



P.O. Box 66540
Albuquerque, NM 87193
505.890.6806
E-mail: lrn@liferesource.org
Website: www.liferesource.org

Presentation Transcript
God-Based Marriage – The Organizing Principles
By Bill Jacobs
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Today we're firing up a series on marriage. We're calling it The God-Based Marriage. The introduction is about the nature of marriage and the underlying principles that make it work. Have you ever thought about that? Everything in nature is organized. Everything people make is organized.

Information has been lost to Western culture and now it's lost knowledge about marriage. There are three expectations I'm holding out to myself about this series. I want to define marriage not only as a social convention, but also one invented and defined by God. And I want to inoculate those who would be from the creeping godlessness we seek in all the cultures around the world and the attack on marriage that we're currently experiencing. And most of all, I want to put the core organizing pieces, found in the Bible about marriage, into one package, so that all who want to be married can know what to do to be successful at it. So that would make it a series for everybody – premarital, newlyweds and those who have been married for a long time – as instruction on how to build and keep a marriage healthy.

Today what we will do is lay out the road map – cover a bit about each organizing principle, so you can know what the series will be about. Then, in each successive part of the series, we will delve into one of those principles using examples and scriptures to clearly define and explain each one. That way, when done, a person can go to this first one and see a summary of all nine principles in one place.

But first, let's start with *creeping godlessness*. As it would happen, the very day I sat down to start preparing this presentation, Jim O'Brien, in his weekly letter, laid out an excellent example of creeping godlessness. The date of his letter was 1/31/2020 and the title was *The End of Marriage*. To read the whole letter, go to their site and click on the link *From our Pastor*. So that would be cogcincinnati.org. So here's a quote from his letter. "Maybe the battle is most clearly stated by Masha Gesson, a lesbian journalist speaking at a conference in Sydney, Australia. She

said, "It's a no-brainer that we (homosexuals) should have the right to marry, but I also think equally that it's a no-brainer that the institution of marriage should not exist." She went on to explain that 'marriage equality' should become 'marriage elasticity' with the goal of 'marriage extinction.'" We've talked about the attack on marriage for quite some time and there it is – spelled right out!

So do you see how it creeps? It goes from one thing to the next thing to the next thing down the line. It doesn't do away with things all at once. It just gradually get us used to something, and then we take the next step from there down the road. So the end goal of all these changes to the original concept of marriage is to do away with marriage all together – total sexual promiscuity without any long term relationship or commitment. Many of the people I work with in my counseling practice have already arrived at this location. So it's real and it's advancing rapidly.

I used to become frightened and discouraged over these things when I would read about them. It felt like panic to me sometimes. But then I realized that God's people have always functioned under this kind of attack. It's nothing new. We were created for it. And we can be well-equipped to function while it all goes on right along beside us. As I said, one of the hopes for this series is that it can serve as a support for those who want to defend God's ways.

So let's move forward. Let's look at the underlying principles that support marriage and make it work. The first principle that I want to cover is what we can call *God's universal hierarchy*. Did you know that every being in the universe functions within an environment of hierarchy? Think about it. Everyone but God the Father is subject to somebody. And He makes Himself subjected to certain principles, like love and sacrifice. Jesus, even, is subject to God the Father. And everything else is subject to Jesus, including the church. Within the domain of the early church, even, there were twelve apostles that decided matters for the church. And we know that they sought input on important matters from other ministry members, even though they were at the top of the hierarchy, which shows that it isn't a strict pyramid. It allows for other people to be included in the decision-making process – that those at the top *seek* input from others. We know they sought input on important matters. We see that in Acts, regarding the circumcision issue. You can read about that in Acts 10, if you like. Among the apostles, it appears that James – after all the discussion about circumcision in Acts 10 – is the one who reported to the group the decision. So he was probably at the top of the hierarchy among them.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that this is about a husband being over the wife in the hierarchy. And that *is* how this applies to this topic. You'd be right. That kind of organization is the only kind God uses. This makes some women angry and others fearful – and many of those, resistant. And when we get into the presentation devoted specifically to God's universal hierarchy, we're going to show you something that's comforting about that – that takes the anxiety out of it. So you just wait and see. I promise you that's what will happen. Your fears can be, and will be, put to rest, unless you resist everything that you hear.

Very few humans are very good at living this hierarchy, including most married men. But thinking about it, if every government, every business, every sports team has someone at the head of it – even people who don't know or care about God understand that some sort of hierarchy is necessary to direct the path of organizations – would it be reasonable to say that marriage should be the only exception? Well, no, it shouldn't. A godly marriage is subject to this natural law of the universe. I'm reminded of Bob Dylan's song, *Gotta Serve Somebody*. "Well, it may be the devil, or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna serve somebody." Even Bob gets it. So moving on to the next universal principle.... When I work with couples, I teach them a way to communicate so they, being different from each other, can understand what the other means by what they say. And because of the difference between people, living with them on a daily basis is very hard. That's even true of employees and employers, or employees with employees, at work. It's just hard for people to understand each other. And when you put two people of the opposite sex in a relationship where they have to live together every day, it becomes very difficult. So, if a person *wants* to live with someone of the opposite sex, it's going to take a commitment. A Bible-based commitment is a commitment for life. That's what the Bible teaches us. The scripture says that a marriage is one man and one woman in a lifetime commitment. And I know there are a few caveats to that. No one has to live with somebody who is violent – physically or psychologically – to them or their children. No one has to live with someone who is sexually unfaithful to them. But those two things aside, it requires a lifelong commitment. When difficulties arise, couples in a godly marriage are required to learn how to work through the difficulties, rather than running away from them, thinking it's the other person's fault, and I just need to find a better mate, when they're carrying at least half the problem with themselves. So, much more later on the benefits of commitment and how to work through the difficulties.

What's next? Well, in Matthew 7:12, Jesus said:

Matthew 7:12 – *Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them* – and then He makes an astounding statement – *for this is the Law and the Prophets*.

One of the hardest things for most people is to say something that is complex in a simple form. Here Jesus does just that. I mean, how big is the Bible – the Old Testament and the New? Really? Because they're all the same thing and they're both built on the same principles – 66%, I believe it is, of the New Testament is Old Testament quotations. Well, He tells us this simple statement is underneath the Law of God. So *whatever it is that you wish other would do to you, do also to them. This is the Law and the Prophets*. So there it is. He summarized the whole thing in one short sentence. "Of course, we don't really have to keep the law," say some Christians. That's true, unless we want life to go well for us, and unless we don't want to become like Jesus, unless we're not grateful for His sacrifice. If you don't really want to be like God, and you're not grateful for His sacrifice, then you're probably totally out of tune with the Bible anyway. So one of the principle underneath marriage, is this one – the Golden Rule.

Now, to those women who would not want to be part of a natural hierarchy in their marriage, how hard would it be to serve a man who only did to and for you what he would want you to do for him? Puts a whole different spin on authority, doesn't it? Now there is a problem finding somebody like that, but... This is all about *learning* to do this, not being perfect at the beginning. So, much more later when we get to the presentation on *the Golden Rule in marriage*.

In Ephesians, the apostle Paul tells us that a husband is to love his wife in the same way that Christ loved the church. And what way was that? Well, He loved the church so much that He was willing to die for her. And what Paul was telling us there was that the love we are to have for our mate in marriage is to be sacrificial love – sometimes putting aside our stuff to help and support someone else. Most of the time, when people enter counseling for marital issues, their marriage has become a tug-of-war – a battle of wills, a battle for control – or else it's become a passive/aggressive unstated attempt to sabotage the other person's plans and goals. It's not about sacrificing and making the thing work, but winning. When this happens, the couple is missing the mark on one of those organizing principles, and consequently, they're going to be unhappy. So, the fourth thing I'm mentioning here is *the kind of love you have to have in marriage has to be sacrificial*. Marriage is *built* on that principle.

In 1 Peter 3:7, Peter said:

1 Peter 3:7 – *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor 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.* Now, I'm not going to go into that *weaker vessel* thing right now, but we will later in the series. Once we understand what Peter's talking about, being the weaker vessel is not an insult and could even be considered a compliment – if you understand it right.

So for now, we're just going to focus on *the heirs with you* part of that scripture. This is talking about the fact that a husband and wife – if they're both in a relationship with Christ – have a common goal. They're both seeking salvation. So it makes sense to work together toward that goal. Can we think of other goals that are common in marriage? So this principle extrapolates. It's not just about being heirs together of the grace of life. Well sure, there are lots of things. A couple can work to save for retirement.

I read a thing on YouTube about this young couple. They both lived in downtown – I think it was Queen Anne, Seattle. She worked in a law office as a secretary – maybe a paralegal – and he worked online at home, editing eBooks. They didn't have a car. They rode their bikes where they needed to go or took the bus. They went on a nice vacation every year, but they very seldom ate out. They bought food and cooked it at home together. So they were working as a team to the goal of retiring when they were forty years old. I don't know that they'll make it. I probably suspect that they will. They were planning to have enough money that they could travel every year. So that's what they like to do.

You can think about people working as a team in a business. You know, housework...at our house, when Elaine and I got married, the rule was, I'll do the outside and she does the inside. Now lately, the amount of yardwork has gone way down, and the amount that Elaine has to do has gone up, because she helps with our businesses. So I'm now doing some inside work, as well as outside, just to keep things even and support her. Think about parenting. Sometimes parents stick to their different styles, which confuses the kids and teaches them to be manipulative. Research shows that it's better for kids if both parents are too lenient or too strict, rather than one that's lenient and one that's strict. It's better to both conform to the same standard – to work a plan together – as a united front. The common goal of bringing children up to eighteen years of age and equipped to make it as an adult is something that parents have to work together on, not as individual agents. So marriage is a team where both set aside personal preference and glory for what works for the couple and the family.

As I write this, the Super Bowl is tomorrow. This past week I saw an interview with the San Francisco quarterback, Jimmy Garoppolo. Now Jimmy is an excellent passer, but the San Francisco ground game is so good, he doesn't get to pass that much – at least he hasn't in the playoffs. In an interview, a reporter asked him if it bothered him that he wasn't getting to do what he was good at, which was pass. He didn't say it, but he was implying that he was taking a second position, instead of the big star of the game, like Patrick Mahomes on the other team. And Jimmy said, without hesitation, the most important thing is winning. So no ego defense – just his eye on the end goal. Everybody on the team is working toward a common goal. And I can assure you that on both of those teams, that really is what it's all about. It's about winning, not being a glory hog.

And it's true at church, in a business, in a sports team, that the companies, the churches, the sports teams that focus on the goal, they're the ones that come out on top. It's also true with the Father and Jesus. They have a plan they are working. Everything God does through Jesus Christ, but "Jesus is also the architect of our salvation," we're told. So it's a universal principle that works. It's a part of a biblical marriage as well. It almost goes without saying, everybody understands this principle, I would hope. And, if a football player, of all people, can practice it, so can we at home.

Okay, next one: *Having each other's backs*. How would this be different from the previous principle – working together for common goals? Well, there are two things I think about. It's more personal for one thing – doing something specifically to help someone else – someone who needs help. Every now and then, I forget to bring my laptop to work with me. Well, that's a game-stopper for me. I can't see clients without my computer. So, when that happens, I have to call Elaine and ask her to drop what she's doing and bail me out, which she graciously does every time.

The second thing – beside being more personal – is that everybody needs help. It says in Genesis that God created Eve for a specific reason – He looked at Adam and saw him as incomplete.

Another way to say that is, the boy needs help! All humans know that they need help. Nobody's perfect. We all need it. We all need somebody to have our backs. And, since we know that, it's very much appreciated and love creating when someone does. So, for a marriage to work optimally, each partner needs to have the back of their mate. Much more about how to do this and the benefits in the presentation that we'll have on that coming down the pike.

Next one: In the Song of Solomon, the woman in the ideal relationship, says, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." There's a sense of *mutual emotional connection*. But this shared emotion is different for males and females. So, as with everything between males and females, it turns out to be complicated. Some men and women think men don't have an emotional connection to their wives, but that would be wrong. It's just a different kind of emotional connection than women have. All that said, one of the fundamental organizing principles of marriage is the development of a deep emotional connection between the two. Do you think that God the Father doesn't have a deep emotional connection with Jesus Christ? "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" And Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of My Father." So there's two very close, very loving Beings. It seems to me that the state of love develops over time as a couple aligns with the principles that we've already discussed. And once accomplished, that state of love between them makes it easier to practice the earlier principles as well. It's a circle. The more you get better at something – the more you do it, the more you get better at it, the more you do it. So it's easier to have the back of one's mate if there is love, and if there is love, it's easier to have the back of one's mate.

Why did Jesus have the back of the world when He died for it? I mean, we would be dead without Him, so we needed somebody to have our backs. And He did it. And what was the reason He did that? Well, it was for love. So we're only scratching the surface of this one. So look for the presentation, *Marriage and Organizing Principles – Emotional Connection*, soon coming to a podcast near you.

Okay, there's another here...there's a significant group of people who believe that once a relationship is ruptured, that it can never be repaired. Consequently, they give up on relationships that often *could* be repaired. Are you one of these people? If it gets tough, do you quit? If so, your chances of being married long-term are diminished, because you believe a lie. Relationships can almost always be restored, if there's a will to try and the knowledge to know what to do.

Think about Jesus Christ. The entire world is at odds with Him. In His day and age, the most important people in society – the scribes and the Pharisees – were at odds with him. But look at this scripture in John 12:32. Jesus said:

John 12:32 – *And I, when I am lifted up from the earth – that would be, in crucifixion – will draw all people to Myself.*

So we can learn from that that one of the things that draws people is sacrificial love. So He knew that the relationship with humankind, ruptured in Eden, *could* be and *will* be restored.

So that principle – *rupture and repair*, or that relationships can be repaired – is an axiom and you can count on it. No matter how bad it gets between a couple, if they do the right things, their relationship can be restored. We have a lot more about that one, too, coming your way soon.

Now, this final one that I want to talk about is somewhat of an add-on. It doesn't directly apply to the organizing principles of marriage, but I thought a lot of single people might listen to this, so this might be a good place to put it.

What can people do before they get married to make being married easier for them? Well, I know of three general things couples can do before they go hunting a mate and a fourth one after they've found somebody they want to marry.

The first one is to think about compatibility. It's not good enough that you both like dogs or enchiladas. You have a deeper, more mature understanding of what compatibility is. We're going to couple with this presentation another presentation called, *Finding a Wife for Isaac*. It doesn't exist yet, but there's the biblical story about marital compatibility and the lengths people in the olden days went to find compatible people. We'll get to that later. It's not a part of the foundational principles, so I'm going to cover it under a separate cover.

The second one is learning to communicate with the opposite sex before you have to live with one on a daily basis in a committed relationship. You can learn it later, but it would be better going in.

Third: Don't have sex before getting married. Sex is like glue in a relationship, but if you use it too much before in uncommitted relationships, it isn't as sticky when you get married. A lot more about that – we have another sermon already on the books about that that I'll mention in a minute.

And fourthly – this is after you find somebody you might be interested in – consider your own values about marriage and those of your proposed before you get married, and make sure that they align. I've talked to people that have done this, and they told me that it's a lot easier to resolve serious issues like this before you get married rather than afterwards. Something to think about.

Now, we're going to refer back to a couple presentations we've already produced. They're already out there, so you can listen to them before we get started on this thing. They are: *God and Sex – Mental Health and the Bible* (that would be the 20th one in that series) and another one called, *Love Your Spouse*. You can find both of those...you can just type in the titles into the

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Search feature, and it will jump right to them. So, *God and Sex – Mental Health and the Bible and Love Your Spouse*.

We will start producing these soon. You should start seeing them around the end of March 2020, so be on the lookout for them. And don't forget to check out our Website, liferesource.org. Lots of help there with all sorts of Christian living and mental health issues.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.