable' marriages**

You can annul a marriage for a number of reasons, such as:

- it was not consummated - you have not had sex with the person you married since the wedding (does not apply for same sex couples)
- you did not properly consent to the marriage - for example you were drunk or forced into it
- the other person had a sexually transmitted disease when you got married
- the woman was pregnant by another man when you got married

Marriages annulled for these reasons are known as 'voidable' marriages.

*Source: Gov.UK*

### **No Fault Divorce:**

At the moment 'No Fault Divorces' are not part of civil law although several recent attempts have been made to progress such through parliament.

If 'no fault divorces' are brought in, couples will be allowed to file for divorce without one partner taking blame for the marriage breaking down. It will allow couples to simply say the marriage doesn't work, and they no longer wish to be wed.

It sounds much fairer than the present system in which one partner must accept fault, but if it were to become law it raises a number of issues that should be of great concern if not dealt with at source, e.g. the applied limitations.

Under a 'no fault' system, a wife (for example) struggling to look after a terminally ill husband could apply for a divorce as a means of escape, and similarly, a husband (for example) could divorce his wife because he cannot cope with their new baby or her predilection for handbags and shoes.

It could be instigated by just one partner and even not need the agreement of the other in order for it to successfully proceed.

It would in effect make divorce possible for any reason and devalues the whole concept of 'marriage' even further. It reduces marriage to a 'matter of dissolvable convenience'.

(It would be more honest to legalise yearly renewable marriage licenses if things got to this stage.)

It seems to me that a better way forward (if anything to do with divorce can be considered 'a better way forward') there might be 'shared fault divorces' where both at least accept personal and joint responsibility for their failures to uphold the promises they both willingly made. At least there would be opportunities for some pastoral intervention and maybe even some form of reconciliation to occur.

By contrast, a 'no fault divorce' is terminal from the moment proceedings are instituted.

**Comment:**

As a society we have allowed marriage to become easier along with divorce. That devalues marriage considerably. Making divorce easier is not the answer to making marriages more successful and less prone to failure.

Making sure people have realistic expectations and know what they are getting into and are better prepared is surely the better option.



Let's just hope that politicians don't get as involved as they have in pushing gender issues into schools.

If this were to be the case then we might end up with couples not being able to get married without the proper Marriage and/or Relationship qualifications in school, and on getting married being subject to unannounced 'OFSTED' visits, to make sure that their children are being taught the 'proper social values' by their parents.

Whilst you may think this is farfetched, you might consider the proposals to teach children as young as five in schools as part of the curriculum that they legally have the right to determine their own gender. You might agree with this, particularly when you see it in the beautifully reasoned terms expressed in one of the [proposed primary school modules](#), but it will have an exponentially powerful effect on the way marriage is defined as the distinctions between 'man' and 'woman' become increasingly blurred.

I would argue that as well-meaning and as logical as this proposal may appear, there are significant reasons why we should be concerned as Christians. I do believe this is all part of a quite deliberate legislative attempt to undermine 'marriage' and 'the family unit', especially in terms of the expression and understanding of our faith. There is a qualitative spiritual darkness which seeks to subsume us and it is using all means possible including democratic process.

The Christian teaching which has underpinned and directed the society we live in is simply being taken apart, brick by brick, by small but highly vocal groups intent on changing the patterns of existing normative social behaviours\*.

The general perception of society seems to be that we have become an irrelevance, that for the most part as Christians we just don't care and/or are too frightened to speak up against those things that are not acceptable. Our silent and possibly misguided 'Christian tolerance' has been seen as weakness and it has cost us (and those we have spiritual responsibility for and would reach out to) dearly. Love does not mean saying 'yes' all the time or agreeing with everything that happens, it also includes saying 'no' and acting appropriately.

It is time to speak with clarity, authority and wisdom in a world that has lost its way.

Are we God's appointed shepherds or not?

+Ian

*\*"The normative social influence involves conforming in order to be accepted or liked by a group, not necessarily because one actually believes the things one is doing or saying. This tendency is due to the fact that one of core instincts is the strong desire to be in a social group of some sort. This comes into play because when a bunch of people get together and want to stay together there needs to be some degree of agreement as far as rules, morals, and behaviours because otherwise there would be issues among the members.*

*Over time people conform more and more to the ways other people do things. It becomes a social obligation to fit in and continue to do what others are doing. This does not just happen with friends or loved ones, it can happen with people you have never met. Overall, the people who are influenced the most by this concept have low self-esteem. These people tend to do just about anything to gain approval from others. Those who decide not to belong to the group are often called strange and deviant.*

*Conformist tendencies can influence all aspects of our lives including the election of our political leaders, moral values, food choices...you name it."*

*A definition of Normative Social Influence and Behaviours - Gillian Fournier*

### **The Lesson of the Book of Ruth - Faithfulness and Relationship**

As Christians and as we follow Jesus and try to be more like Him the life of the Christian is not a straight line wearing rose coloured glasses but we do eventually arrive at our hoped for destination.

We do not drive along at 70 miles an hour along a deserted three lane motorway – toll free by the way – with beautiful, stunning scenery, plenty of well-equipped motor stops stocked with free coffee and cakes.

There are heavy rains to cope with, slippery roads, foggy journeys and accidents along the way - it's not all motorway but twisty narrow roads as well. But, we always arrive at our destination in bright weather, safe and feeling familiar with our surroundings. If we believe, trust and obey, in Jesus.

The book of Ruth describes a journey of Ruth's and others, in so many different ways - spiritual, physical and emotional. It was written to give us encouragement and hope, that all the perplexing turns in our lives, particularly of late, are not dead-end streets.

We must understand and accept that in each and every one of the setbacks of life, as a believer, God is plotting and planning our lives - Romans 8:28 New International Version (NIV)

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

### **Setbacks, Hope, and Strategies of Righteousness**

The story of Ruth is a series of setbacks. In chapter 1 Naomi and her husband and two sons were forced to leave their homeland in Judah on account of famine. Then Naomi's husband dies. Her sons marry Moabite women and for ten years the women prove to be barren. And then her sons die leaving two widows in the house of Naomi. But Ruth stays with Naomi and practices the same faith and worships the same God – our God. Ruth has learnt a lot and put it into practice.

It has to be said that during each of our lifetimes we have learnt many things – I'm sure we all have. Some of these things we have put into practice, others perhaps we are still to act upon, or introduce. We are all still on a journey, learning and changing all the time.

There are two really big learning points that have made a tremendous impression on me – the first one being:

***We are not defined by our difficulties - We are defined by how we respond to them.***

Many good and wonderful things happen to each of us, both in our own individual lives and our lives within the relationship and fellowship we have with others.

Good things that happen and I'm not going to give examples – we all know the difference between good and bad. Good things that happen then – do we thank someone?

Do we thank ourselves because we have been able to do it?

Do we thank our spouses, children or friends – as they have successfully enabled it?

Or is it God who we thank???

Whatever – it's right that we *respond* with genuine thankfulness and happiness to demonstrate our appreciation - an acknowledgement of an action done with love. Perhaps GOD.

With regard to our difficulties, we must always tailor our responses towards good attitude and behaviour, and love for God, ourselves and each other. After all, as Christians we are taught that. Needless to say, perhaps we all know those people who are unable or unwilling, to share with others, any form of love or fellowship and are always grumpy argumentative and bitter.

Godless people perhaps, but we are far from perfect too. We should encourage them by our own example to read the Bible and form constructive relationships- especially with God.

But when we are in a difficult mood let us remember that we should try harder and ask God to help sort ourselves out.

The second learning point is

***It's not what we do it's who we do it with. It's not where we go, it's who we go there with and it's not how much money we have, it's who we spend it on and how..***

Just three things to consider for a good and fulfilling life.

**It's not what we do.....**

Travelling round the world every year to the most far flung places to view fabulous sights and places that we never knew existed. 10/10? Fabulous – all we wanted? Yes? **NO!**

**Only if it is done with the right person and for the right reason.**

Accepting a personal approach from a colleague to be Chairman of the local society of which you are a part?

Flattering! Yes. Meaningful, and effective and right? It depends....is the role accepted for what can be got out of the new found role for himself/herself? Or for the good of others?

Or, more interesting, is the new Chairman unknowingly going to be used and manipulated so that others get their own way and can place blame elsewhere? Large wordly nations apparently – are very good at this one.

**It's not how much money we have – it's how we use it....**expanding much on that one is unnecessary as I've only to mention the Widow's mite! On the other hand misuse of money is the root of a lot of evil.

Substantial, loving, faithful, long term relationships with each other whether in a personal or global relationship with one or many is vital to the current and future well- being of God's creation.

We may ask.....Where is all this going then?

We have only to look at the Bible and in particular the book of Ruth to see where it's going.

The stories of so many people in the Bible are woven together so very closely, that they are almost inseparable – in more ways than one.

With a good few characters we know more about their relationships with others than we know about them. In an age like this one that practices and almost worships individualism their stories become very useful examples of the coming together of separate lives. Naomi and Ruth are wonderful examples of this blending of lives. Everything about and between them was very different – culture, age, family background. Yet they were truly inseparable.

Mothers in Law and Daughters in law don't always get on well together all the time...and this potentially applied to Ruth and Naomi. Opportunity for tension was present as much as affection. They were inseparable. They would share much sadness and sorrow, a deep affection for each other and each one had a passionate commitment and belonging to God – the God of Israel – our God.

They also were willing to give each other freedom. Ruth was willing to leave home and go to Israel. Naomi even helped arrange Ruth's marriage to Boaz even though it might have changed their relationship with each other.

Our Lord God was at the centre of their very close relationship. And He should be at the centre of our lives/relationships too.

Ruth came to know our Lord through Naomi. Naomi allowed Ruth to see, hear and feel all the joy and anguish of her relationship with God.

How often do we feel that our thoughts and questions about God should be left out of relationships – casual or close?



How often do we share our unguarded thoughts about God with our spouse or friends?

Perhaps sharing openly about our relationship with God can bring more depth and closeness to our relationship with others and provide for ourselves and others encouragement in seeking God. We never know how much we influence the thinking of others. Do we wait for the opportunity – or make it?

The relationship then between Ruth and Naomi can very easily be transferred into our relationships with others today.....by

1. *Having a relationship where the greatest bond is...faithfulness and Love for God and each other....*
2. *Through a strong mutual commitment.....Faithfulness to God, to each other.*
3. *Each person trying to do the best for each other. Let's take this a bit further...and deeper.*

We all want to love...and be loved. We all want to belong....and have special relationships

**The big lesson that we can learn from Ruth:** God's living presence in any relationship whether on a one to one basis or collectively, nation to nation, would overcome any difficulties or differences that might cause division, divisiveness and lack of unity. It would give us what we want.

**Unity in the Body of Christ:** the Greatest Commandment Mark 12 29-31...

Jesus replied, "This is the most important: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."...

Let us then look to God in Prayer and His Word in Ruth, for help. Amen.

Rev David Startup, OSJ

### **Office for National Statistics: Civil partnerships in England and Wales: 2017**

#### **An Outline Summary:**

The rate of dissolution for civil partnerships is far higher than the rate of divorce within marriage, according to figures released last week by the Office for National Statistics. *(This says a lot about Civil Partnerships!)*

It was reported that in 2016 for every 1,000 marriages there were 8.9 divorces (0.89%). For civil partnerships the figure is 29.7 dissolutions for every 1,000 partnerships (2.97%), more than treble the rate.

Over 2017 there were more dissolutions (1,217) than there were new partnerships formed (908). The annual rate of formation is down 85% from its peak, largely due to the introduction of same-sex marriage.

#### **The implications:**

1: it implies that same-sex unions may be less stable and likely to endure than traditional marriages.

2: it also suggests that civil partnerships themselves are less stable and likely to endure than traditional marriage.

3: it suggests that there is already very little demand for civil partnerships as opposed to marriage from same-sex couples.

This data suggests that these unions are not an effective substitute for marriage.

The Government is currently considering the introduction of civil partnerships for heterosexuals. Instead of attempting to devise alternatives for marriage, the Government should perhaps concentrate on strengthening 'marriage' as it has stood for centuries. We already have a gold standard. Let's protect it. (Source: C4M)

**Main Points of the report:** (Source: Office for National Statistics)

1. There were 908 civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2017, an increase of 2.0% compared with 2016; this is the second annual increase since the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples was announced in 2013.
2. Almost two-thirds (66%) of all civil partnerships formed in 2017 were between men.
3. The increase in the number of civil partnership formations between 2016 and 2017 resulted solely from an 8.0% rise (23 civil partnerships) in civil partnerships between women, civil partnership formation among men decreased by 0.8% (five civil partnerships).
4. More than half (51%) of those entering a civil partnership in 2017 were aged 50 years and over; this compares with 19% in 2013, prior to the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples.
5. In 2017, the average age of men forming a civil partnership (50.3 years) was higher than for women (49.5 years).
6. London continued to be the most popular region for the formation of civil partnerships; 37% of all formations in England and Wales in 2017 took place in London.
7. There were 1,217 civil partnership dissolutions granted in England and Wales in 2017, of these 57% were to female couples.

The number of civil partnerships formed increased in 2017.

This is the second year that civil partnership formations have increased since the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples was announced in December 2013.

There were 908 civil partnerships formed in England and Wales in 2017, a rise of 2.0% compared with 890 in 2016.

However, civil partnership formation numbers in 2017 were around one-sixth of what they were in 2013 before the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples in March 2014.

**Number of civil partnership formations by sex and area of occurrence, 2017**

Area of formation	Total	Male	Female
England	908	599	309
North East	11	5	6
North West	63	36	27
Yorkshire and The Humber	44	21	23
East Midlands	42	26	16
West Midlands	51	32	19
East	68	48	20
London	334	264	70
South East	166	98	68
South West	97	54	43
Wales	32	15	17

There were 1,217 civil partnership dissolutions granted in England and Wales in 2017 (*compared with a total of 908 civil partnership formations, not exactly a great success for civil partnerships and accounting for around 1% of all marriages*).

Female couples accounted for 57% of all dissolutions in 2017. More civil partnership dissolutions have occurred between female than male couples. This is despite the fact that historically a greater number of men have formed civil partnerships.

Source: Office for National Statistics

You might consider what the implications are for us as a church and what action is required to develop Christian marriage as the ideal over the alternatives on offer?

## **Luke 16 19 – 33**

Unice Brearley, OSJ

This liturgy is putting an emphasis on the cost of following Jesus. Not monetary cost but the cost of relationships etc. This morning, Luke is quoting Jesus' emphasis on the use of wealth.

At the time of this parable the Pharisees considered wealth to be proof of a persons righteousness. Jesus startled them with the story of a diseased beggar being rewarded and a rich being man punished. The rich man did not go to hell because of his wealth, but because he was selfishness refusing to feed Lazarus, take him in an care for him

Let us look at the situation further.

First there is the rich man, usually called Dives, which is the Latin for rich. Every phrase adds something to the luxury in which he lived. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. That is the description of the robes of the high priests, and such robes were very expensive , costing many times the value of a working man's wage. He feasted in luxury every day. Gourmet feeding on exotic and costly dishes. He did this every day, and in doing so he positively broke the fourth commandment.

That commandment not only forbids work on the Sabbath, it also says six days you shall labour ( Exodus 20:9) which the rich man obviously ignored.

In a country where the people were very fortunate if they ate meat once in the week and where they toiled for six days of the week. Dives is a figure of indolent self-indulgence. Lazarus was waiting for the crumbs that fell from Dives table, in that time there were no knives , forks or napkins, Food was eaten with the hands and, in very wealthy houses, the hands were cleaned by wiping them on hunks of bread, which were then thrown away. That was what Lazarus was waiting for.

Second, there is Lazarus. It is strange that Lazarus is the only character in any of the parables who is given a name. The name in Latin means God is my help. He was a beggar, he was covered in ulcerated sores, and so helpless that he could not even ward off the street dogs which pestered him.

This is the scene that Jesus describes. Then it abruptly changes to Lazarus being in glory and Dives being in torment. What was Dives sin. He hadn't ordered Lazarus to be removed, and was quite happy for him to receive the bread thrown away from the table. He wasn't

deliberately cruel , but to him Lazarus was part of the landscape, he never saw him when he came and went from his house. His sin was that he could look on the world's suffering, and with all his wealth, do nothing. How often does this apply to people today? This passage is a terrible warning that the sin of Dives, and of many today is not that they do wrong, but that they do nothing.

Didn't Jesus say as much as you did or did not do anything you did or did not do it unto me"

This is one of the many occasions when Jesus spoke sharply about attitudes to money and material possessions. He spoke more about this subject than about any other simple issue. It was just as much a problem then and is for his disciples today. The key to this story is verse 14. The Pharisees who were lovers of money, heard all this and they ridiculed him. And no doubt Jesus' listeners clearly identified the hated Pharisees with the rich man in the story.

The rich man had a attitude problem, demonstrated by the fact that he loved luxury. Dressing in fine linens . Living in a fine house and hosting fine parties. But it's not his wealth that Jesus condemns.

But the pursuit of it for its own sake, as though salvation were available through material possessions.

The story is told of the funeral of a wealthy person. A relative asked "How much did he leave" Everything came the reply.

The rich man is completely blind to the suffering of Lazarus outside his gate He only saw value in people who could serve his needs. He cannot see that the privilege of wealth also has its responsibilities – to care for those less comfortable. He demonstrated this further when, instead of offering to return to warn his brothers of the torment he demands of Abraham that Lazarus returns. A big contrast with Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

The rich man's attitude to spiritual matters is shown through his rejection of the Old Testament revelation already available to him. When his attention was drawn to it, he complained that it wasn't enough – someone needed to rise from the dead.

A famous preacher was greeting his congregation after the service when a woman told him off for repeating a sermon he had preached a few weeks earlier in another Church.



He asked if she had put it into practice yet. As she fumbled with an answer, he said "Well my dear I'll keep preaching it until you do.

The best way to cultivate a right attitude to money, people and spiritual things is to see the beggar outside our gate – the poor, the exploited, the sick, the dying, the marginalised – in fact all who are not like ourselves. The miracle is that the more loosely we hold our possessions the more we enjoy them, the more we serve the needs of others, the more we value them, and the more we listen to God's words, the more we value ourselves.

This is a parable of yawning gaps.

We live in a world of yawning gaps where people keep a safe distance from those who are different – white from black, East from West. Christian from Muslim, heterosexual and homosexual. And our country seems to be going more and more down this road.

This story is about one of the most obvious yawning gaps. Between rich and poor. The obvious yawning gap is that one lives in a world of obvious luxury and the other suffers grinding poverty.

We have only to look round the world today to see that this is still very evident, the Western world lives in this gap. Within and between nations, the wealth gap is getting wider. The rich often have no idea of the problems of poverty. It is often said (Why can't they work harder and manage their money better) and the poor often have no concept of the problems of wealth (Why don't they give it away to the people who need it?) so instead of solutions being sought the gap gets wider.

In this story this yawning gap is reversed between Dives and Lazarus. The rich man is in eternal torment and Lazarus end up in eternal joy. Warmth and love.

This must have been a terrible shock to Jesus' listeners, who would assume that wealth was a sign of God's blessing. But the gap between the two men didn't just relate to wealth, it was more than that, it was attitude.

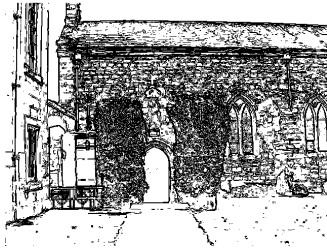
Dives was blind to his neighbour's needs. Instead of using his wealth to benefit others, he abused it to establish his status. Yet in the afterlife Lazarus enjoyed an eternity of divine blessing while the rich man discovered what it was like to be Lazarus.

The rich man fondly hopes that a simple warning will rescue his brothers from the torment he is suffering, whereas the reality is that even if someone were to rise from the dead they would not believe. Even Jesus who did rise from the dead still came up against the attitude of the Pharisees, as he has over the centuries by many, and he still does, we have only to look round the world and even in our own country, to see the worship of money and possessions, although people wouldn't call it that.

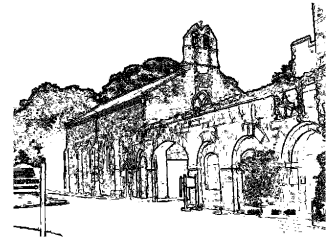
In the musical *My Fair Lady* Eliza cries "Don't talk of love. Show me" Our postmodern culture demands the same of the Church- don't talk of Jesus show us. . Good evangelism does not just proclaim the truth that Jesus is risen, but also gives people a reason to believe it. In Jesus' time, as in ours people need to know not only that the gospel is true but that it works.

How are we, at the present time, going about the task that this parable has set us?

Only we in our hearts know the answer to this.



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.  
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.  
All are very welcome and all may receive freely if of good intent and need.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">October 2018: The Year of Marriage</p>	
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## **‘No Fault’ Divorce Proposals – Marriage as we know it is under threat.**

Thanks to the release of the draft documents from the Justice Department on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2018 I have had a look at the draft proposals for ‘No Fault’ Divorce. Buried within the pages the Government’s intent is made clear. Their disregard for ‘marriage’ as the mainstay of society is made plainly evident.

There will no doubt be a lot of support for the bill as it is basically an unconditional ‘get out of jail free’ card for anyone dissatisfied with their marriage.

I have copied the bulk of the proposals with my comments and thoughts on the proposals. It is only in the later pages does the Government’s real intent reveal itself (highlighted in yellow). It is amongst other things financially driven. Whilst it is a proposal, there are sections within the document that make it quite clear that some of the proposals are not open to discussion.

I recommend that you have a look through the summary (page 2) and then the annotated document (page 4) and draw your own conclusions as to the real intent behind these proposals. Marriage as an institution is clearly under threat from this Government. What is important is that you contact your MP to let them know of any concerns you may have regarding these proposals before the consultation period is over and/or that you are involved directly with the online response to the consultation which closes 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018. You have a voice, it is important that you use it and it is heard.

+lan

See also <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/justice-secretary-confirms-plans-to-reduce-conflict-in-divorce>  
<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/reform-of-the-legal-requirements-for-divorce/consultation/>

## **A summary of the proposed new legislation:**

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1. The Government has proposed that in order to save court both time and cost that couples now can make their own 'considered decisions' as to whether their marriage is irretrievably broken down.
2. The Government has proposed to opt for a 'no fault' notification which removes the need for checks and safeguards usually made by the courts.
3. The Government has proposed that the system of 'fault' (assigning 'fact' to one of the partners as being the determining factor in a divorce) is to be dropped.
4. The Government has proposed that this includes the legislation regarding separation times in both contested (5 years) and non-contested (2 years) applications which are to be significantly reduced under this legislation.
5. The Government has proposed it will not therefore be consulting on the principle of removing these 'facts' together with the 'separation facts'.
6. The Government has proposed that there will be a speeding up of the process of divorce by reducing and simplifying the associated paper work, hinting that some (or all) may be completed online.
7. To enable this, the Government has proposed that only one partner need make notification and the other cannot contest this.
8. The Government has proposed that the right to defend a marriage by contesting the notification is to be withdrawn.
9. The Government has proposed that the number of contested applications is historically around 15% based on figures for 2016 and representing around 16,000 of the 106,713 couples who filed for divorce.

10. The Government has cited that the reason behind this proposed change in legislation is designed to reduce conflict.
11. There were many suggestions throughout the proposals, that if adopted they would also significantly reduce conflicts for children experiencing the trauma of divorcing parents.\*
12. The Government also cited the significant potential cost savings to be made by Her Majesty's Government by the adoption of these proposals.
13. The Government has proposed that these changes are based on a number of self-admitted and untested assumptions, mainly that there will be no increase in the number of divorces or increased costs.
14. The Government has proposed that this legislation will not 'devalue' marriage but offers no research or findings in support of this statement.
15. The Government has made these proposals on the basis of very selective and limited research according to the cited sources. (Trinder 1976, Trinder 2017, etc)
16. Models of NFD from other countries and their experiences were not cited.
17. The Government proposals appear not to have been made in consultation with religious or other groups with an interest in strengthening the role of marriage in society given the lack of citation.
18. The Government proposals say very little about strategies for preventing divorce or supporting couples who are experiencing difficulties. This proposal is clearly one that by intent supports divorce rather than marriage. As Christians, we have every right to be, and should be, very concerned.

*\*Significantly, no actual valid substance, references to research or recommendations were offered in support of making these suggestions a reality. There was 'intent' but no 'how'.*

Title: Reducing Family Conflict: Reform of the legal requirements for divorce

IA No: MoJ017/2018

Impact Assessment (IA) Date: 14/09/2018

**DOCUMENT EXTRACTS:** (black text)

**COMMENT:** (red text)

The current legal process for obtaining a divorce, civil partnership dissolution and judicial separation ("matrimonial") proceedings has been shown to aggravate conflict between parties.

No comprehensive evidential sources are quoted or figures are given to support this. The actual extent of this problem is not qualified.

Currently it is necessary to establish irretrievable breakdown by proving one of five 'facts' to obtain a decree or order involving stress, effort and costs for the parties, yet may not reflect the real reason for the breakdown.

Irretrievable breakdown needs to be established, as does cause, and also whether sufficient steps have been made to establish the real reasons behind the breakdown of marriage and to establish that reconciliation is no longer possible. At the moment it would appear that intervention is ineffective given the number of proceedings that conclude in divorce.



Government intervention is necessary to reduce the possible harm from conflict during and after the legal process, either directly (for spouses) or indirectly (for children and other family members).

Again, no comprehensive evidential sources are quoted or figures given to support this positional statement. There is no evidence offered that making the legal process easier and possibly faster will reduce the possibility of actual physical or emotional harm to spouses or their children or their extended families.

What are the policy objectives and the intended effects?

The objective is to remove from the legal process the requirement to establish irretrievable breakdown by proving a 'fact'. We propose to retain safeguards that ensure the decision to legally end a marriage or civil partnership remains a considered one, with sufficient opportunity to change course.

The revised process will remove legal requirements that may achieve nothing for spouses or for society and that may increase conflict with potential consequential poorer outcomes for children.

It is also proposed to remove the opportunity, in most cases, for one spouse to contest (defend) the proceedings, preventing coercive and controlling behaviour through the legal process. Most divorces are not contested.

The issue of not being allowed by law to defend one's beliefs in one's marriage is a key point in this legislation which should not be overlooked. It has far greater implications if that 'right' is taken away by law.

The prevention of coercive and controlling behaviour through legal process is a product of the procedure rather than the legislation. It is the procedure which is at fault rather than the existing legislation.

The types and frequency of coercive and controlling behaviour are not listed so cannot be quantified.

If most divorces are not contested (85% according to 2016 figures are not contested) then why in practice is there the need to change the legislation?

**Two options are considered in this Impact Assessment:**

**Option 0:** Do Nothing (Baseline): Maintain the current legal process for establishing irretrievable breakdown through proving one or more of the following five "facts": adultery, 'unreasonable behaviour'\*, desertion, or separation for two years (if both agree to the proceedings) or five years otherwise.

**Option 1:** Remove from the legal process the requirement to establish irretrievable breakdown by proving one of the five facts.

One (or possibly both) spouses would instead give notice to the court that their marriage or civil partnership has irretrievably broken down.

Option 1 is the preferred option as it best meets the policy objectives.

\* 'Unreasonable behaviour' is often used as a short-hand for the full legal test, which is that the respondent spouse has behaved in such a way that the petitioning spouse cannot reasonably be expected to live with the respondent.

**Option 1 benefits:**

Divorcing couples and their children would benefit from a reduction in conflict affected matrimonial proceedings.

No adequate comprehensive research or findings are offered to support this.

There would also be cost savings to divorcing couples who would no longer have to spend time and effort (including through a solicitor) on working up narrative particulars in support of conduct or separation based facts.

No adequate comprehensive research or findings are offered to support the extent of any savings that would be made. The main cost of a divorce is not in the legal proceedings but in the settlements made and the emotional damage which cannot be financially quantified to the spouses themselves, their children and their families or the increased costs of running two homes instead of one.

In the matter of housing, reconciling couples would potentially have made 106,713 homes available in 2016 by taking away the need for two homes.

Changes in process timing will provide a minimum fixed period for the legal process to ensure the parties have sufficient time to make arrangements for the future.

**Note: no mention of reconciliation.**

We propose to focus on the period between the first stage (decree nisi) and the final decree of divorce (decree absolute) but will consider any alternatives put forward in consultation.

## **A. Background**

### **Introduction**

1. The law on divorce and judicial separation in England and Wales is set out in the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, with mirroring provisions for dissolution of civil partnerships in the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

The court will grant a decree or order for divorce or dissolution only if it is satisfied that the marriage or civil partnership has broken down irretrievably.

The question here is that it is up to the courts to make that decision and it is based on evidence provided. Providing that evidence is part of the process of looking at whether reconciliation can be achieved by both parties. The problem here is that when solicitors/barristers become involved that the procedures become adversarial and this makes the process of reconciliation much more difficult.

A spouse seeking a divorce must give evidence of one or more of five 'facts' (or one of four for dissolution of a civil partnership).

Divorce should not be granted without reason and this is quite key in coming to understand why a marriage has broken down and to what extent. The process of divorce is as much pastoral, in helping couples to realise what has caused the breakdown and the reasons behind it (and hopefully help avoid making the same mistakes in the future). The giving of evidence of one or more 'facts' helps identify possible areas of exploration.

When seeking a judicial separation (where couples just want a legal separation rather than a divorce) there is no requirement to establish irretrievable breakdown but one of the facts must nevertheless be demonstrated.

This means that an incentive exists under the current legal requirement to give evidence of spousal conduct in order to avoid waiting a minimum of two years for a separation 'fact' to apply.

That two year period is quite important as it is evidence of considered rather than spontaneous or emotionally driven irretrievable breakdown. It is in effect a cooling down period. To remove or circumvent that is to take away one of the safety nets that actually helps protect couples from making decisions that they may later come to regret.

This has been shown to introduce or aggravate family conflict and impair agreement on future arrangements, especially about children.

That is just part of the nature of divorce. Divorce and conflict cannot be separated whatever arrangements are put in place. The simple answer is 'don't get divorced – make sure you do your homework and get the right partner first.'

Parents, in particular, who are ending their relationship with each other need to maintain a positive and constructive ongoing parenting relationship for the sake of their children.

Of this there is no doubt but where are the safeguards when 'positive and constructive' isn't possible? Also, by making divorce less confrontational as a process just makes divorce much easier and therefore puts more children at risk.

2. Of the 106,713 divorces in 2016, 27% were for separation (two years and consent), 15% were for separation (five years), 11% adultery, 45% behaviour, with the remainder either desertion or a combination of adultery and behaviour.

The present system does work effectively for those people seeking divorce even if it is time consuming. Whilst couples themselves might not regard this as being expedient, as previously stated, it does make divorce as an option a more considered resolution.

3. In cases where adultery, behaviour or desertion, are proven, the minimum time between decree nisi and decree absolute is six weeks and one day. However, most cases take longer than this and the mean time between decrees in 2017 was 25 weeks.

#### **Problem under consideration**

4. 'Fault' can create and exacerbate conflict and there is no evidence that the current legal process protects marriage (Trinder 2017).

Neither is there any offered evidence that the converse is true.

**The key issue driving the policy is to reduce conflict between spouses who have made the considered decision to legally end their marriage or civil partnership,** particularly when the futures of any children they have may be at stake.

There is no mention as to how a 'considered decision' has been made by the couple, or what constitutes a 'considered decision'.

What are the checks and balances made or applied by the courts in their deliberations as to whether a marriage has irretrievably broken down?

Conflict exists because of the divorce. The only way it can be reduced is by couples facing up to their respective responsibilities honestly and openly in a supportive environment. That by implication means accepting fault. Ergo, a 'no fault' divorce is a contradiction in terms.

5. The research referenced in the previous paragraph highlights how reliance on the conduct-based facts can shift focus from the wellbeing of children onto the alleged behaviour of the adult parties.

'Can shift....' but not necessarily. If the courts and representing solicitors were taking their responsibilities seriously then this wouldn't even be a consideration.

I believe that divorce proceedings involving children should be treated very differently to those not involving children.

Even in situations where relations between the parties were initially amicable, introducing conduct allegations can distort negotiations about property, finance and future child care arrangements.

Again, 'can....' The courts should be able and empowered enough to discriminate and advise accordingly.



This may encourage damaging behaviour from the parties for example; manipulation of children, threats to share details of the alleged conduct of the other spouse with their children or the court.

Again, the unqualified use of the word 'may...' Where is the evidence?

Such behaviour (if allowed or accepted by the courts) is likely to be highly detrimental to a child and undermine their relationship with their parents.

Individuals divorcing will also save the time, cost and effort needed to establish that their marriage or civil partnership has irretrievably broken down.

Where is the evidence?

Is this proposed legislation really just a cover for saving the Government money?

It may well be the case given that the proposals also include a 'do it yourself on-line form of application.

6. The Government has concluded that it is necessary to remove the requirement to prove a "fact".

In proving 'fact' it determines responsibility. Divorces rarely are the sole fault of one partner. Usually, fault can be applied to both to some greater or lesser extent.

and is now consulting on the detail of implementation.

The consultation will ask for views on, among other matters:

It will ask for views but will not necessarily take note if it conflicts with their intentions.

Moving to a notification of irretrievable breakdown system

On line applications look the most likely outcome.

The minimum length of time for the revised legal process to end a marriage (or civil partnership), which it is proposed should focus on the period from decree nisi to decree absolute (or conditional order to dissolution order)

Removing the ability of a spouse to contest (defend) these matrimonial proceedings

This is the most concerning precedent. This effectively takes away any hope of reconciling a marriage in difficulty once a notification has been submitted. It means one partner can decide the fate of a marriage without consulting the other and the other is not able by law to lodge a defence of the marriage.

Retaining the bar on divorce or civil partnership dissolution in the first year following legal formation of the relationship

Retention of other procedural requirements and safeguards. This includes the requirement that legal professionals should **certify** whether they have advised their client about the possibility of reconciliation and sources of appropriate help and advice.

‘Certification’ is not enough. There should be a better structure to inform the courts whether a marriage is genuinely irretrievable and that all reasonable steps have been taken to explore all possibilities.

7. This **Impact Assessment (IA)** seeks to support the consultation.

A further IA will therefore be prepared post-consultation which will examine options for the reform of the law governing these matrimonial proceedings, following the consideration of consultation responses.

## **B. Rationale and policy objectives for intervention**

### **Policy Rationale**

8. The rationale for intervention is to reduce the harm resulting from conflict created by the use of conduct facts within matrimonial proceedings.

The rationale is flawed in principle –it should be directed towards strengthening the concept of marriage rather than make divorce easier and 'less painful'.

This is expected to lead to a less confrontational process and thereby allow the discussions relating to children, property and finance to progress more effectively.

Divorce will always be confrontational because it is ultimately about failure. It will always carry elements of blame because it is essentially about failure and fault. It will always be painful and have long lasting consequences that go far beyond the couple involved.

The phrase 'expected to lead to a less confrontational process .....' is not one that exudes great confidence but some limited optimism. I would prefer that the courts had the power to make decisions on behalf of couples, especially with regard to their children, as an incentive to reach genuine and mutually beneficial agreement.

### **Policy objective**

9. The associated policy objective of the Government's options considered in this IA is to remedy the difficulties created by the current statutory requirement to establish irretrievable breakdown by proving a conduct or separation 'fact'. The preferred option would seek to amend the law primarily to the extent that it relates to that requirement.

The difficulty here is that this initiative has arisen from one particular case where a spouse was refused a divorce (based on the circumstances stated in this particular application) because her husband contested it. She was left with the alternative route of a 5 years separation or a mutually agreed two year separation and this was not considered to be a satisfactory arrangement. Under the government's proposals, a 'no fault' provision would give one partner the right to end their marriage whilst denying the other the right to defend it. If one of the agreed human rights in the HRA is the right to be married, then this seems a contradiction in terms to take away the right to remain married.

See <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/law/court-of-appeal-ruling-prompts-renewed-no-fault-divorce-plea/5060412.article>

The basic structure that underlies the legal process in these matrimonial proceedings would remain the same, including safeguards for reconciliation and the two-stage process for legal ending a marriage or civil partnership which will continue to provide couples with an opportunity to change their minds.

The balance of changes and retained provisions would ensure that the decision to initiate matrimonial proceedings remains a considered one, with the opportunity for the couple to change course, while removing the legal requirements that benefit neither them nor society.

This is self-contradicting as it takes away the option for mutual and joint decision making and places it in the hands of the person making the application. Simply, the application cannot be contested, so how is that a 'considered decision'?

10. In doing so, the changes aim to reduce acrimony and conflict and the risk that this leads to poorer outcomes for children.

Evidence? Research? In reality, how does this reduce acrimony and conflict when the decision to make an end of a marriage lies with just the applicant? It will not benefit the children any more than it would under the existing system.

Only a small number of matrimonial proceedings are contested and one driver is for **perpetrators** (????) to exert power and control in cases of domestic abuse.

Emotive, suggestive and unhelpful language use. And the other drivers are....?

If this is the case then why hasn't provision been made for this specific circumstance to be taken into account, rather than bring into being 'no fault' divorces?

'No fault' divorces would just bury the figures for marriage breakdown caused by domestic violence and abuse.

In December 2015 a new domestic abuse offence to capture coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate and familial relationships was introduced into the Serious Crime Act 2015.

This offence recognises that those who suffer psychological and emotional abuse are just as much victims as those who suffer physical violence.

The policy may confer some benefits to those suffering domestic abuse.

Removing the opportunity for respondents in most cases to contest matrimonial proceedings or evidence relied upon in them also removes the risk that a (male or female – yes, it applies to both sexes) perpetrator could continue to coerce and control their spouse through a protracted legal process.

Again, ‘may confer...’ but by no means a certain outcome.

Marriage breakdown caused by domestic violence and abuse will not be resolved by creating ‘no fault’ divorces – that it needs dealing with is not in question but there is already the basis of provision under the terms of the Serious Crimes Act 2015 as a specific ‘fault’ worthy of inclusion in its own right.

This policy does not directly change the law on offences that constitute domestic abuse or protective remedies available to victims, which remain governed by distinct legislation.

### **C. Affected Stakeholder Groups, Organisations and Sectors**

11. The groups most affected by the options assessed in this IA are as follows:

Spouses who wish to bring their marriage or civil partnership to a legal end (divorce)

or who wish to legally live apart without certain ongoing obligations to each other, and their children and families (separate/abandon)

HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the family judiciary (cost)

Legal Profession (cost)

#### **D. Options under Consideration**

12. In order to meet the policy objectives, two options are assessed in this IA:

Option 0: Do Nothing (Baseline)

Option 1: Remove from the legal process the legal “fact” requirement to establish irretrievable breakdown by proving one of the five facts.

13. The Government’s preferred option is option 1 as it best meets the policy objectives.

#### **Option 0: Do Nothing (Baseline)**

14. Under this option the current divorce system would remain in place. This would require continued use of one or more conduct or separation “facts” to meet a legal threshold to establish irretrievable breakdown.



15. Continued use of the conduct facts (adultery, behaviour, or desertion) will retain the incentive for spouses to make allegations about the other's conduct in order to secure a divorce without otherwise waiting a minimum two years to use a separation fact.

The continued use of conduct facts will continue to introduce or increase conflict in some cases, working against other policies intended to reduce conflict and support better outcomes for children and families.

Marriage does not result in divorce on the basis of 'no fault'. Where there is marriage failure, there exists fault, and with fault there is blame. Even in 'no fault' divorces there will be blame, fault and recrimination.

**Option 1: Remove legal "fact" requirement from the divorce process.**

16. The option would remove from the legal process the legal requirement to establish irretrievable breakdown by proving one of the five 'facts'.

So how is irretrievable breakdown proved regarding marriage leading to divorce?

Under a 'no fault' divorce, if there is 'no fault' then why the need to start divorce proceedings?

There has to be fault, it has to be admitted and accepted if there is to be healing and learning through experience. It is a pastoral necessity.

Reconciliation requires forgiveness, forgiveness needs confession, and confession needs great personal honesty. The same is true in marriage and that very much is what you make of it or let it become.

The underlying law would in most other respects remain the same except in relation to the timescale in the divorce process.

The Government proposal focuses on the period between interim and final decrees of divorce (and orders for civil partnership dissolution) and a longer minimum period of six months to better support couples to make the transition and finalise their arrangements for the future.

17. Provisionally, the Government envisages utilising a notification process where one (or possibly both) spouses give notice to the court of the irretrievable breakdown of their marriage or civil partnership, retaining this as the sole legal ground for divorce or civil partnership dissolution but removing the need to demonstrate one of the conduct or separation facts.

The court would then be able to grant a provisional decree of divorce (the decree nisi) or dissolution of a civil partnership (conditional order).

Does this imply that once an application has been made that the process is automatic?

Where do the safeguards and checks lie or have they been removed altogether?

Either spouse would then be able to apply to the court to finalise the legal ending of their relationship through a decree absolute (in respect of divorce) or a dissolution order (in respect of a civil partnership).

Under the current law, a period of at least six weeks must elapse before a final decree or order may be obtained.

18. The Government also believes that the digitisation of less efficient paper-based processes combined with **the removal of the need for parties to draft particulars in support of a 'fact' (and consideration by the court of those particulars) would likely result in a considerable reduction in the period from the start of the legal process to the first interim decree or order.**

Again, where do the safeguards and checks lie and how are they implemented by the courts?

The Government is therefore proposing to set a minimum timeframe between the interim and final decree or order of six months as a period during which couples would finalise arrangements for the future but has set out options for consultation on alternative periods.

In all other respects, the underlying law will remain the same.

19. The family court would retain its function in granting interim and final decrees and orders for divorce and dissolution and orders for judicial separation.

There are important public policy interests in ensuring that only a legally valid marriage or civil partnership is capable of obtaining a legal divorce, dissolution or judicial separation.

It is also important that the family court exercises its powers only in respect of cases where it has the legal jurisdiction to do so, and to guard against the risk of fraudulent proceedings.

20. The court would no longer be required to inquire into the alleged conduct or separation facts in order to be satisfied as to irretrievable breakdown.

**Finally, the truth.... this is what the government is intending marriage to become!**

**The Government believes that spouses should have autonomy to decide for themselves that their marriage or civil partnership has broken down beyond the point where it can be saved, and the legal process should not put in place unnecessary barriers to bringing their legal relationship to an end.**

So there will be no checks or safeguards other than the couple's decision?

**Along with removing the conduct and separation facts, the new policy also proposes to remove the opportunity to contest the divorce because it serves no practical purpose.**

We seek views on this and whether in any exceptional circumstances the ability to contest a divorce or civil partnership dissolution should be retained.

But....

21. **The Government** is satisfied that citing conduct in legally ending a marriage or civil partnership serves neither the interests of the parties nor society, and **will not therefore be consulting on the principle of removing these facts together with the separation facts.**

.....

24. **IAs place a strong focus on the monetisation of costs and benefits.** .....

So essentially, this appears to be a cost led initiative.

.....

### **Benefits of Option 1 Divorcing Couples**

33. The primary benefit of Option 1 ..... is expected to encourage divorcing couples to focus more on the future rather than dwelling on the events of the past and prevent a worsening of the situation for the couple and their family, in particular for their children.

34. In cases where separation would now otherwise be cited to establish irretrievable breakdown, there is likely to be a significant shortening of the time to secure a divorce.

This is because the necessity to wait either two years (if the parties both agree) or five years if they do not to establish irretrievable breakdown will be removed.

Along with the removal of the ability to contest, this should reduce stress for those involved and allow parties to continue with their lives and to plan for their future. ....

#### **F. Assumptions and Risks**

39. The assessment of options in this IA are based on a number of assumptions. In the table below, we set out some of the key assumptions .....

We have assumed no changes to the divorce rate. ....

We have assumed that there is no impact of these changes on the outcome of divorce settlements. ....

On what models, evidence or projections are these assumptions based as if found incorrect then the whole basis of the proposed choice of legislation is flawed?

## **Status of Marriage**

40. Whilst there may be some views that the proposed changes would devalue marriage, the existing (and highly selective) evidence does not seem to support this. ....

43. As set out above, the changes would ensure that the decision to divorce remains a considered one (likely based on a highly recriminate and emotionally charged circumstances), while removing the legal requirements that benefit neither the couple or any children nor society (evidence?). In doing so it aims to reduce acrimony and conflict and the risk that this leads to poorer outcomes for children.

If divorce is made 'easier' then is this suggesting that children will be less affected by divorce?

Surely the converse is more probable, that with divorce being easier, there will be many more divorces and therefore many more children affected by this outcome.

Do these proposals achieve their goals?

Simply, it is a monolithic own goal in the making that will damage society and family stability for many decades to come.

## **USA: the pros and cons of 'No Fault' Divorce**

Extract. Full article <https://www.liveabout.com/the-pros-and-cons-of-no-fault-divorce-laws-1103067>

### **Pros**

- States that adopted no-fault laws saw a decline in the rates of domestic violence.
- These laws empower a man or woman in an abusive marriage and make it easier to leave.
- Means less conflict during divorce, which means less emotional harm to children whose parents, are divorcing.
- Helps reduce the heavy caseloads of family courts.
- Shortens the length of time it takes to obtain a divorce, which, in turn, shortens the amount of time spent in a stressful situation.
- Divorce settlements are based on need, ability to pay and contribution to the family finances, rather than on fault.

### **Cons**

- Over 80% of no-fault divorces are unilateral. This means that one party to the divorce objects to the marriage ending and no-fault laws take away that parties control over whether or not they can save their marriage.



- Has given more power to Family Court Judges in deciding issues such as custody, splitting marital assets and spousal support. When there is no one at fault, a judge's decisions are based on his feelings and feelings are not always objective.
- Takes away a father's rights to his children because they have no defence against a wife who wants to leave the marriage. Courts favour mothers and under the no-fault system it is hard to prove a mother unfit to parent.
- The idea that marriage is a covenant larger than the two people who make it has been lost. Marriage vows and the promise made to each other during those vows have lost their value. This is evident in the high divorce rate in the United States.
- Lowers a dependent wife's living standards because she no longer has grounds to argue in her defence. Her husband can choose to leave her and 75% of the time the courts will not enforce any spousal support. Since the mother gets custody more often than the father this also means a lower standard of living for the children.
- Where once the Family Court Systems allegiance was with the institution of marriage, it is now with the institution of divorce. Family Courts used to put effort into protecting the sanctity of marriage. Now the main concern is to make divorce quick and easy and get it off the docket (*i.e. processed quickly*).

*No Fault Divorce has existed in the States since the 1970's, long enough to have been thoroughly tried and tested, and this is a fairly typical assessment. Some states currently are now trying to revoke legislation simply because it is destroying the whole basis of marriage and family. +lan*

**Write to your MP: a copy of letter to Alec Shelbrook MP, 11/09/2018.**

As someone who spends a good deal of time supporting married couples, and couples coming to be married, I am left feeling very despondent when it comes to hearing about the Government's proposals to introduce 'no fault divorce'. I believe this will end in tears and ultimately create more social and financial problems than it solves.

I am sure that you have already heard all the arguments for and against and that both are very persuasive. I am sure that you will have heard many individual heart breaking stories that evoke a sense of emotional injustice and demand some kind of legislative action so I will be concise.

I very much regard this move towards 'no fault divorce' as retrogressive on two counts:

1. It reduces 'marriage' to a temporary arrangement and takes all the responsibility away from couples to live up to their marriage vows. It undermines the entire concept of 'marriage' as traditionally understood and accepted, something that society is built on.
2. It does not address the source of the problem. Most people genuinely do not understand what is required in being married and what is expected of them. The media/society has created an unreasonable expectation which cannot be met.

'No fault divorce' may well be seen as a panacea to problems that occur in marriage but it takes away the need for real honesty in looking at the causes of failure. Marriage may ultimately end in divorce, but it doesn't have to. 'No fault divorce' simply absolves the need for personal responsibility and makes the basis for marriage a matter of personal selfishness rather than a truly shared partnership. Personal selfishness is not what 'marriage' is about.

The long term affect will be to destabilize society even further by making the breakup of the family unit even easier.

It is in my opinion populist short term politics and is built on emotional and political appeal rather than a long term approach to strengthen society through the family unit. To say it is short sighted is an understatement.

Of its popularity there will be no doubt as thousands of couples, dissatisfied with their partner and possibly based on a single moment or event in time, will see this as a 'free get out of jail card'. Marriage is a long term commitment with responsibilities and that is quite clear in the vows that are made.

Or is the Government simply recognizing and accepting that society has a wholesale lack of integrity when it comes to marriage? If it is, then clearly 'no fault divorce' is not the way forward.

I would rather the time and effort of this Government was directed to strengthening 'marriage' rather than dismantling it.

If it must pursue this course then it would be more appropriate to suggest a 'mutual fault divorce' with both partners having the opportunity to take a serious look at why their marriage is failing/has failed and to accept responsibility for their part in this. At least it will be a better preparation and object lesson when it comes to a possible future repeat marriage. 'No fault' is an untenable myth in reality and is an abrogation of responsibility.

Yours sincerely,

+lan

No response received as yet.

## **Christian Concern: No Fault Divorce, Another Step Towards Abolishing Marriage**

In the biggest shake-up to family law in the past 50 years, the government is set to announce a consultation on 'no-fault divorce', aiming to 'streamline' current divorce procedures by 'decreasing antagonism' and potential 'confrontation'.

The Justice Secretary, David Gauke, is expected to launch a public debate on proposals that are currently being finalised in a bid to 'modernise' existing legislation.

[Speaking recently to \*The Times\*](#), he said that he was *"increasingly persuaded ... that what we have at the moment creates more antagonism than we really need"*. He added that, *"I don't think the best way of helping the institution of marriage is by putting bureaucratic hurdles in the way of a divorce"*.

### **Current Laws**

Under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 in England and Wales, couples wanting a divorce must either prove that their partner is at fault through adultery, desertion or unreasonable behaviour, or if both parties agree, they can part after having been separated for a minimum of two years.

Alternatively, if both parties don't agree, they may divorce after having been separated for a minimum of five years.

According to family law solicitors, Resolution, some 60% of divorces in England and Wales are granted after a spouse makes an allegation of adultery or unreasonable behaviour.

Resolution has [campaigns for changes to the law](#), arguing that the current system creates conflict and an unnecessary 'need to blame'.

Nigel Shepherd, former chair of the family law organisation, said, *“apportioning blame can lead to long-term damage to relationships between children and their parents, and can undermine attempts to resolve matters outside of an already overstretched court system.*

*“The government appears to have heeded our calls to make our divorce system fit for the modern age, and we will continue to push for the much-needed, overdue reform to be implemented as soon as possible”.*

The government has said that their proposals will aim to reduce family conflict and protect children from the confrontational nature of the current system.

The Shadow Justice Secretary, Richard Burdon, said on Friday, *“Labour is fully committed to introducing no-fault divorce proceedings. Instead of yet another consultation, the Conservatives should get on with changing our divorce laws so that they are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century”.*

### **What will this mean for marriage?**

However, changing divorce laws would have a hugely damaging effect on society.

Marriage would be given a far weaker status; “until death us do part” would no longer mean “until death”, but rather “until one of us has had enough”.

Tim Dieppe, Head of Public Policy at Christian Concern, described the new proposals as ‘unilateral divorce’, speaking of the potential dangers for the children of divorced couples: *“These proposals would mean that one partner can impose divorce on the other and any children, forcing them to move house and break up the family. This amounts to ‘unilateral divorce’ where one partner is imposing divorce on the other. Studies have shown that children do better with married parents, even if those parents*

*are in conflict. No-one seems to care about the effects on children and vulnerable women of making one-sided unilateral divorce legal.”*

Thomas Pascoe, of the Coalition for Marriage, argues that although these campaigners argue their reforms are compassionate, in reality they are simply [trivialising marriage and reducing its status](#) “to that of a tenancy contract”.

He adds, “No-fault divorce is really ‘no-reason’ divorce, it undermines marriage by allowing anyone to walk away from their commitments, fully supported by the state, at any time without having to give a good reason.

“[It puts] the most vulnerable at risk by removing the protections in the current system for those who become disabled or suffer a financial setback and whose spouses currently cannot divorce them on this basis.

“It also ignores common sense. You cannot strengthen an institution by stripping it of its legal protections and asking progressively less of its participants.

“Marriage between a man and a woman is part of our history and embedded in our social fabric. Real marriage is not a social invention and cannot be changed by legislation.”

In an article for *The Conservative Woman*, Ann Farmer [agrees](#). “Rather than benefiting couples, the measure will ‘benefit’ only one – the one who wants a divorce for no other reason than that he or she wants it ... this is simply another step on the road to abolishing marriage and returning us to the exploitation and ‘survival of the fittest’ situation that existed before. Once again, ‘progressive’ measures are shown to be regressive – it is ‘modernity’ that really needs updating”.

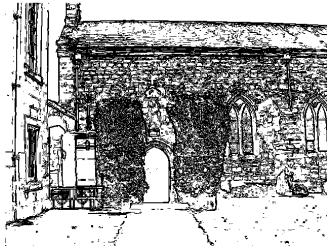
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**Suggested 'As it really is' Vows in Preparation for 'No Fault' Divorce.**

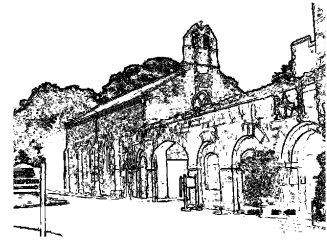
I, (my name), Take you, (your name),  
To be my husband/wife, (delete as appropriate)  
To have and to hold,  
From this day forward,  
For better, not worse,  
For richer, not poorer,  
Nor in sickness but in health,  
To love and to cherish,  
Till boredom, or a newer and better looking model turns up,  
Or for any other random, non-specific but very selfish reasons  
Like I simply can't be asked any more  
Or your kids won't stop screaming,  
Do I part,  
Not that the reason will be any of your business under the proposed legislation

**OPTIONAL:**

According to God's holy law and in the presence of God,  
And as long as it works in my favour, I make this vow.



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.  
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.  
All are very welcome and all may receive freely if of good intent and need.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>





## The Order of St James Newsletter

November 2018: The Year of Marriage

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### The current differences between a 'marriage' and a 'civil partnership'.

Not many people know if there are actually any differences between 'marriages' and 'civil partnerships'. Recent changes to the law and currently proposed changes make the matter more confusing. There are many similarities but there are some significant differences, even if they appear very small. They are very different, especially in a Christian context.

Same sex couples who register their partnership gain access to a number of legal rights. These include rights to survivor pensions, equal treatment for tax and benefit purposes together with next of kin rights. Along with these rights come certain responsibilities including parental and maintenance duties if applicable.

This table sets out the similarities and differences between civil partnership, which is available only to same sex couples, and marriage as it applies to same sex couples as the law stands at the present time.

It would probably not be too unreasonable to assume that the current legislation would be changed little other than it became inclusive of heterosexual couples. Following the announcement of intention of HMGov at the Conservative Party Conference in October, and in response to the Supreme Court ruling re *Steinfeld* and *Keidan*, Civil Partnerships are now to be extended to Heterosexual couples.

	Marriage	Civil Partnership
<b>Separate Legal provisions</b>	Separate legal regime from civil partnership. Provisions set out in the Marriage Act 1949, Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 and Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 (the 2013 Act).	Separate legal regime from marriage. Provisions set out in the Civil Partnership Act 2004.
	Married couples cannot call themselves civil partners for legal purposes.	Civil partners cannot call themselves married for legal purposes.
<b>Formation</b>	Marriages are solemnized by saying a prescribed form of words.	Civil partnerships are registered by signing the civil partnership document, with no words required to be spoken.

	<p>Marriages can be conducted through either a civil ceremony, or a religious ceremony if the religious organisation has agreed to solemnize marriages of same sex couples according to its rites.</p> <p>Currently, HMGov recognises that different religious organizations and faiths have different views on marriage and respects their rights not to conduct same sex marriages.</p>	<p>The formation of a civil partnership is an entirely civil event. Civil partners can choose to add a ceremony to follow the formation of their civil partnership but this does not form part of the formation.</p> <p>Where the civil partnership is formed on religious premises (where the religious organisation agrees to host it), the ceremony may be religious, as long as the actual formation remains secular.</p>
<b>Administrative processes</b>	<p>Notice of marriage is given by each party in the registration district(s) in which he/she has lived for the previous 7 days.</p>	<p>Notice of civil partnership is given by each partner anywhere within the local authority in which he/she has lived for the previous 7 days.</p>
	<p>Marriage notices display the name, date of birth, gender, condition, occupation, address and period of residence, place of marriage, nationality and district of residence of both parties.</p> <p><i>At present, when a heterosexual couple gives notice of their intention to marry, their details, including names, occupations and addresses are made public, as the marriage register is a public document.</i></p>	<p>Civil partnership notices display the name, date of birth, gender, condition, occupation, period of residence, place of civil partnership formation, nationality and Registration Authority of residence of both parties (not their addresses).</p> <p><i>When drafting the civil partnership act the Government recognised that there could be a risk of harassment for some lesbian and gay couples if their sexual orientation were made public. Because of this addresses are not published to protect people's privacy.</i></p>
	<p>Marriages are registered on paper, in a hard copy register.</p>	<p>The details of civil partnerships are recorded in an electronic register.</p>
<b>Certificates</b>	<p>Marriage certificates include the names of only the fathers of the parties.</p>	<p>Civil partnership certificates include the names of both parents of the parties.</p>

	Marriage certificates are available to anyone to purchase provided they can identify the entry.	Civil partnership certificates are available to anyone to purchase provided they can identify the entry. The address will only be shown on the certificate if it is provided by the applicant.
<b>Annulment</b>	A marriage can be annulled for the following reasons:	A civil partnership can be annulled for the following reasons:
	If either party did not validly consent to the marriage.	If either party did not validly consent to the civil partnership formation.
	If either party was suffering from a mental disorder of such a kind as to render them unfit for marriage.	If either party was suffering from a mental disorder of such a kind as to render them unfit for civil partnership.
	If at the time of the marriage the respondent was suffering from a venereal disease in a communicable form.	This is not a ground for annulling a civil partnership.
	If the respondent was pregnant at the time of the marriage by some person other than the petitioner.	If the respondent was pregnant at the time of the civil partnership formation by some person other than the applicant.
	If an interim gender recognition certificate has been issued to either party after the marriage.	If an interim gender recognition certificate has been issued to either party after the formation of the civil partnership.
	If a full gender recognition certificate has been issued as at the date of the marriage to the respondent.	If a full gender recognition certificate has been issued as at the date of the civil partnership to the respondent.
<b>Divorce / Dissolution</b>	<p>Marriage is ended by divorce, by obtaining a decree absolute.</p> <p>Some effects of marriage of the couple end on the issue of the decree nisi.</p>	<p>Civil partnerships are ended by a dissolution order.</p> <p>Some effects of civil partnership of the couple are ended on the issue of an interim order of dissolution.</p>

	A marriage can be ended on the ground that the marriage has broken down irretrievably, relying on one or more of the following facts:	A civil partnership can be dissolved on the ground that the partnership has broken down irretrievably, relying on one or more of the following facts:
	<p>Adultery and the petitioner finds it intolerable to live with the respondent.</p> <p>The definition of adultery is sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex outside of marriage.</p>	This is not a fact which could be relied on for ending a civil partnership.
	Unreasonable behaviour.	Unreasonable behaviour.
	Desertion for 2 years	Desertion for 2 years.
	Separation for 2 years (with the respondent's consent to the divorce).	Separation for 2 years (with the respondent's consent to the dissolution).
	Separation for 5 years (no consent required).	Separation for 5 years (no consent required).
<b>State pensions</b>	<p>Under the 2013 Act, married same sex couples are treated the same as men married to women, irrespective of their gender. They may be entitled to a lower-rate basic pension based on their spouse's National Insurance record only where the spouse was born after 5 April 1950.</p> <p>A married woman whose spouse changes legal gender from male to female during the marriage may qualify for a lower-rate basic pension based on her spouse's National Insurance record regardless of her spouse's date of birth.</p> <p>This is the same treatment as if her spouse had not changed their legal gender.</p>	Civil partners are treated the same as men married to women, irrespective of their gender. They may be entitled to a lower-rate basic pension based on their civil partner's National Insurance record only where the civil partner was born after 5 April 1950.

<b>State pensions for widows, widowers and surviving civil partners</b>	<p>Under the 2013 Act, married same sex couples are treated in the same way as men whose wives have died, irrespective of their gender.</p> <p>Where the surviving spouse is over state pension age and the late spouse died while under state pension age, the survivor can inherit earnings-related state pension only if he or she reaches state pension age after 5 April 2010.</p>	<p>Surviving civil partners are treated the same as men whose wives have died, irrespective of their gender.</p> <p>Where the surviving civil partner is over state pension age and the late civil partner died while under state pension age, the survivor can inherit earnings-related state pension only if he or she reaches state pension age after 5 April 2010.</p>
<b>Survivor benefits – occupational pension schemes</b>	<p>Where an occupational pension scheme provides discretionary survivor benefits, schemes are permitted to only take into account the rights accrued from the date the Civil Partnership Act came into force (5 December 2005).</p> <p>Where an occupational scheme is contracted out schemes are required to pay surviving spouses of either gender half of the Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) accrued based on the member's accruals back to April 1988.</p>	<p>Where an occupational pension scheme provides survivor benefits, schemes are permitted to only take into account the rights accrued from the date the Civil Partnership Act came into force (5 December 2005).</p> <p>Where an occupational scheme is contracted out schemes are required to pay surviving civil partners of either gender half of the Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) accrued based on the member's accruals back to April, 1988.</p>
<b>Survivor benefits – public service pensions</b>	<p>Survivor benefits in public service pensions are, in most cases, in line with those for civil partners and widowers of a marriage between an opposite sex couple. This means that in most cases, in addition to the GMP, they take account of service accrued since 1988.</p>	<p>Survivor benefits in public service pensions are, in most cases, in line with those for survivors of a marriage of a same sex couple, and widowers of a marriage of an opposite sex couple. This means that in most cases, in addition to the GMP, they take account of service accrued since 1988.</p>

Source: HMGov with some amplification for clarification.

## Why legal reform is required?

Extracted from Family Partnership In Law Ltd. Copyright not indicated at source and reprinted as being 'non-copyright'.

New figures released by the ONS reveal that the number of same-sex couples entering into civil partnerships increased by 3.4% in 2016. This represents the *first annual increase* since same-sex marriage became possible in March 2014 following the enactment of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. Further, nearly half (49%) of those entering a civil partnership in 2016 were aged 50 or above. So what might these figures show within the overall context of modern day relationships?

### *Civil Partnerships vs. Marriage*

The face of the 'modern family' has been in transition for some time. Same-sex couples have been able to enter into a civil partnership in the UK since December 2005. Nine years then passed until same sex couples could marry including converting their civil partnerships into marriages. This marked one of the biggest sea changes in family law as well as a moment of profound importance for the gay community.

What became less obvious to the wider world is the reverse discrimination that some opposite-sex couples have since felt by dint of the fact that they are unable to enter into civil partnerships as an alternative to marriage. This sentiment gained attention and indeed momentum when Rebecca Steinfeld and Charles Keidan sought to challenge the government on this very point in December 2014. Nearly 3 years on, in August 2017, the couple have been granted permission to appeal to the Supreme Court (*and the judgement was declared in their favour, prompting the announcement by HMGov to reform the current law*).

With a rise in the number of couples choosing to cohabit rather than marry, it would seem that the law is falling behind changes in societal attitudes. Rebecca Steinfeld and Charles Keidan feel that a civil partnership is more representative of how they live their lives.

They say that a civil partnership "*captures the essence of our relationship and values. Civil partnerships are a modern social institution conferring almost identical legal rights and responsibilities as marriage, but without its historical baggage, gendered provisions and social expectations.*"

The recent statistics released by the ONS show that the number of those entering into civil partnerships in England and Wales is starting to pick up again. However, we have also seen an increase in the number of civil partnership dissolutions.

In 2016, the figure rose by nearly 9% in England and Wales which means the number of civil partnership formations was outweighed by the number of dissolutions in 2016. Further, of the 1,313 civil partnership dissolutions that took place in 2016, 60% were accounted for by female couples.

### **Same Sex Marriage and Religion**

It is important to remember that whilst same-sex couples are now able to enter into a civil marriage, the legislation does not compel religious organisations to conduct marriages between same sex couples. For example, the Church of England is legally banned from conducting marriages between same sex couples pursuant to The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. Similarly, same sex marriages cannot take place in Roman Catholic churches, Islamic mosques, Orthodox synagogues nor Hindu temples.

You can only therefore enter into a marriage as a same sex couple if:

1. the religious organisation allows the marriage of same sex couples to take place; and
2. the premises has been registered for the marriage of same sex couples

Research undertaken by York University and Leeds University show that *“Only 139 places of worship are registered to perform same-sex marriage in England and Wales, meaning approximately 99.5 per cent do not offer it. Just 23 same-sex couples had a religious marriage ceremony in 2014, compared with over 68,000 opposite-sex couples.”*

So this in itself may represent a disincentive to marriage for many same-sex couples who wish to have a religious marriage in addition to a civil marriage and for whom, arguably a religious marriage is of crucial significance. *(Or it may equally be the way things really are. +lan)*

### **Conversion of Civil Partnerships to Marriage**

Religious marriages aside, statistics from the ONS show that between 10 December 2014 and 30 June 2015, the number of conversions of civil partnerships to same sex marriages has declined.

The peak was in December 2014 with conversions totalling 2401. There has however been a steep decline to 691 conversions in June 2015 representing just 13% of total civil partners in England and Wales. As the ONS identifies, one possible reason for the lower uptake of marriages between same sex parties as compared to civil partnerships is because when civil partnerships were first introduced, this was the only option available to same sex couples to formalise their relationship.

Interestingly however, since the introduction of marriages of same-sex couples in 2014, the percentage of civil partnerships formed by male couples has increased from 57% in 2014 to 68% in 2016. Conversely, the number of female couples entering into civil partnerships decreased from 43% in 2014 to 32% in 2016.

### **What Next?**

For whatever reason, some couples who are currently cohabiting choose not to marry. The idea of marriage may simply not coincide with their values or beliefs.

For many people, a civil partnership conforms more with their way of life and of course offers the legal protection that is otherwise unavailable as a cohabiting couple.

This in itself is a hugely persuasive argument put forward by family practitioners for a change in the law and, of course highlights the lack of protection for those in cohabiting relationships.

In its latest release, the ONS states that “*the Government Equalities Office (GEO) considers that it is too early to fully evaluate the impact of the introduction of marriage for same-sex couples on civil partnerships – more years of data are required*”. The latest statistics regarding marriage in the UK are due to be released early in 2018.

Nevertheless, the *Steinfeld* and *Keidan* case has the potential to make some ground-breaking law as regards civil partnerships and ..... will provide an alternative to cohabiting couples who are looking to formalise their relationship in a manner other than marriage.

A change in the law is warranted and the recent statistics from the ONS should also guide policymakers as to reform in this area.

### **Sources:**

[Civil Partnerships in England and Wales: 2016. Statistical Bulletin. Office for National Statistics.](#)

Sacred Spaces, Sacred Words: Religion and Same-sex Marriage in England and Wales by Paul Johnson (Professor of Sociology, University of York) and Robert M. Vanderbeck (Professor of Geography, University of Leeds). The Journal of Law and Society 2 May 2017.



## **Marriage, Civil partnership, Co-habitation and Common law.**

No one wants to think about the end of a relationship and what happens then, particularly regarding the law. The following is for information regarding one of the most overlooked areas of law regarding the difference between Marriage, Civil Partnerships, and Co-habitation or Common Law Spouses, and that is 'what happens when a partner dies'. The law is different regarding each relationship type. Surviving partners don't always have the rights they think they have and may need to seek further qualified legal advice.

The following is extracted from 'Final Duties'. Copyright not indicated at source and reprinted on this basis as being 'non-copyright'.

### **Marriage**

The Oxford English dictionary defines marriage as "The legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship" In the UK marriage can be between two people of an opposite gender or two people of the same gender.

There are benefits to being married when it comes to rights to inherit, inheritance tax and estate administration. As a spouse you are protected by law under the Rules of Intestacy, this means if your spouse has not left a valid will you are still entitled to inherit from their estate. Spouses are considered the most direct next of kin and take priority over blood relations.

There are also inheritance tax benefits to leaving your estate to your spouse, the first being that there is no Inheritance tax to pay on assets being passed between spouses (although there are sometimes in certain circumstances exceptions to this rule). When you pass your estate to your spouse you also pass your Nil Rate Band which entitles your spouse a higher inheritance tax threshold on their death.

### **Civil Partnerships**

Citizens Advice defines civil partnerships as "a legal relationship which can be registered by two people of the same sex who aren't related to each other."

The benefits of a civil partnership is that if you are in a same-sex relationship your partnership is legally recognised, this means you will have additional legal rights and responsibilities. When it comes to Inheritance tax and Estate administration civil partners are entitled to the same property rights, inheritance tax exemptions, social security and pension benefits as married couples.

This includes the right to inherit under the rules of intestacy and the transfer of their Nil Rate Band.

### **Common law spouses**

Common law husbands or wives are not legally recognised under British Inheritance laws, and therefore no provision is made for them under the Rules of Intestacy. This means that they will not be entitled to inherit upon the others death, and the deceased's estate will be distributed to their next of kin.

To ensure that your partner will be provided for after your death you must write a valid will naming them as a beneficiary of your estate. If you do write a will leaving your estate to your partner they will still not receive the same tax exemptions that a spouse would.

### **Living together/ Cohabiting**

Although there is no legal definition of living together, it generally means to live together as a couple without being married or in a civil partnership. When it comes to inheritance and estate administration you do not have the same rights when the relationship is not legally recognised, this means you do not receive the same tax benefits or rights to inherit.

To ensure that your partner inherits it is important to write a will instructing how you want your estate to be distributed. This is especially important if you own assets in your sole name or if you own property together as tenants in common.

When one partner dies without leaving a valid will, Living together or cohabiting does not give you the same legal entitlement to inherit as a spouse/civil partner or family member. When there is no valid will their estate would be subject to the rules of intestacy, these rules prioritise spouses /civil partners and family members.

The laws of intestacy will designate your next of kin as your beneficiaries, without the correct precautions in place your partner may be forced into giving up assets you wanted them to have.

Your partner will only inherit assets you owned together, in joint names. The surviving owner will automatically inherit these assets regardless of your relationship with them through the rights of survivorship for example, joint bank accounts or a property owned as joint tenants.

Where survivorship is not applicable is when property is owned as tenants in common. Without a valid will stating who should inherit the deceased share of the property, it will be distributed according to the next of kin entitled by the rules of intestacy. In some cases this can lead to the surviving partner having to sell the property for the deceased's beneficiaries to receive their share.

Under certain circumstances you can apply to the court to receive from the estate or more of the estate if your partner dies without leaving enough or no provision for you and you were financially reliant on them.

## **Opinion: the future of marriage.**

+lan

I believe that Christian marriage still has a future despite the further watering down of 'marriage' by HMGov. So why do I feel optimistic, especially when HMGov seems hell bent on reducing marriage to a 'come and go as you please' temporary social contract?

Below is a simple table comparing Christian Marriage values against HMGov's proposals. It speaks for itself.

<b><u>Christian Marriage Values</u></b>	<b><u>HMGov existing/proposed alternatives: (Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships)</u></b>
'Marriage is between a man and a woman and is intended for the procreation of children'	Any two unrelated people of any self-declared gender can have a Civil Marriage/Partnership
The family is defined as a mother(female), father (male) and their children (male and female). Gender is biologically defined	Gender is not based on biological referencing and extends across the whole LGBT spectrum. It is based on who or what you think you are or would like to be recognised as
Christian marriage is built on scripturally based ethics and codes of behaviour with specific responsibilities, obligations and expectations required of each partner	Anything is allowable so long as you are old enough, have given your consent and are not directly related to your partner, or change gender
Christian Marriage is intended for the life of both partners' i.e. 'till death do us part'	Civil marriages/partnerships are intended for the life of the marriage/partnership rather than the life of both partners

In Christian Marriage, divorce is not generally considered 'an option' from the outset	No Fault Divorce means that divorce can be quick and easy and no reason for the divorce is required because it is 'no fault'
Marriage is a Christian Sacrament and encompasses the most intimate emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of life	A civil marriage/civil partnership is essentially a legally defined contract governed by civil law. It is devoid of any faith aspect
The church community which the couple are a part of are there to support and guide the couple when they face difficulty	A partner can decide for themselves whether their marriage has broken down irretrievably without the consent of the other
<p>The success or failure of a Christian marriage is a communal responsibility.</p> <p>Christians have a responsibility to lead by example</p>	HMGov believes people are able to make 'considered decisions' without the need for any external support, guidance or form of intervention. The couple are essentially to be left to sort out their own problems
<p>The basis of Christian marriage is that it is tried and tested, is ordained of God, and is for the protection and mutual benefit of not just those getting married, but of their families and for the good and stability of society as a whole, not just for the Christian community.</p> <p>Christian marriage is not based on emotional, sexual or spiritual self-gratification.</p> <p>Christian marriage does not fail, but it recognises that people do, and this sometimes leads to divorce</p>	HMGov is responding to change demanded by a very small but highly vocal number of self-interested groups largely intent on destroying social stability or with their own political agendas. These groups represent the difference between being the present government being the elected majority and it sitting in opposition. Whilst small in size, these unelected groups hold an unrepresentatively large amount of power in the present circumstances and their views do not necessarily represent those of the majority of the electorate

There is obviously a massive difference between the columns in the table, and whatever position you take on this, any of the individual statements made in either column have equally massive personal and social implications.

Christian marriage begins with the precept that 'marriage' is a work in progress rather than it being considered an end in itself. It grows towards perfection rather than starts there.

What is interesting is the number of brides and grooms who want 'a church wedding' even though they may not have any lasting connection with 'the church'. It seems it is what it represents that catches their attention and draws them to it. Whether it is the inner stirrings of a call to faith or is based on a kind of superstition is debatable. The thing is, it exists.

As a person of faith, if I was getting married, I would rather start with grounded expectations and the spiritual, emotional and physical responsibilities and intentions of 'Christian Marriage', through which both I and my partner were making a lifetime's commitment, not just to one another, but to any subsequent children, to our families and to the community/church we are all a part of. Divorce is simply not part of the deal, even when things get very difficult.

In contrast, a civil marriage or partnership tends to start with the idea of 'happy ever after' coupled with 'we can always get divorced if things don't work out', and it ultimately lacks both solid foundation and conviction because there is an easy way out. It is often based on 'how we feel about each other now' and thinks of marriage/partnership as the pinnacle of achievement, the end of the journey rather than the beginning.

It is mostly premised on a lie – there is no such thing as 'happy ever after' unless you happen to be a character in a Disney movie. This kind of basis for a lasting relationship is doomed to failure and disappointment - life is not, and people are not, perfect - and this lack of realistic expectation is a real handicap and will end in tears. It is based on very transient emotional responses to circumstance rather than the evidence of time and experience.

For me, and probably for most people, the Christian view of marriage is the gold standard and ideal, but it is a hard path to follow once the honeymoon years are gone. That is why family, friends and community are so important in keeping us on the right track with their support and experience and wisdom, things that 'no fault divorce' removes the need for.

So what would I put in place instead of the present proposals?

The way I feel at the moment, (and you should never make a decision based on feelings alone), I am favouring the continental system of marriages – an agreed 'one cap fits all' civil service followed by a separate religious marriage service if required.

That in itself allows things to be taken things up a notch because we can reset the standard and the expectation. 'Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and render unto God what is God's.'

I would not change the present system for allowing individual churches to opt in to 'same sex marriages' although personally I cannot see any scriptural justification for allowing these at all. .

(The idea of having to opt out of conducting same sex marriages is one step too close to having no choice but to comply by law.)

Regarding HMGov's proposed change of the gender recognition laws - the changes being consulted on currently include:

1. Allowing a person to change legal gender without first living as a member of the opposite sex for two years;
2. Allowing legal gender change without any medical diagnosis;
3. Removing the requirement that a married person who changes gender may only do so with the permission of their spouse;

I reckon that this proposed position regarding item 3 was the result of an 'own goal' by HMGov not thinking the original legislation on gender recognition through properly, especially in the way it would be affected by and affect the law governing marriage and civil partnerships\*. The proposals do not resolve the problems but just compound them.

*\*The current effect of Gender Recognition legislation on Civil Partnerships and Marriages*

*A same sex civil partnership – one partner changes legal gender and under the current law that automatically dissolves their partnership as they are now legally a heterosexual couple.*

*A civil marriage - one partner changes legal gender forcing the law to nullify their marriage as they are now legally the same sex.*

Perhaps you can see why HMGov is trying to change the legislation.

However, it has great consequences for the church.

*A heterosexual church marriage – one partner changes legal gender forcing the law to nullify the marriage but some would say it cannot nullify the marriage in the eyes of God. How does the church community handle this forced situation pastorally and theologically?*

If accepted it would potentially lead to even more marriages or civil partnerships being rendered invalid in the eyes of the law.

Then what?

My concern is that the current HMGov proposals are too focused on the rights of the individual to determine their own gender and not the partner and the effect it has on them. They have rights too. We as Christians need to have thought through how we respond the Gender Recognition legislation and the way it affects our understanding of sexuality and marriage.

The whole issue of gender recognition, marriage and civil partnership is a complete mess the way it stands, and these proposals if enacted will only make things far worse.

(My comments do not mean that I support the proposals or the principles embedded in the legislation in any way, but even I can see that they are flawed and will cause massive pastoral problems if there are no interventions. Even whilst we as Christians may disagree with the LGBT community about its objectives and life choices, they are still God's children and we as Christians still have a responsibility towards them as we do with all in the community.)

Then there is the problem of the inequalities between marriage, civil partnerships and common law relationships.

Are these inequalities still valid?

Sometimes inequalities are necessary simply to make thing workable even if they are not inherently 'fair'. Or is it about choice and therefore inequalities are necessary?

Do inequalities occur as a temporary effect of transition from one state of legislation to another?

Let's look at 'common law' relationships as a case in point. Couples in 'common law' relationships may be equally faithful and loving and committed as a married couple compared to those in a civil partnership, so why are they discriminated against when it comes to matters of legal protection, taxation and inheritance, or is that part of making that deliberate choice?

To be very controversial, I might suggest a principle of 'automatically registered civil partnerships (ARCP)' – that after a set period of say three years, a couple cohabiting are determined legally to be in a civil partnership by default. If they had children, an ARCP would immediately apply. There would be no 'opt out' unless there were exceptional reasons.

(I am self admittedly old fashioned and a bit 'Old Testament' in my attitudes in this but I still think 'if a person is good enough to have sexual intercourse with, they are good enough to be married to.')

There would of course be huge objections if my proposals were to be enacted in law and it would create massive legislative and social problems, but this for me is about couples being fully made to accept their personal and social responsibilities and commitments, especially where children are concerned. There is nothing that should be optional about this in my view.

That is the basis of Christian love and we are not on this earth for our own gratification, but for the benefit of those God has brought into our lives. It is not about being 'selfish' but being 'self-less'.

At the moment, it seems like society has deemed it is ok to be self-focused and self-absorbed, and it appears you can have your cake and eat it, and let someone else clear up the mess afterwards.

We all want 'rights' but it seems nobody wants the responsibilities that go with them. We all want 'free speech', to be able to express our opinions, but we don't want anybody to disagree with us. We all want what makes our lives better, even if it is at the expense of someone else.

I'd like to both challenge and change those preconceptions. So let me start with divorce.

Marriage is what you make it or let it become. It has to be worked at to make it successful. It takes time and effort and it is often stressful and difficult. Divorce should be the very last thing on a couple's mind at any point in their relationship. Making 'marriage' work should be the prime focus.

On that basis I am not in favour of making 'divorce' easier/less stressful or speeding up the process in principle. (However, I would probably make exceptions where rape or domestic violence or abuse leading to a criminal conviction and term of imprisonment are the cause of divorce.)

If I have to accept 'divorce' as a social necessity then I am more in favour of a 'mutual fault' divorce rather than a 'no fault' divorce.

As I have stated before, there is no such thing as 'no fault' where divorce is concerned. Marriage is what you make it or let it become. Both partners would be required to focus on their contribution to the breakdown of their marriage rather than their partner's.



Divorce, if it has to be, has to be learned from if it has any personal and/or social value. Making divorce easier will not reduce the divorce figures and will trivialise marriage even further despite HMGov's 'considered' but un-evidenced judgements on this matter.

Pastorally, couples need to look at why things fell apart in preparation for further potential relationships otherwise the cycle continues unabated. This requires time and mediation and adds to the costs whereas 'no fault' divorce is an attempt by HMGov to bypass this responsibility and save court costs.

There will always be a financial cost to society when there is a divorce, and 'no fault' divorce is on HMGov's own admission just a means of shifting the costs from the public purse to private ones and reducing work load (and subsequently, the number of staff required) in the courts. It leads me to wonder just how many of these proposals are being motivated and driven by reducing HMGov's spending rather than by actual social need.

Or is there something else driving this?

What is almost totally lacking in the latest round of HMGov's proposals is the matter of pastoral care, guidance and support, especially where children are concerned or where one or both of the couple are carers. That is probably because no visible funds have been allocated in the proposals.

Yet again, this deficiency will have to be covered by the larger church community and the voluntary sector.

Yet again.....? Yes, yet again!

I am particularly grieved by the promises HMGov made regarding our military being returned back to civilian life after their tours of duty – HMGov made many fine speeches and promises but, as time proved, there was little substance. It was left to the voluntary sector to do the bulk of the rehabilitation and the providing of what treatment it could for those suffering from PTSD.

The irony of all this is the gold standard of marriage set by our faith (and occasionally supported by the church when it remembers its responsibilities) remains socially aspirational despite all attempts to lower its moral and social value. Even couples, with no connection to 'church', still see 'a church wedding' and all it encompasses spiritually, as something as highly desirable in principle, even if they can't explain why. The irony exists in that HMGov is relying on the very organizations it frequently rails against to pick up the pieces and the tab for the damage it (HMGov) has caused.

My suspicion is that with such small percentages needed to shift the seat of power in government from one party to another, it is the largely electorally unrepresentative groups that hold those tiny percentages and have their own agendas that are driving the legislation forward. This is a case of the tail wagging the dog and it is not a form of government that I understand as being either democratic or representative of the electorate. It is about power and control rather than service to the country.

(Service is what OSJ is about and we have shown it works perfectly well.)

I cannot change the nation's politics, but as a Christian I don't have to accept second best and I have a voice. I cannot see the point in remaining silent. This issue of 'marriage' affects my friends, my family, my children and my grandchildren (you should see what is in the curriculum for PHSCE), and beyond into the foundations of society itself. As the Old Testament suggests 'my sins (in this case failures to act) will be visited on my children to the seventh generation.'

So if I do not speak out, then who will?

One of our few rules in OSJ is 'If you see the need, deal with it.' You can't assume anyone else will take responsibility or act appropriately, so get on with it. You don't need my permission.

When I stand face to face with God, will I feel the shame of not having done something, even something as simple as just offering a concerned prayer, when I could or should have?

The saying, 'all the devil has to do to succeed is for good people to do nothing,' is perfectly applicable in this case.

God's vision for marriage remains the gold standard. It is not easy because we are all flawed and we will make mistakes, but it remains the gold standard and we should not be afraid of rallying to the call to uphold and defend that.

We can speak with confidence knowing that the God we serve has the ultimate authority. +Ian

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**Comment: Organizing a wedding and dealing with expectation.....**

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3642283/Why-have-weddings-become-so-grotesque.html>

Anybody fancy starting a 'Campaign for Real Weddings'?

**EXTRACTS FROM THE JUDGMENT OF THE SUPREME COURT, 10 OCTOBER 2018:**

**(Lee v Ashers Baking Company Ltd and others [2018] UKSC 49)**

**'Christians have rights too.'**

**FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

"On 8 or 9 May 2014, Mr Lee went into the shop and placed an order for a cake to be iced with his design, a coloured picture of cartoon-like characters "Bert and Ernie", the QueerSpace logo, and the headline "Support Gay Marriage". Mrs McArthur took the order but raised no objection at the time because she wished to consider how to explain her objection and to spare Mr Lee any embarrassment. Mr Lee paid for the cake. Over the following weekend, the McArthurs decided that they could not in conscience produce a cake with that slogan and so should not fulfil the order. On Monday 12 May 2014, Mrs McArthur telephoned Mr Lee and explained that his order could not be fulfilled because they were a Christian business and could not print the slogan requested. She apologised to Mr Lee and he was later given a full refund and the image was returned to him." [Para. 12]

"The Court of Appeal held that there was no evidence that the bakery had discriminated on that or any other prohibited ground in the past. The evidence was that they both employed and served gay people and treated them in a non-discriminatory way. .... The reason was their religious objection to gay marriage." [Para. 28]

In a nutshell, the objection was to the message and not to any particular person or persons."  
[Para. 34]

"...The SORs [Sexual Orientation Regulations] do not, at least in the circumstances of this case, impose civil liability for the refusal to express a political opinion or express a view on a matter of public policy contrary to the religious belief of the person refusing to express that view." [Para. 36]

"The objection was not to Mr Lee because he, or anyone with whom he associated, held a political opinion supporting gay marriage. The objection was to being required to promote the message on the cake. The less favourable treatment was afforded to the message, not to the man. ...The evidence was that they were quite prepared to serve him in other ways. The situation is not comparable to people being refused jobs, accommodation or business simply because of their religious faith. It is more akin to a Christian printing business being required to print leaflets promoting an atheist message." [Para. 47]

"...obliging a person to manifest a belief which he does not hold has been held to be a limitation on his article 9(1) rights." [Para. 50]

"The freedom not to be obliged to hold or to manifest beliefs that one does not hold is also protected by article 10 of the Convention... The right to freedom of expression does not in terms include the right not to express an opinion but it has long been held that it does.

Lord Dyson held that the principle applied as much to political opinions as it did to religious belief: 'Nobody should be forced to have or express a political opinion in which he does not believe'" [Para. 52]

"what matters is that by being required to produce the cake they were being required to express a message with which they deeply disagreed." [Para. 54]

"...The bakery could not refuse to provide a cake - or any other of their products – to Mr Lee because he was a gay man or because he supported gay marriage. But ..... they would be entitled to refuse to do that whatever the message conveyed by the icing on the cake – support for living in sin, support for a particular political party, support for a particular religious denomination. The fact that this particular message had to do with sexual orientation is irrelevant to the FETO claim." [Para. 55]

"...FETO should not be read or given effect in such a way as to compel providers of goods, facilities and services to express a message with which they disagree, unless justification is shown for doing so." [Para. 56]

"The important message from the Masterpiece Bakery case is that ..... there was no discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. " "The bakery would have refused to supply this particular cake to anyone, whatever their personal characteristics. " [Para. 62]

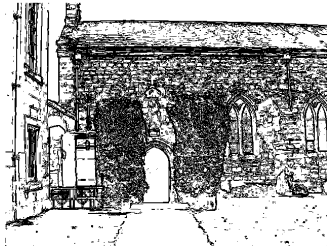
### **THE EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND [ECNI]**

"The Court of Appeal expressed some concern that the correspondence between the ECNI and the bakery may have created the impression that the ECNI was not interested in assisting members of the faith community when they found themselves in difficulties as a result of their deeply held religious beliefs." [Para. 106].

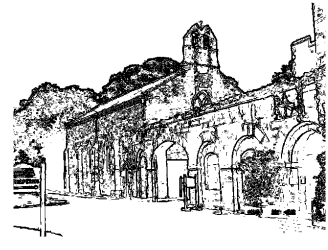
It is obviously necessary for a body such as the ECNI to offer its services to all people who may need them because of a protected characteristic and not to give the impression of favouring one such characteristic over others." [Para. 14]

### **Summary:**

- Supreme Court agrees it was about 'the message not the messenger'
- Unanimous decision: 5-0 in favour of Ashers Baking Co
- Equality law does not compel people to say something with which they profoundly disagree
- Court says: "There was no discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in this case."
- There was no discrimination on grounds of religious belief or political opinion
- Judgment: "The objection was to being required to promote the message on the cake. The less favourable treatment was afforded to the message not to the man." (Paragraph 47)



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.  
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.  
All are very welcome and all may receive freely if of good intent and need.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James</b> <b>Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>December 2018: The Year of Marriage</b></p>	
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### Joseph: a Model Husband and Father?

There isn't much in the Gospels that helps us with information regarding Joseph, the husband of Mary and the earthly father of Jesus. A lot of the information we have come to accept about Joseph is actually quite subjective and based on a few references so can't be taken as 'Gospel'.

So here is the main reference:

**Matthew 1:18-25**<sup>18</sup>*This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>19</sup>*Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.* <sup>20</sup>*But after he had considered this, an angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."* <sup>22</sup>*All this took place to fulfil what the LORD had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

<sup>24</sup>*When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the LORD had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup>But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

**All references:**

Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Joseph lived in Nazareth			Luke 2:4	
Genealogy of Jesus	Matthew 1:1–17 Solomon to Jacob		Luke 3:23 Nathan to Heli	
Joseph Betrothed to Mary	Matthew 1:18			
Angel visits Joseph (1st dream)	Matthew 1:20–21			
Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem			Luke 2:1–5	
Birth of Jesus	Matthew 1:25		Luke 2:6–7	
Temple presentation			Luke 2:22–24	
Angel tells Joseph to flee (2nd dream)	Matthew 2:13			
Flight into Egypt	Matthew 2:14–15			
Angel tells Joseph to return to Nazareth (3rd dream)	Matthew 2:19–20			
Joseph and family settle in Nazareth	Matthew 2:21–23		Luke 2:39	
Finding Jesus in the Temple			Luke 2:41–51	
Holy Family				John 6:41–42

If you ask thinking people what they think they know you about Joseph will get ideas like the following, (particularly a fascination as to how old Joseph and Mary actually were when Jesus was born): I picked out three at random from the internet.

**(Daniel Gerber)** *There's no verse in the Bible that says how old either Joseph or Mary were. Since she was a virgin, engaged but not yet married, one could assume from that culture that she was young. I don't think we have any good historical evidence for how old peasant women were when they married at that time, in the country areas, but we can assume it would be young by our standards. 12 sounds a bit young though. But that's just assuming by looking at traditional cultures all around the world, some that still survive to this day. In some parts of Africa, for example, despite the governments' really strong attempts to stamp out the practice, 15 is still quite a common age for a woman to get married.*



*The man would normally be expected to be older, of course, since he needs to have a job, and a little bit of money, so that they have somewhere to live and he can adequately support a child (and his wife). So a man being somewhere in his twenty's wouldn't be unusual.*

*Not many men are willing to wait till they're go to get married. There's nothing to suggest that Joseph was that old, not in the Bible, and not, as far as I know, in any good extra-biblical sources - i.e. ones that could possibly have any chance of being anywhere vaguely near accurate.*

*The idea that he must have been very old sprung up much later. The Catholic Church wanted to believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary (something that's not in the Bible at all, in fact it seems to imply that they did have sex after Jesus was born, presumably getting married!) But the gospels refer to a few of Jesus brothers, and Matthew and Mark also refer to a few unnamed sisters. So some people suggest that these siblings were half-siblings, through Joseph.*

*Of course that isn't a very good explanation, not least of all since if Joseph wasn't really Jesus' father, those siblings wouldn't even be half-siblings!*

*Also if those siblings are anywhere near Jesus' age, Joseph still wouldn't have to be anywhere near ninety when he married marry.*

*But the problem that some Christians have is that after Jesus' teenage years there's no mention of Joseph. In one gospel, when Jesus is dying, he asks one of his disciples to look after his mother Mary.*

*If this actually happened, it would imply that Mary was a widow. In those days, when women couldn't work, widows usually needed to be looked after, but married women were looked after by their husbands. This implies that Joseph was not in the picture by then already. So many people think that he must have died some time before that, possibly during Jesus' teens. Of course, there's a lot of ways people can die, but probably the least scandalous is by old age, so the story seemed to fit nicely with the idea that Joseph was already very old when Jesus was born.*

**(Anderley St Fleur)** *One can guess Joseph was older than Mary since he died before even Jesus did. Jesus is once called "the son of Mary" with no reference to Joseph. ( Mark 6:3) Joseph is also not mentioned anywhere in the Scriptures after figuring in an incident that occurred when Jesus was 12 years old.*

*But Joseph 90?*

*And Mary 12?*

*That's just false.*

*Mary had other children by Joseph after Jesus. So Joseph could not have been 90 at the time when he married Mary as he would not be able to still have kids at 100.*

*The following verses : Matt 12 :46; 13:55,56; Mr 3:31; Lu 8:19; Joh 2:12; Ac 1:14, 1Cor 9:5; Ga 1:19 show that Jesus had at least four brothers and two sisters.*

*Also Joseph was still working as a carpenter after Jesus was born. Carpentry is a profession that requires great strength; strength that a 90 year old Joseph would not have. And Mary is depicted as a mature person before Jesus' birth when the angel came to visit her, not a 12 year old.*

**(Zorah MysDes)** *Traditional engagements in Jewish culture occurred when the female was between 15 and 17; while the actual marriage took place between 16 and 18.*

*The male was generally 2 - 5 years older than the female, and families either side were generally in full agreement for the wedding to take place.*

*Obviously there were exceptions to this, just as there are in our own time; but the story of Mary and Joseph did not divert from traditional protocol.*

*Both of their families were very religious, and Mary could have been stoned when she came back from her cousin's house pregnant, due to the strict order of the Israelites.*

As you can see, there are some intelligent and thinking people out there trying to make the most out of the little information that there is about Joseph.

However there are other sources that you may not be aware of and these can be found in the Gnostic Writings and the Apocryphal Texts.

These writings are sometimes considered useful for study and research, and are often the real sources of many of the things we believe to be 'true facts' but they may be wholly based on stories and teachings handed down by word of mouth, or are based on often schismatic or unorthodox teachings found within the early church as it struggled with emerging and distinctly Christian theology, and written in the form of the pseudo gospel or even letters purporting to be from the apostles.

(Some may even be legitimately regarded as 'disinformation' and disruptive propaganda but that is not to say they don't contain elements that have some truth.)

It might be useful to remember that there was a power struggle going on between all the different Christian factions as they each struggled for supremacy and that new letters and gospels were to be had in abundance.

However, not all of these documents were what they purported to be, and each faction vied with the other as to who had the real, undeniable, most complete knowledge and wisdom of Jesus, and therefore were God's only true representatives.

(As a rough yardstick, if any of the texts contain the words 'the secret teachings of our Lord' then they probably fall into these categories and should not be taken too seriously but will be 'of use in edifying the reader'.)

What follows is the complete **Apocryphal Text: 'Joseph the Carpenter,'** a compilation of different emerging traditions, and it was probably composed in Byzantine Egypt in Greek in the late 6th or early 7th century although some have cited 4<sup>th</sup> Century origins.

This translation is taken from the Coptic version.

## Apocryphal Text: 'Joseph the Carpenter.'

*'In the name of God, of one essence and three persons.*

*The history of the death of our father, the holy old man, Joseph the carpenter. May his blessings and prayers preserve us all, O brethren! Amen.*

*His whole life was one hundred and eleven years, and his departure from this world happened on the twenty-sixth of the month Abib, which answers to the month Ab. May his prayer preserve us! Amen. And, indeed, it was our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who related this history to His holy disciples on the Mount of Olives, and all Joseph's labour, and the end of his days. And the holy apostles have preserved this conversation, and have left it written down in the library at Jerusalem. May their prayers preserve us! Amen.*

*1. It happened one day, when the Saviour, our Master, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, was sitting along with His disciples, and they were all assembled on the Mount of Olives, that He said to them: O my brethren and friends, sons of the Father who has chosen you from all men, you know that I have often told you that I must be crucified, and must die for the salvation of Adam and his posterity, and that I shall rise from the dead. Now I shall commit to you the doctrine of the holy gospel formerly announced to you, that you may declare I, throughout the whole world. And I shall endow you with power from on high, and fill you with the Holy Spirit. And you shall declare to all nations repentance and remission of sins. For a single cup of water, if a man shall find it in the world to come, is greater and better than all the wealth of this whole world. And as much ground as one foot can occupy in the house of my Father, is greater and more excellent than all the riches of the earth. Yea, a single hour in the joyful dwelling of the pious is more blessed and more precious than a thousand years among sinners: inasmuch as their weeping and lamentation shall not come to an end, and their tears shall not cease, nor shall they find for themselves consolation and repose at any time for ever. And now, O my honoured members, go declare to all nations, tell them, and say to them: Verily the Saviour diligently inquires into the inheritance which is due, and is the administrator of justice. And the angels will cast down their enemies, and will fight for them in the day of conflict. And He will examine every single foolish and idle word*

*which men speak, and they shall give an account of it. For as no one shall escape death, so also the works of every man shall be laid open on the Day of Judgment, whether they have been good or evil. Tell them also this word which I have said to you to-day: Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches; but let him who wishes to glory, glory in the Lord.*

*2. There was a man whose name was Joseph, sprung from a family of Bethlehem, a town of Judah, and the city of King David. This same man, being well furnished with wisdom and learning, was made a priest in the temple of the Lord. He was, besides, skilful in his trade, which was that of a carpenter; and after the manner of all men, he married a wife. Moreover, he begot for himself sons and daughters, four sons, namely, and two daughters. Now these are their names—Judas, Justus, James, and Simon. The names of the two daughters were Assia and Lydia. At length the wife of righteous Joseph, a woman intent on the divine glory in all her works, departed this life. But Joseph, that righteous man, my father after the flesh, and the spouse of my mother Mary, went away with his sons to his trade, practising the art of a carpenter.*

*3. Now when righteous Joseph became a widower, my mother Mary, blessed, holy, and pure, was already twelve years old. For her parents offered her in the temple when she was three years of age, and she remained in the temple of the Lord nine years. Then when the priests saw that the virgin, holy and God-fearing, was growing up, they spoke to each other, saying: Let us search out a man, righteous and pious, to whom Mary may be entrusted until the time of her marriage; lest, if she remain in the temple, it happen to her as is wont to happen to women, and lest on that account we sin, and God be angry with us.*

*4. Therefore they immediately sent out, and assembled twelve old men of the tribe of Judah. And they wrote down the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. And the lot fell upon the pious old man, righteous Joseph. Then the priests answered, and said to my blessed mother: Go with Joseph, and be with him till the time of your marriage. Righteous Joseph therefore received my mother, and led her away to his own house. And Mary found James the Less in his father's house, broken-hearted and sad on account of the loss of his mother, and she brought him up. Hence Mary was called the mother of James. Thereafter Joseph left her at home, and went away to the shop where he*

wrought at his trade of a carpenter. And after the holy virgin had spent two years in his house her age was exactly fourteen years, including the time at which he received her.

5. And I chose her of my own will, with the concurrence of my Father, and the counsel of the Holy Spirit. And I was made flesh of her, by a mystery which transcends the grasp of created reason. And three months after her conception the righteous man Joseph returned from the place where he worked at his trade; and when he found my virgin mother pregnant, he was greatly perplexed, and thought of sending her away secretly. But from fear, and sorrow, and the anguish of his heart, he could endure neither to eat nor drink that day.

6. But at mid-day there appeared to him in a dream the prince of the angels, the holy Gabriel, furnished with a command from my Father; and he said to him: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take Mary as thy wife: for she has conceived of the Holy Spirit; and she will bring forth a son, whose name shall be called Jesus. He it is who shall rule all nations with a rod of iron. Having thus spoken, the angel departed from him. And Joseph rose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord had said to him; and Mary abode with him.

7. Sometime after that, there came forth an order from Augustus Caesar the king, that all the habitable world should be enrolled, each man in his own city. The old man therefore, righteous Joseph, rose up and took the virgin Mary and came to Bethlehem, because the time of her bringing forth was at hand. Joseph then inscribed his name in the list; for Joseph the son of David, whose spouse Mary was, was of the tribe of Judah. And indeed Mary, my mother, brought me forth in Bethlehem, in a cave near the tomb of Rachel the wife of the patriarch Jacob, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin.

8. But Satan went and told this to Herod the Great, the father of Archelaus. And it was this same Herod who ordered my friend and relative John to be beheaded. Accordingly he searched for me diligently, thinking that my kingdom was to be of this world. But Joseph, that pious old man, was warned of this by a dream. Therefore he rose and took Mary my mother, and I lay in her bosom. Salome also was their fellow-traveller. Having therefore set out from home, he retired into Egypt, and remained there the space of one whole year, until the hatred of Herod passed away.

9. Now Herod died by the worst form of death, atoning for the shedding of the blood of the children whom he wickedly cut off, though there was no sin in them. And that impious tyrant Herod being dead, they returned into the land of Israel, and lived in a city of Galilee which is called Nazareth. And Joseph, going back to his trade of a carpenter, earned his living by the work of his hands; for, as the law of Moses had commanded, he never sought to live for nothing by another's labour.

10. At length, by increasing years, the old man arrived at a very advanced age. He did not, however, labour under any bodily weakness, nor had his sight failed, nor had any tooth perished from his mouth. In mind also, for the whole time of his life, he never wandered; but like a boy he always in his business displayed youthful vigour, and his limbs remained unimpaired, and free from all pain. His life, then, in all, amounted to one hundred and eleven years, his old age being prolonged to the utmost limit.

11. Now Justus and Simeon, the elder sons of Joseph, were married, and had families of their own. Both the daughters were likewise married, and lived in their own houses. So there remained in Joseph's house, Judas and James the Less, and my virgin mother. I moreover dwelt along with them, not otherwise than if I had been one of his sons. But I passed all my life without fault. Mary I called my mother, and Joseph father, and I obeyed them in all that they said; nor did I ever contend against them, but complied with their commands, as other men whom earth produces are wont to do; nor did I at any time arouse their anger, or give any word or answer in opposition to them. On the contrary, I cherished them with great love, like the pupil of my eye.

12. It came to pass, after these things, that the death of that old man, the pious Joseph, and his departure from this world, were approaching, as happens to other men who owe their origin to this earth. And as his body was verging on dissolution, an angel of the Lord informed him that his death was now close at hand. Therefore fear and great perplexity came upon him. So he rose up and went to Jerusalem; and going into the temple of the Lord, he poured out his prayers there before the sanctuary, and said:

13. *O God! author of all consolation, God of all compassion, and Lord of the whole human race; God of my soul, body, and spirit; with supplications I reverence thee, O Lord and my God. If now my days are ended, and the time draws near when I must leave this world, send me, I beseech Thee, the great Michael, the prince of Thy holy angels: let him remain with me, that my wretched soul may depart from this afflicted body without trouble, without terror and impatience. For great fear and intense sadness take hold of all bodies on the day of their death, whether it be man or woman, beast wild or tame, or whatever creeps on the ground or flies in the air. At the last all creatures under heaven in whom is the breath of life are struck with horror, and their souls depart from their bodies with strong fear and great depression. Now therefore, O Lord and my God, let Thy holy angel be present with his help to my soul and body, until they shall be dissevered from each other. And let not the face of the angel, appointed my guardian from the day of my birth, be turned away from me; but may he be the companion of my journey even until he bring me to Thee: let his countenance be pleasant and gladsome to me, and let him accompany me in peace. And let not demons of frightful aspect come near me in the way in which I am to go, until I come to Thee in bliss. And let not the doorkeepers hinder my soul from entering paradise. And do not uncover my sins, and expose me to condemnation before Thy terrible tribunal. Let not the lions rush in upon me; nor let the waves of the sea of fire overwhelm my soul—for this must every soul pass through – before I have seen the glory of Thy Godhead. O God, most righteous Judge, who in justice and equity wilt judge mankind, and wilt render unto each one according to his works, O Lord and my God, I beseech Thee, be present to me in Thy compassion, and enlighten my path that I may come to Thee; for Thou art a fountain overflowing with all good things, and with glory for evermore. Amen.*

14. *It came to pass thereafter, when he returned to his own house in the city of Nazareth, that he was seized by disease, and had to keep his bed. And it was at this time that he died, according to the destiny of all mankind. For this disease was very heavy upon him, and he had never been ill, as he now was, from the day of his birth. And thus assuredly it pleased Christ to order the destiny of righteous Joseph. He lived forty years unmarried; thereafter his wife remained under his care forty-nine years, and then died. And a year after her death, my mother, the blessed Mary, was entrusted to him by the priests, that he should keep her until the time of her marriage. She spent*



*two years in his house; and in the third year of her stay with Joseph, in the fifteenth year of her age, she brought me forth on earth by a mystery which no creature can penetrate or understand, except myself, and my Father and the Holy Spirit, constituting one essence with myself.*

*15. The whole age of my father, therefore, that righteous old man, was one hundred and eleven years, my Father in heaven having so decreed. And the day on which his soul left his body was the twenty-sixth of the month Abib. For now the fine gold began to lose its splendour, and the silver to be worn down by use—I mean his understanding and his wisdom. He also loathed food and drink, and lost all his skill in his trade of carpentry, nor did he any more pay attention to it. It came to pass, then, in the early dawn of the twenty-sixth day of Abib, that Joseph, that righteous old man, lying in his bed, was giving up his unquiet soul. Wherefore he opened his mouth with many sighs, and struck his hands one against the other, and with a loud voice cried out, and spoke after the following manner:—*

*16. Woe to the day on which I was born into the world! Woe to the womb which bare me! Woe to the bowels which admitted me! Woe to the breasts which suckled me! Woe to the feet upon which I sat and rested! Woe to the hands which carried me and reared me until I grew up! For I was conceived in iniquity, and in sins did my mother desire me. Woe to my tongue and my lips, which have brought forth and spoken vanity, detraction, falsehood, ignorance, derision, idle tales, craft, and hypocrisy! Woe to mine eyes, which have looked upon scandalous things! Woe to mine ears, which have delighted in the words of slanderers! Woe to my hands, which have seized what did not of right belong to them! Woe to my belly and my bowels, which have lusted after food unlawful to be eaten! Woe to my throat, which like a fire has consumed all that it found! Woe to my feet, which have too often walked in ways displeasing to God! Woe to my body; and woe to my miserable soul, which has already turned aside from God its Maker! What shall I do when I arrive at that place where I must stand before the most righteous Judge, and when He shall call me to account for the works which I have heaped up in my youth? Woe to every man dying in his sins! Assuredly that same dreadful hour, which came upon my father Jacob, when his soul was flying forth from his body, is now, behold, near at hand for me. Oh! how wretched I am this day, and*

worthy of lamentation! But God alone is the disposer of my soul and body; He also will deal with them after His own good pleasure.

17. These are the words spoken by Joseph, that righteous old man. And I, going in beside him, found his soul exceedingly troubled, for he was placed in great perplexity. And I said to him: Hail! my father Joseph, thou righteous man; how is it with thee? And he answered me: All hail! my well-beloved son. Indeed, the agony and fear of death have already environed me; but as soon as I heard Thy voice, my soul was at rest. O Jesus of Nazareth! Jesus, my Saviour! Jesus, the deliverer of my soul! Jesus, my protector! Jesus! O sweetest name in my mouth, and in the mouth of all those that love it! O eye which seest, and ear which hearest, hear me! I am Thy servant; this day I most humbly reverence Thee, and before Thy face I pour out my tears. Thou art altogether my God; Thou art my Lord, as the angel has told me times without number, and especially on that day when my soul was driven about with perverse thoughts about the pure and blessed Mary, who was carrying Thee in her womb, and whom I was thinking of secretly sending away. And while I was thus meditating, behold, there appeared to me in my rest angels of the Lord, saying to me in a wonderful mystery: O Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take Mary as thy wife; and do not grieve thy soul, nor speak unbecoming words of her conception, because she is with child of the Holy Spirit, and shall bring forth a son, whose name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. Do not for this cause wish me evil, O Lord! for I was ignorant of the mystery of Thy birth. I call to mind also, my Lord, that day when the boy died of the bite of the serpent. And his relations wished to deliver Thee to Herod, saying that Thou hadst killed him; but Thou didst raise him from the dead, and restore him to them. Then I went up to Thee, and took hold of Thy hand, saying: My son, take care of thyself. But Thou didst say to me in reply: Art thou not my father after the flesh? I shall teach thee who I am. Now therefore, O Lord and my God, do not be angry with me, or condemn me on account of that hour. I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaiden; but Thou art my Lord, my God and Saviour, most surely the Son of God.

18. When my father Joseph had thus spoken, he was unable to weep more. And I saw that death now had dominion over him. And my mother, virgin undefiled, rose and came to me, saying: O my beloved son, this pious old man Joseph is now dying. And I answered: Oh my dearest mother,

*assuredly upon all creatures produced in this world the same necessity of death lies; for death holds sway over the whole human race. Even thou, O my virgin mother, must look for the same end of life as other mortals. And yet thy death, as also the death of this pious man, is not death, but life enduring to eternity. Nay more, even I must die, as concerns the body which I have received from thee. But rise, O my venerable mother, and go in to Joseph, that blessed old man, in order that thou mayst see what will happen as his soul ascends from his body.*

*19. My undefiled mother Mary, therefore, went and entered the place where Joseph was. And I was sitting at his feet looking at him, for the signs of death already appeared in his countenance. And that blessed old man raised his head, and kept his eyes fixed on my face; but he had no power of speaking to me, on account of the agonies of death, which held him in their grasp. But he kept fetching many sighs. And I held his hands for a whole hour; and he turned his face to me, and made signs for me not to leave him. Thereafter I put my hand upon his breast, and perceived his soul now near his throat, preparing to depart from its receptacle.*

*20. And when my virgin mother saw me touching his body, she also touched his feet. And finding them already dead and destitute of heat, she said to me: O my beloved son, assuredly his feet are already beginning to stiffen, and they are as cold as snow. Accordingly she summoned his sons and daughters, and said to them: Come, as many as there are of you, and go to your father; for assuredly he is now at the very point of death. And Assia, his daughter, answered and said: Woe's me, O my brothers, this is certainly the same disease that my beloved mother died of. And she lamented and shed tears; and all Joseph's other children mourned along with her. I also, and my mother Mary, wept along with them.*

*21. And turning my eyes towards the region of the south, I saw Death already approaching, and all Gehenna with him, closely attended by his army and his satellites; and their clothes, their faces, and their mouths poured forth flames. And when my father Joseph saw them coming straight to him, his eyes dissolved in tears, and at the same time he groaned after a strange manner. Accordingly, when I saw the vehemence of his sighs, I drove back Death and all the host of servants which accompanied him. And I called upon my good Father, saying:—*

22. *O Father of all mercy, eye which seest, and ear which hearest, hearken to my prayers and supplications in behalf of the old man Joseph; and send Michael, the prince of Thine angels, and Gabriel, the herald of light, and all the light of Thine angels, and let their whole array walk with the soul of my father Joseph, until they shall have conducted it to Thee. This is the hour in which my father has need of compassion. And I say unto you, that all the saints, yea, as many men as are born in the world, whether they be just or whether they be perverse, must of necessity taste of death.*

23. *Therefore Michael and Gabriel came to the soul of my father Joseph, and took it, and wrapped it in a shining wrapper. Thus he committed his spirit into the hands of my good Father, and He bestowed upon him peace. But as yet none of his children knew that he had fallen asleep. And the angels preserved his soul from the demons of darkness which were in the way, and praised God even until they conducted it into the dwelling-place of the pious.*

24. *Now his body was lying prostrate and bloodless; wherefore I reached forth my hand, and put right his eyes and shut his mouth, and said to the virgin Mary: O my mother, where is the skill which he showed in all the time that he lived in this world? Lo! it has perished, as if it had never existed. And when his children heard me speaking with my mother, the pure virgin, they knew that he had already breathed his last, and they shed tears, and lamented. But I said to them: Assuredly the death of your father is not death, but life everlasting: for he has been freed from the troubles of this life, and has passed to perpetual and everlasting rest. When they heard these words, they rent their clothes, and wept.*

25. *And, indeed, the inhabitants of Nazareth and of Galilee, having heard of their lamentation, flocked to them, and wept from the third hour even to the ninth. And at the ninth hour they all went together to Joseph's bed. And they lifted his body, after they had anointed it with costly unguents. But I entreated my Father in the prayer of the celestials—that same prayer which with any own hand I made before I was carried in the womb of the virgin Mary, my mother. And as soon as I had finished it, and pronounced the amen, a great multitude of angels came up; and I ordered two of them to stretch out their shining garments, and to wrap in them the body of Joseph, the blessed old man.*

26. And I spoke to Joseph, and said: The smell or corruption of death shall not have dominion over thee, nor shall a worm ever come forth from thy body. Not a single limb of it shall be broken, nor shall any hair on thy head be changed. Nothing of thy body shall perish, O my father Joseph, but it will remain entire and uncorrupted even until the banquet of the thousand years. And whosoever shall make an offering on the day of thy remembrance, him will I bless and recompense in the congregation of the virgins; and whosoever shall give food to the wretched, the poor, the widows, and orphans from the work of his hands, on the day on which thy memory shall be celebrated, and in thy name, shall not be in want of good things all the days of his life. And whosoever shall have given a cup of water, or of wine, to drink to the widow or orphan in thy name, I will give him to thee, that thou mayst go in with him to the banquet of the thousand years. And every man who shall present an offering on the day of thy commemoration will I bless and recompense in the church of the virgins: for one I will render unto him thirty, sixty, and a hundred. And whosoever shall write the history of thy life, of thy labour, and thy departure from this world, and this narrative that has issued from my mouth, him shall I commit to thy keeping as long as he shall have to do with this life. And when his soul departs from the body, and when he must leave this world, I will burn the book of his sins, nor will I torment him with any punishment in the Day of Judgment; but he shall cross the sea of flames, and shall go through it without trouble or pain. And upon every poor man who can give none of those things which I have mentioned this is incumbent: viz., if a son is born to him, he shall call his name Joseph. So there shall not take place in that house either poverty or any sudden death for ever.

27. Thereafter the chief men of the city came together to the place where the body of the blessed old man Joseph had been laid, bringing with them burial-clothes; and they wished to wrap it up in them after the manner in which the Jews are wont to arrange their dead bodies. And they perceived that he kept his shroud fast; for it adhered to the body in such a way, that when they wished to take it off, it was found to be like iron—impossible to be moved or loosened. Nor could they find any ends in that piece of linen, which struck them with the greatest astonishment. At length they carried him out to a place where there was a cave, and opened the gate, that they might bury his body beside the bodies of his fathers. Then there came into my mind the day on

*which he walked with me into Egypt, and that extreme trouble which he endured on my account. Accordingly, I bewailed his death for a long time; and lying upon his body, I said:—*

*28. O Death! who makest all knowledge to vanish away, and raisest so many tears and lamentations, surely it is God my Father Himself who hath granted thee this power. For men die for the transgression of Adam and his wife Eve, and Death spares not so much as one. Nevertheless, nothing happens to any one, or is brought upon him, without the command of my Father. There have certainly been men who have prolonged their life even to nine hundred years; but they died. Yea, though some of them have lived longer, they have, notwithstanding, succumbed to the same fate; nor has any one of them ever said: I have not tasted death. For the Lord never sends the same punishment more than once, since it hath pleased my Father to bring it upon men. And at the very moment when it, going forth, beholds the command descending to it from heaven, it says: I will go forth against that man, and will greatly move him. Then, without delay, it makes an onset on the soul, and obtains the mastery of it, doing with it whatever it will. For, because Adam did not the will of my Father, but transgressed His commandment, the wrath of my Father was kindled against him, and He doomed him to death; and thus it was that death came into the world. But if Adam had observed my Father's precepts, death would never have fallen to his lot. Think you that I can ask my good Father to send me a chariot of fire, which may take up the body of my father Joseph, and convey it to the place of rest, in order that it may dwell with the spirits? But on account of the transgression of Adam, that trouble and violence of death has descended upon all the human race. And it is for this cause that I must die according to the flesh, for my work which I have created, that they may obtain grace.*

*29. Having thus spoken, I embraced the body of my father Joseph, and wept over it; and they opened the door of the tomb, and placed his body in it, near the body of his father Jacob. And at the time when he fell asleep he had fulfilled a hundred and eleven years. Never did a tooth in his mouth hurt him, nor was his eyesight rendered less sharp, nor his body bent, nor his strength impaired; but he worked at his trade of a carpenter to the very last day of his life; and that was the six-and-twentieth of the month Abib.*

30. *And we apostles, when we heard these things from our Saviour, rose up joyfully, and prostrated ourselves in honour of Him, and said: O our Saviour, show us Thy grace. Now indeed we have heard the word of life: nevertheless we wonder, O our Saviour, at the fate of Enoch and Elias, inasmuch as they had not to undergo death. For truly they dwell in the habitation of the righteous even to the present day, nor have their bodies seen corruption. Yet that old man Joseph the carpenter was, nevertheless, Thy father after the flesh. And Thou hast ordered us to go into all the world and preach the holy Gospel; and Thou hast said: Relate to them the death of my father Joseph, and celebrate to him with annual solemnity a festival and sacred day. And whosoever shall take anything away from this narrative, or add anything to it, commits sin. We wonder especially that Joseph, even from that day on which Thou wast born in Bethlehem, called Thee his son after the flesh. Wherefore, then, didst Thou not make him immortal as well as them, and Thou sayest that he was righteous and chosen?*

31. *And our Saviour answered and said: Indeed, the prophecy of my Father upon Adam, for his disobedience, has now been fulfilled. And all things are arranged according to the will and pleasure of my Father. For if a man rejects the commandment of God, and follows the works of the devil by committing sin, his life is prolonged; for he is preserved in order that he may perhaps repent, and reflect that he must be delivered into the hands of death. But if anyone has been zealous of good works, his life also is prolonged, that, as the fame of his old age increases, upright men may imitate him. But when you see a man whose mind is prone to anger, assuredly his days are shortened; for it is these that are taken away in the flower of their age. Every prophecy, therefore, which my Father has pronounced concerning the sons of men, must be fulfilled in every particular. But with reference to Enoch and Elias, and how they remain alive to this day, keeping the same bodies with which they were born; and as to what concerns my father Joseph, who has not been allowed as well as they to remain in the body: indeed, though a man live in the world many myriads of years, nevertheless at some time or other he is compelled to exchange life for death.*

*And I say to you, O my brethren, that they also, Enoch and Elias, must towards the end of time return into the world and die—in the day, namely, of commotion, of terror, of perplexity, and*

*affliction. For Antichrist will slay four bodies, and will pour out their blood like water, because of the reproach to which they shall expose him, and the ignominy with which they, in their lifetime, shall brand him when they reveal his impiety.*

*32. And we said: O our Lord, our God and Saviour, who are those four whom Thou hast said Antichrist will cut off from the reproach they bring upon him? The Lord answered: They are Enoch, Elias, Schila, and Tabitha. When we heard this from our Saviour, we rejoiced and exulted; and we offered all glory and thanksgiving to the Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. He it is to whom is due glory, honour, dignity, dominion, power, and praise, as well as to the good Father with Him, and to the Holy Spirit that giveth life, henceforth and in all time for evermore. Amen.*

In reading this it is easy to see that there is a lot going on in the text and one has to see it in the context it was written, and possibly as a partial exposition and development of some aspects of an early Marian theology.

But does it add anything to what is already known about Joseph, or is the truth sacrificial when it comes to theological convenience?

According to this text, it gives him a greater age. It states he was unmarried for 40 years, married for 49 years and then his wife died. A year later, he was betrothed to Mary at the instigation of the priests, and died aged 110. He predeceases Mary. His body is made incorruptible. He is shown great respect in his death, not only by the chief men of the city, but by Jesus himself who grieves at the death of his earthly father.

The text fulfils a number of functions:.

1. It gives Joseph greater spiritual status,
2. It confirms and builds upon existing traditions where it can,
3. It creates new oral tradition when none existed,
4. It seeks to explain that Jesus' siblings were from a previous marriage
5. and that Mary remained 'perpetual virgin' (i.e. Jesus was her only child).



6. It raises the prominence of the author as it presents knowledge which is only held by the writer and his immediate community.

What is especially clear despite the obvious theological intentions of the texts is that Joseph was regarded as someone very special, not only a model husband and father, but someone found by God to be a worthy adoptive parent on His behalf.

Joseph therefore remains the enigmatic aspirational ideal, even though not much is known about him. All we can say is he did everything that was required, quietly and faithfully.

So let's hear it for dads and be proud to celebrate Christian fatherhood..

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For more information and opinion:

<https://discover-the-truth.com/2013/09/30/marriage-of-mary-to-joseph-the-carpenter/>

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### **What does the Bible say about engagement?** (Extracted and edited)

Stage	<b><u>Old Testament</u></b>	<b><u>Modern Version</u></b>
	There are allusions to how engagements worked in Bible times.	A modern take would still have three similar stages.
<b>1</b>	Usually marriages were arranged to the benefit of the families and their patriarchs—not the feelings of the individuals involved.  This would be a time for partners to meet formally.	Two individuals recognize each other as potential marriage partners, either through friendship or dating. This is the time for big issues to come to light including faith ( <u>2 Corinthians 6:14-15</u> ), family obligations, personal challenges, struggles with sin.

		Both individuals need to know enough to be able to make an informed decision as to whether they can be compatible as a couple. They need to take the time to ask God if this is the right person ( <u>Proverbs 3:5-6</u> ).
2	<p>The engagement is the binding agreement which is a precursor to marriage.</p> <p>The groom would approach the bride's father and set terms, including the dowry which was supposed to be a nest egg for the woman if her husband should die or divorce her without giving her a child.</p> <p>The groom would return to his father's house and build a room for the future couple.</p>	<p>At this point a couple may decide to formalise their long term intentions and make the commitment to work toward marriage by getting engaged.</p> <p>The emphasis should be on practical and relational matters that will ensure the marriage is strong. This will cover finances, housing, expectations of roles</p> <p>In addition, men need to learn how to love sacrificially (<u>Ephesians 5:25</u>), and women need to learn to respect their man (<u>Ephesians 5:33</u>).</p>
3	<p>The marriage ceremony takes place. Sometime later, the groom would go get his bride and bring her to the prepared space. They would have the marriage ceremony, the families would celebrate, and the bride would become a member of the groom's family.</p>	<p>The marriage ceremony takes place. This is much bigger than the feelings of two people in one moment. If done properly and thoroughly, the skills learned during the engagement period should serve the couple throughout their marriage.</p>

4	Breaking off an engagement required divorce	Breaking of an engagement is not 'a sin' but should be a 'last resort'. A Christian engagement should lead to marriage.
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An engagement is a commitment to another person, and such commitments should be honoured, but it is not a sin to break off the engagement if events occur or issues come to light that cause the couple to re-evaluate the appropriateness of their match.

A Christian engagement **is not** a time to try things out to see if they work.

**It is not** a chance for the couple to make sure they're sexually compatible; it's a time to develop communication skills that can be the basis for a healthy sexual relationship ([1 Corinthians 7:3-5](#)).

**It is not** a time to determine if a couple can live together without driving each other nuts; it's a time to learn how to love sacrificially ([Philippians 2:3](#)).

Resolution skills, love, and communication are surer signs of a lasting marriage than convenient personal compatibility at a particular stage in life.

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### **The difference between 'engagement' and 'betrothal'.**

In modern Western culture, there is a clear distinction between betrothal/engagement and marriage.

In the cultures of Bible times, the distinction was much less definitive.

Betrothal in most eras of Bible history involved two families in a formal contract, and that contract was as binding as marriage itself.

Betrothal then was more of a business transaction between two families than a personal, romantic choice.

Dowry or bride price agreements were included, so that a broken engagement required repayment of the dowry.

After betrothal, all that remained were three matters: the wedding celebration, the bride's move into the groom's house, and the consummation of the marriage.

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### **John 10 v 22 – 30:**

Unice Brierley, OSJ.

This Gospel reading comes immediately after the parable of the Good Shepherd, the only parable that John quotes in his gospel, when Jesus told them again and again that he is the good shepherd and keeps his sheep safe from wolves, but this section is headed in the Good News Bible as 'Jesus is rejected'

It was winter and the time of the Festival of the Dedication of the Temple, sometimes called the Festival of Light, this is the 25<sup>th</sup> of the Jewish month of Chislev, our December, the Festival falls very near to Christmas, when everywhere is lit up, it is still celebrated to-day by the Jews, where houses are all lit up with the Jewish candlestick of 7 candles. Christians and non-Christians alike seem to be using this symbol over the Christmas period. I must admit we have looked at buying one of these candlesticks, but have nowhere to display it.

The history of this Festival goes back to around 164 B.C. when Judas Maccabeas and his brother fought and freed the Jews from the Greeks and the Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated.

The lights celebrated that the light of freedom had come back to Israel and can be traced to a very old legend. It was told that when the temple had been purified and the great 7 branched candlestick relit, there was only enough unpolluted oil found still to last one single day, but by a miracle it lasted 8 days until new oil could be prepared, hence this celebration lasts 8 days

It was at this time that Jesus was walking in Solomon's Porch, when all the lights were being kindled, in memory of this freedom Jesus said 'I am the light of the world, I alone can light men and women to the knowledge and presence of God. At this point he was approached with the question. "Tell us plainly are you or are you not God's promised Anointed one. As was usual with the Priests and Rabbis, there were those who honestly wanted to know, and those who wanted to catch Jesus out, so that they could charge him with blasphemy in their own courts of insurrection in the Roman courts.

The Priest and Rabbis were not prepared to accept that all Jesus' miracles and healing told their own story as to who he was.

Jesus talks about his sheep and his flock and that no one could snatch them from him because both he and his sheep are in the Fathers care

We as Christians love the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, it speaks to us in the troubled world of to-day, where we have to work hard to achieve some semblance of safety. We cling to this image of the Good Shepherd. Although at the time these words were spoken he was in conflict with his questioners.

Are we like his questioners, as in Handel's Messiah "All we like sheep have gone astray, everyone to his own way"? Are we like these sheep who go exploring and need bringing back now and again? I am sure we are from time to time.

To-day we read of the religious men in the temple, they await a Messiah, but don't expect anyone like Jesus, he didn't fit the mould of whom they expected, they were wanting someone who would come on a charger, raise an army and drive the Romans out of the country, so they asked straight out 'If you are the Messiah tell us plainly.

Of course they didn't get the answer they wanted, as we to-day don't always get the answer to our prayers that we want, we disregard the fact that Jesus might want something different for us and he will reveal this in his own good time. How often then do we lose heart instead of carrying on praying for his revelation.

As the priests didn't get the answer they wanted, Jesus' answer was "The Father and I are one" his listeners are plunged into uncertainty and anger. IF he has answered YES it would have shored up their preconceptions, blinding them to the meaning of his deeds and words.

Jesus' questioners failed to understand because they didn't believe, do we fail to understand, that those who know Jesus are his sheep and cannot be taken away from him, for they see and hear with the eyes and ears of faith. They may not be able to prove what they believe, but they are secure in the shepherd's hands.

How often do we look for simplistic answers? They may make us feel safe, but it is false security. We cannot understand who Jesus is, or enter a relationship with him by accepting readymade answers to questions we are too lazy or frightened to work through for ourselves. We must certainly make a leap of faith before we can know that Jesus and the Father are one.

What images do we have of God, what do we have to keep and what do we have to get rid of in our expectations and understanding of God.

In my studies I had to look at some modern art pictures of various scenes of Jesus, pick one out and write a meditation on one.

This reading reminds me rather of that project, although I do some painting, post-modern art leaves me cold, and I had great difficulty in completing this assignment.

Thank goodness this wasn't my experience and understanding of God,

What questions must we be willing to ask, and be asked?

David Adam describes watching a boy and his father climb a steep rock face. The father was strong and experienced. For him the climb was easy, but for his son it is the scariest thing he has ever done. The two are roped together, but at the worst bits the boy cannot see his father. The writer sees how the father's presence gives confidence, even when out of sight. The boy completes the climb because he trusts his father to lead him to the top.

Experiences of life shows us that we must trust God if we are to grow beyond the limitations of ideas and practices. For those prepared to set out on the road with faith Jesus is always there, offering security and help. He doesn't say the road will always be smooth, that would be too much to ask, but says he will always be there.

This reminds me of the poem, 'Footsteps in the sand', where a man is walking and there are two sets of footprints, one his and one God's, there comes a time when things prove very difficult and he realises there is only one set of footprints, he accuses God of leaving him at a difficult time, but God tells him that he has carried him over the bad times and will always do so. You will probably know the poem better than I do but it does make us realise that the Good Shepherd is always there to guard and protect his flock at all times. The man trusted his Father even when out of sight, as we must trust Jesus although we cannot see him.

How can we hear the voice of Jesus? Maybe like Martha who has brought up a large family single handedly on a rundown estate in east London? When asked how she copes she replies "When I have any problem, I put on my hat, open my Bible and pray".

Robert was a successful business with everything he thought he wanted. One evening while walking the dogs, he sat down to look at the view. In that quiet time he became certain that he was called to be a priest.

Jesus calls those who hear into a new life and to share it. The prayerful reading of Scripture guided Martha as she brought up her children, inspiring her to set up a drop-in centre for mothers and young children on the estate. Robert is now a much-loved parish priest, working in six scattered country Churches. How is Jesus calling us to live his new life and to share it with others.

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These are two examples of ordinary folk whose lives changed dramatically through following Jesus.

These sort of examples show us that we must trust Jesus if we are to grow beyond the limitations of idea and practices. For those prepared to set out on the road with faith, Jesus is always there offering security and help.

How is Jesus calling us to live his new life and to share it with others?

There are many ways in which Jesus calls us. Is Jesus calling us to-day to change direction, and follow him in new ways, to live his new life and to share it with others?

Is Jesus calling you?

-oOo-



**+David has written a number of ‘bite-size’ inspirational pieces to provoke thought, build up faith, and to give encouragement. Here are just three that may help you over the coming months and years.**

**(1) Do You Remember Those Sunday Best Clothes?**

For generations, do you also remember the people who have dressed in their Sunday-best clothes to go to church. I expect there are still a few today who do this. Then upon arriving home, they place their Sunday-best neatly back into the wardrobe – not to be worn again until the next service.

Often as Christians, we can be guilty of putting on church-personalities as we would our Sunday-best clothes. When in a Christian environment, we are bubbly, friendly and seemingly without a care in the world.

We use the right spiritual words and catch-phrases and all our actions are carefully pious. But as soon as we arrive home, we take off our ‘Sunday-best personality’ and put on our normal hang-ups such as discouragement, guilt, resentment and depression.

We should consider why we do this and who we are fooling. Though we should always put on our best-manners when in public, God has commanded our life be without hypocrisy. God sees and knows us as we really are – we can’t fool Him with our church-going personality. Remember, just because our fellow Christians think highly of us, doesn’t mean God does.

We should free ourselves from wearing those itchy fake personalities. We gain nothing of value by fooling our peers and it’s usually the very thing that stops us from having an honest relationship with both them and God.

***Let Love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.***

*Romans 12:9.*

## (2) Burn-out

**“I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. . . . I am the only one left”**

**(1 Kings 19:14).**

A Priest and teacher experienced clinical depression related to a nonstop workload and schedule. Reflecting on that time in his life, he said, “I didn’t know that you could get totally, completely burned out doing what you loved.”

Despite the fulfilment his multiple ministries brought him, a lack of rest led him to become incapacitated. Over time, however, his situation improved as God renewed him through means such as prayer, encouragement and proper relaxation.

Might it be that Elijah experienced a similar kind of burnout after an intense string of ministry events led him to a cave on Mt. Sinai. There, God listened patiently as the prophet explained, *“I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the [Israelites] have . . . torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too”* (1 Kings 19:10)

Elijah was overwhelmed, isolated, and feeling the emotional pressure of a belief many of us share: ***It all depends on me.***

In reality, ***it all depends on God.***

God helped Elijah understand this by shifting the prophet’s responsibilities to others. Elijah would begin training Elisha to take his place, and *God* encouraged him by revealing there were still 7,000 faithful followers of Him in Israel (1 Kings 19:16-18)

The idea that God’s work in a certain area depends primarily on us can add unnecessary pressure to our lives. Although He can provide His amazing strength to meet specific demands, God knows that people have limits (Isaiah 40:7)

Rest isn't an obstacle to fulfilling our responsibilities; rather, it's the God-approved means by which we can continue to press on in our mission for Him.

### **(3) The Power of Healing:**

A doctor is someone qualified to practice medicine. We mistakenly think that doctors heal the sick; in fact, doctors rely on the human body's marvellous ability to heal itself.

Their job is to diagnose the problem then endeavour to remove the malignancy or realign the break to allow the body's natural healing processes to begin.

Teachers of God's Word are like doctors. They spend much time researching to help the spiritually sick by identifying problems and advising Biblical solutions.

Just as doctors have their area of speciality; teachers of God's Word are usually gifted with aiding a certain category of patients. Some have the divine gift to treat the youth, others will specialise in bringing hope to those in despair, or enlighten those with prejudices, or lift those in poverty.

We should always be thankful to our spiritual teachers but at the same time remember where the credit truly goes. If we have received spiritual healing from their insightful council or sermons, it is usually because they have identified a blockage or an aspect that needed to be realigned so God's amazing grace can flow back into our spiritual life to accomplish the actual healing.

God is the source of all restoration and the Bible is His medical book. If we take His treatments, firstly by accepting Christ's saving work at the cross, God can begin the process of healing.

Then, if we follow the Biblical prescriptions and stop thinking, saying and doing things that cause blockages and get us out of alignment, we will have a healthy and robust spiritual life here on Earth and for eternity.

***‘But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.’***      *Isaiah 40-31.*

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**The Gender Recognition Act is a direct threat to the Christian View of Marriage. Discuss.**

**Background:** (Extraction from source material)

In 2016 the Women and Equalities Select Committee heard evidence from trans, non-binary and non-gender people who are directly affected by the shortcomings of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA). In its day the GRA, and the access it provided to a new birth certificate, was considered ground-breaking, but the world has moved on. Now, several countries have written more appropriate legislation which recognises the human rights and personal autonomy of individuals whose gender identities are not stereotypically associated with their sex, as assigned at birth, on the basis of genital appearance alone. It is opportune that the NHS, in line with the World Health Organisation, now recognises that gender incongruence is not psychopathological; accordingly, it will be moved out of its present location under Mental and Behavioural Disorders in the International Classification of Diseases, into a non-psychopathological section.

The proposals now put forward by Justine Greening MP who was, until recently, the Minister for Women and Equalities, would allow applicants who wished to achieve legal recognition of a gender status on their birth-certificate that accorded with their gender identity, to do so by a simple process. They would be able to self-declare without the need for a ‘diagnosis’ of gender dysphoria.

**Intent:**

People, unhappy about the way they feel about their gender will be able to 'Self-Identify' and determine what they feel best describes their sexual identity.

**General Consequences:** (Extracted from various sources)

1. Heterosexual marriages and partnerships will be dissolved automatically if one partner 'self-identifies' as the same sex as their married partner.
2. Same sex civil partnerships will be dissolved automatically if one partner 'self-identifies' as a different sex to their civil partner.
3. Gender will no longer be able to be solely evidenced or determined biologically.
4. Gender will be determined by 'feelings' rather than evidenced by 'fact'.
5. Birth certification will have to be 'corrected'. Given the gender identities being suggested as individual and unique, currently estimated as over 60 types, what does one put? The least number of options might be Male, Female, Both, Neither, Transitioning, Other, Not known, Undecided.
6. There will be a further blurring the unique boundaries that identify 'man' and 'woman'. Would someone who self-identifies as neither 'male' or 'female' be entitled to get married or be in a civil partnership as currently you must be either 'male' or 'female'?
7. There will be a direct impact on the education curriculum in both Primary and High Schools. (Parents really do need to be aware of what is being taught in schools and regularly check curriculums.)
8. There appear to be no safeguards or checks, and decisions to 'self-identify' may be made ill advisably without appropriate or proper advice and/or support.

**General Effect on Marriage:** (Extracted from various sources)

1. Marriage as is further undermined as an institution – there is no protection for those whose partners choose to re-'self-identify' their gender during their relationship, and there is no requirement for partners to be consulted.

2. The intended permanence of marriage is further undermined by allowing one partner to independently and effectively terminate their marriage on the grounds of their own personally defined 'self-identity' whenever they wish.
3. The terms 'husband' and 'wife' become increasingly redundant as they become more difficult to define under 'self-identification'. The effect of this is to diffuse the identity, definition and components that define marriage as a social institution and the roles and responsibilities of the contacting partners.
4. The above (3) has a massive impact on 'the family', the way it is constructed and roles and responsibilities within that construct, and those are no longer clear or evident.
5. The terms 'mother', 'father', 'son' and 'daughter' cease to be as identifiable or as accurately definable in practicable terms of the effects of 'self-identification'.
6. The only eventual outcome is that the concepts of 'marriage' and 'the family unit' will become so dilute and diffused that they will cease to have any real meaning or genuine social, moral or spiritual purpose. This will have a major impact on society.

#### **The Conflict with Christian Teaching:**

1. Christian teaching is unchangeably binary when it comes to gender – it recognises only 'male' and 'female' - these are biologically and permanently identifiable. It is 'either/or' and you don't get a choice as to which.
2. ('Male' includes other terms such as 'father/son/man/boy/etc.' and 'female' includes other terms like 'mother/daughter/woman/girl/etc.' They are gender specific and these identities are not transferable between genders.)
3. Christian marriage is between 'a man' and 'a woman' and is intended for the procreation of children.
4. Marriage is intended to be 'until death do they part'.
5. Whilst divorce is allowed by the church under certain conditions, it is clearly not part of God's overall plan for mankind.
6. The Bible is quite clear in the roles and responsibilities that husbands and wives each individually and jointly has and share, likewise those of 'father' and 'mother'.

7. It also clearly defines the relationship between children and their parents, and parents and their children, and their individual and collective roles and responsibilities in society.

**Personal Comment:**

1. The clue is in the word 'Self'. It places 'my needs' above those of others and makes the assumption that 'I' am the centre and focus of the world I inhabit and it exists solely for my benefit.

Since we are all a part of the society we live in, and very much reliant on others, this is not a good starting point. What we are saying is that 'I' am more important than anyone else and that 'my' needs should be served first. It is 'me' first, 'everyone else' second.

2. 'Self-identification' can become an essentially self-indulgent and selfish choice if made independently. It is a decision that affects other people and therefore there should always be a complete and detailed and open dialogue with all concerned. If this is not tasked then it is likely to create further isolation, misunderstanding and prejudice.
3. We all have 'rights'. These are not limited to minority groups but are universal. I, like you, have a right to express opinions and views but I do not have the right to hate or discriminate. However, I have a right to agree with you or to disagree with you. I know if I agree with you then you will probably be very happy, but if I disagree with you then probably you will not be so happy, but so long as we treat other with respect and consideration, even if we find ourselves in total disagreement, there is no problem. The problem comes when one of us decide only our voice shall be heard.
4. So regarding the whole concept of 'Self-Identification', the idea that 'we are who we say we are', (1) does it need legislation and (2) is it founded on a rock solid legal framework that can be built upon without collapsing under its own weight?

Those things are not so clear. I see problems ahead in just how far you take 'self-identification' as a concept, and this is already beginning to happen, something recently highlighted in an article by C4M:

*"Dutchman Emile Ratelband has the answer to ageing. Just 'self-identify' as two decades younger. The enterprising 69-year-old wants to shift his legal year of birth from 1949 to 1969, immediately making him the 20 years younger he already feels. In Ratelband's own words in a debate with a transgender person: "It's your feeling, it's my feeling... I respect you, you respect me".*

*Times Columnist Janice Turner also commented on this parallel:*

*"Now activists demand that anyone who says she is a woman is entitled to a document stating she was born biologically female.*

*There is no logical reason at all why such magical thinking should not extend to other identities protected in equalities legislation. ...*

*An unqualified, unchecked policy of "I am who I say I am" should apply to everyone or no one at all."*

*Whatever the Dutch court decides in Ratelband's case, his logic is obvious enough."*

5. Legislation is not the way forward because it will simply be abused. Learning to respect other people's views whilst having different opinions and views of your own, and treating people with consideration and care, seems a much better long term solution.

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### **'So who owns the engagement and wedding rings if things go wrong?'**

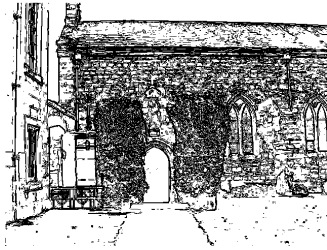
I recently had this question from a couple I was interviewing and it was intriguing. I did a little research on the internet and here is the easiest answer and most comprehensive answer I found. (Original source:- UK solicitors Nelsons).

*For British couples, The Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970 states that: "The gift on an engagement ring shall be presumed to be an absolute gift; this presumption may be rebutted by proving that the ring was given on the condition, express or implied, that it should be returned if the marriage did not take place for any reason."*

*In simpler terms:-*

1. *"Basically, although it can seem unfair, this means that unless there was an agreement to return the ring if the wedding was cancelled then the recipient is under no obligation to return the ring."*
2. *"If however, there was a condition (expressed or implied) that the ring would be returned if the engagement was broken off, the recipient would have to give the ring back."*
3. *"The courts will generally say there was an implied intention that the ring would be returned if it was a family heirloom or had particular sentimental value, although this would have to be proven."*
4. *"This rule applies not only to engaged couples, but to married ones as well. In the event of a divorce, the same rule should be followed - that the ring, unless previously stated, was a gift and therefore should be kept by the receiver."*

With engagement rings costing around one or two month's salary or more on average you should think hard before parting with your cash, and scotch any thoughts that a diamond ring is a sound investment. A retailer can mark up a new diamond ring by up to 100%, and it could lose half its value the moment that you leave the shop. Making sure you have the right person is more important than having 'the right ring'.



St Leonard's Chapel,  
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,  
LS24 9NJ



**OSJ Services, 2018.**

**Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.**  
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

<b>7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> January, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> March, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April, 2018</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> May, 2018</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2018</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> June, 2018</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018</b>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> August, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> September, 2018</b>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> October, 2018</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018</b>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2018</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018</b>

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.  
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.  
All are very welcome and all may receive freely if of good intent and need.

**Additional Services:**

<b>Remembrance Sunday:</b>	<b>11th November 10.35 a.m.</b>
<b>Midnight Mass:</b>	<b>24th December 11.20 p.m.</b>