

Why Are You Married?

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Reading Time: 3 minutes

Have you ever wondered why your spouse is married to you? I have been married for almost 20 years, and my wife is one of the greatest blessings of my life. We have provided each other companionship and she is my best friend. We have raised our children together and experienced the ups and downs of life together. I can't imagine life without her, but our relationship was never intended to be limited to spending time in the same house. As a matter of fact, many people talk about their pets doing all the things I have already mentioned. God intended marriage to be something more than mere companionship. Marriage is designed to be a vehicle that draws us closer to God.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is writing about a marriage that is filled with a great deal of conflict because one spouse is a Christian and one is not. He argues that the believing spouse should remain with their unbelieving partner, so long as the unbelieving partner is willing. Why? Because Paul says, "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband" (1 Cor. 7:14). This doesn't mean non-Christians can be saved simply because he/she happens to be married to a Christian.

Instead, it means that the person you are married to has a lot to do with your own salvation and growing closer to the Lord.

To be sanctified means to be set apart for God's purposes. Jesus prayed in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." We might think of *sanctification* as the process of being made more holy. God uses many different methods to achieve this, from reading the Bible to difficult life situations, so that we can be transformed more into His image. The institution of marriage is one of the vehicles that He has created with the intent of drawing us closer to Him. In Ephesians, Paul explains that marriage is designed to teach us something about Christ's relationship to the church (Eph. 5:26-27). Christ serves His bride with the intent of sanctifying her. Likewise, this should be my purpose in marriage. Eventually, my wife is going to stand before the Lord. She should be more holy because of the influence I have had in her life than she would have been without that influence.

Sometimes this does not happen in a marriage. One married couple whose names are synonymous with each other is Ananias and Sapphira. You probably would not name one without at least thinking of the other. At some point in their marriage, they decided to do something that most of us have never done—they decided to sell some of their property and give the proceeds to the church. They didn't have to do this, but they chose to make a sacrifice. Yet, at some point in the discussion, they also decided to keep part of the profits for themselves while telling the lie that they were contributing all the profits to the church. I don't know what that conversation looked like—I don't know if it was Ananias' idea or Sapphira's idea—but I know it occurred because they both told the same lie on separate occasions. The real problem is that when it did happen, no one tapped the breaks. No one said to the other, "This is not right." Instead of their marriage being a sanctifying force in the life of one another, it actually drove them farther from the Lord. They were doing it wrong. I think about how many times my wife or I have been weak spiritually that we have picked each other up. How easy it would have been to say nothing, but that would not be fulfilling our purpose.

Sometimes marriage *does* draw us closer to the Lord—just as it was intended. Another famous married couple is Priscilla and Aquilla. Everywhere we find them in Scripture, they are serving the Lord together. In Acts 18, we find them opening their home in Corinth for Paul to stay (I wonder how many homes would be able to practice hospitality if the husband and wife would work together to open their home for God's purposes). Eventually, their home would be a meeting place for the *whole* church (1 Cor. 16:19). Later, in Acts 18, we find this husband and wife team teaching Apollos "the way of God more accurately." A husband and wife who worked together to share the gospel. You never read about one without the other present. You never read about them when they are not serving the Lord in some way.

For everyone who is married, God has given you a mission. That mission is the sanctification of your spouse. That does not mean that your spouse wants to be your project. It does mean, however, that God intends for you to be a spiritual blessing in his/her life. Your spouse ought to have a better chance to walk with the Lord because they are married to you. We must take that responsibility very seriously. While I may want to buy my wife a new car and take her on a nice vacation, I should be even more concerned about the spiritual impact I am having on her walk with God. May we walk that road together as “fellow heirs of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7).