

**Marriage Convenient or Marriage Covenant:
Six Ways to Fight the Erasure of Marriage**
Revelation 19:6–9 & 21:1–5 & 22:15 | June 25 | Worldview

The year is 2540 and “Everyone belongs to everyone else.”

Or at least that is how the proverb goes in Aldous Huxley’s book ***A Brave New World***.

In Huxley’s book, written in 1931, but set in 2540 . . . Huxley gives a frightening picture of the future . . . one that in many ways resembles our own.

Like Henry Ford’s assembly line which automated production and standardized quality, Huxley’s future world runs on mass production . . . only it is the production of people

In his dystopian future, children are engineered and conceived and conditioned at the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre.

In this way, children no longer belong to parents . . . they belong to everybody. And as the proverb resounds in their infant ears – **everyone belongs to everyone else**.

In this commodified world . . . the morals and joys of Christianity have been replaced by psychological drugs . . . family has been replaced by the state . . . and marriage has become repulsive . . . left only to savages who live on enclosed reservations.

If you know the book . . . you know how dark this vision of the future is.

But you also know . . . how closely our world is following its path.

In ***A Brave New World*** . . . monogamy had been replaced by a society devoted to sex on demand . . . endless contraception . . . and open relationships.

In our day . . . SSM is being followed by polyamory + endless partner-defined marriages.

Just as parents are beginning to design the genes of their children . . .
. . . so marital partners are creating new ways of forming romantic relationships.

[IN SUCH A WORLD . . .] WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH MARRIAGE?

It seems that marriage, like gender, has become a fluid commodity, shaped today by everything but the Bible.

Instead of reflecting God’s glory, marriage now glorifies self, where people have exchanged the Creator and his ways . . . for all kinds of other images (Rom 1:23).

As a result . . . everything about sex and marriage is being altered and erased.

What are we to do?

Do we throw up our hands in despair?

Do we hide our views, because they will get us in trouble?

Do we only talk about marriage behind closed doors?

Or should we do something more public . . . more proactive? But what? And how?

Those are important questions . . . Ones I pray you are asking . . . and thinking about.

Some of you may be called to speak and engage the culture.

Others may be called to counsel couples escaping the ravages of the sex. revolution
or to explain biblical marriage winsomely to an angry co-worker.

All of us . . . if you are a Xian . . . are called to display God's design for marriage in our
your life – and as we'll see . . . that's true if you are married or single!

Indeed . . .

If you are a disciple of X . . . you are called to give an answer for the hope . . .

And that means . . . you must have an ever-ready defense for marriage.

Why? Because marriage is not a matter of convenience . . . something we defend when
culture accepts it or applauds us for it.

No . . . we defend marriage because it is God's gift to humanity for our good.

And more . . . we defend marriage . . . because it displays the gospel.

To erase the meaning of marriage . . . is to erode the meaning of the gospel.

For this reason . . . as inconvenient as it is . . . we must defend a biblical view of marriage,
because of the way it informs our understanding of God and his gospel.

And to do that we need to see two things

- (1) What God's design for marriage is
- (2) How God's design for marriage is being erased

So this morning . . . I want to briefly outline a biblical view of marriage in six points.
This will come from Genesis 2 and God's original design for marriage.

And then . . . We'll turn to Revelation to see how the marriage of Christ and his church

. . . gives us a permanent vision of marriage which is absolutely necessary
to combat six transitions in culture which are eroding God's good design

So . . . **6 Truths** About Marriage from Genesis

6 Transitions Erasing Marriage in Culture, Combated by One vision in Revelation

Six Building Blocks for Marriage

In Genesis 1–2, we find at least six truths that serve as necessary building blocks for marriage.

1. Marriage is Local

In **Genesis 2:8** . . . we read “**And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.**”

Verses 9–14 describe the plants and waters in and around the Garden, before v. 15 repeats the location of the man: The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden

Verse 15 commands Adam to work and keep the garden and **vv 18–25** then explains how he fulfills the command to work and keep the Garden – namely with his helpmate!

So . . . the context for marriage is in the Garden. Indeed, it’s not coincidental Song of Songs describes marriage and the marriage bed as a lush garden.

There’s so much we could develop from that . . . but for now . . . consider. . . when God joined man and woman . . . they were physically together in the same place.

Marriage is fundamentally a union whereby spouses go from living apart to dwelling together . . . seeking to make the world under their feet flourish.

2. Marriage is Monogamous

The word monogamy means ‘1 marriage.’ And we find this building block in v. 24 = **READ**

When Jesus is asked about marriage and divorce, this is the verse he quotes . . . b/c this is God’s good design—one man and one woman, committed to each other until death.

To be sure, the Bible tells of men who took multiple wives. But an honest study shows how destructive polygamy is:

In Jacob’s house, rivalry exploded between Jacob’s wives,
. . . this was followed by deadly fighting between their sons.

David’s many wives were a source for political intrigue and infighting.

Solomon’s many wives led to idolatry and the fall of the nation.

In Scripture, God’s good design is the marriage of one man and one woman for life.

This brings stability to the home . . . security for the children . . . strength for community.

It is not restrictive . . . it is good and wise and loving!

3. Marriage is Heterosexual.

From the same verse, we see marriage is heterosexual—one man, one woman.

We see this in the way verse 24 speaks of a father and mother . . . a son and wife.

Indeed, we find here, not only evidence that marriage is heterosexual . . . but that heterosexual marriage builds communities . . .

Indeed, just last week . . . FB was covered with father's and their families.

And this is as it should be . . . the vision of a father with his bride, his children, and his children's children IS GLORIOUS!

How does the glory of God cover the earth? It is through men AND women getting married and making a family.

Only heterosexual marriage can produce this fruit – which leads to #4.

4. Marriage is (designed to be) Fruitful.

This is inferred from 2:24, where mothers and fathers, sons and daughters are described

But it is commanded in Genesis 1:28 . . . where it says . . . **READ**

Likewise, 2:18 speaks of the woman as a helper . . . man cannot be fruitful on his own.

Nor can any form of same sex marriage be fruitful in and of itself.

A man needs his wife to bear offspring . . . so that together they can subdue + rule.

Therefore, in God's design, marriage is the place for children to be born.

It doesn't always happen this way . . . children are born outside of marriage and not every married couple is able to conceive . . . But that doesn't change the nature of marriage.

Marriage is fundamentally a fruitful union, where children are a blessing from God.

5. Marriage is Human.

→ At the same time . . . marriage is a HUMAN institution.

Maybe this goes without saying . . . but marriage is a union of a man made in the image of God to a woman made in the image of God.

So . . . marriage is not between man + beast, nor man + non-man.

Marriage is human . . . because only humans can make covenant commitments to one another . . . which is the sixth building block.

6. Marriage is Covenantal.

As a monogamous, heterosexual, human union . . . marriage is covenantal.

In our day, marriage is treated as a contract of convenience.

We might call it a consumer marriage, where if one partner fails to do their part, the subscription is cancelled . . . or at least questioned because of poor service.

Contrast this with the Bible:

Genesis 2:24 says: “**a man shall LEAVE his father and mother and HOLD FAST / CLEAVE to his wife.**”

This language of leaving and cleaving, of holding fast signifies a covenantal union.

Likewise **Malachi 2:16** says of marriage:

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. .

So marriage is not simply a human vacillating contract . . .

. . . **It is a covenant** ratified through **verbal** vows and **sexual** union.

Our culture divorces love and law . . . saying true love must be devoid of rules.

But the Bible rightly conjoins legal obligations with love.

And heterosexual sex is the covenant sign which conjoins two people in marriage.

Homosexual marriage . . . can't truly create a marriage because only the physical union of a man and woman can signify a covenant.

This is what distinguishes marriage from all other loving relationships . . . sex is what establishes and renews the covenant.

By God's design . . . marriage then is the garden where sex bears lasting fruit.

In all other contexts . . . sex becomes a vine that entices the lips, but poisons the body.

So we must insist, . . .

Marriage is not a plastic institution . . . moldable for your own convenience.

Marriage is a solemn covenant . . . to be **received** as a gift from God. . .
and **honored** as a sacred trust.

Those are the basics ... we could add a few more, but we can't erase any w/o damage.

In fact, in the only comprehensive study ever conducted on the relationship between sexual practices and economic flourishing, J.D. Unwin concluded:

"Any human society is free to choose either to display great energy [in economic flourishing] or to enjoy sexual freedom; but the evidence is that it cannot do both for more than one generation." (*Sex and Culture*, 412)

Citing Unwin, Daniel Heimbach has said, "restricting sex to marriage make societies strong, easing sexual standards is what causes them to weaken and collapse." (348)

Indeed, all that is holding back our culture from sexual self-destruction is time . . . and maybe, just maybe, those who have not forgotten the goodness of covenant marriage.

For that reason . . .

We must be ready to explain why marriage is more than a matter of convenience, . . .

Indeed, we must be ready to explain the beauty and goodness of marriage amidst cultural forces seeking to erase marriage . . .

And what are those forces?

Well, I'll suggest six cultural forces that are trying to erase marriage.

Some of them are not immoral . . . but traits of our modern age which strain marriage.

Others are hallmarks of the sexual revolution which have changed nature of marriage.

Still others are part of our postmodern . . . Do It Yourself Romances . . .

And I share them today. . .

Not to condemn anyone in particular . . . but to lament over the sad state of marriage . . .

And to show how only an ongoing vision of Christ's future marriage can help us.

So for the sake of your marriage and marriages in our culture . . . we need to consider . . .
six threats to marriage today.

And w/ each threat . . . we need to run to Revelation 19 + 21 to find an anchor for our souls.

Six Threats to Marriage Today

1. TRANSIENCE and the Loss Marriage's Place

Yesterday . . . I talked to a friend whose husband has divorced her. At root is this man's selfishness . . . Sin is what destroys marriage. And this case is no different.

Still, I can't help but think about how dis-location has added difficulty to their marriage. She is from **India**. He is from **Mexico**. They met in **London**. And then moved to the **US**.

On one hand . . . the diversity was/is beautiful. But the lack of family connections and local roots has, I believe, added to their marriage crisis.

Remember . . . I said marriage is local . . . and for most of human history that meant that sons and daughters lived and married and raised children in close proximity to their families.

That all changed with the rise of mass transit . . . and the loss of rootedness in any place.

In a word, **transience** has opened up channels for the gospel and good works, but it has also wreaked havoc on marriage.

Consider this statistic: "In 1880, only 1 in 20 marriage dissolved; today it is 1 in [5]" (44)

That is staggering! And the sociological reasons for such a shift are manifold. But surely **transience** plays a part.

Commenting on this point, David Wells has observed.

Impermanence characterizes our relationships. Our mobility means that most of our friendships are quite fleeting. Christmas cards [or FB] may tentatively renew the links once we have moved, but any such renewal is brief and insubstantial. It is simply a part of the reality of moving that we will have to make a new set of friends. And we may have to find fresh spouses as well, for the bonds that are formed with such high hopes at the beginning of the marriage often turn out to be impermanent. (44)

For all of us, the impermanence of our age presses against us . . . and if we are not careful it will shape our habits, our hearts, and our homes – **This causes unique challenges for marriage**

So what do we do in response?

1. Remember that you are made for community and that if in your life you have lost a sense of place . . . as I have, as many in our military have . . . your rootedness comes not from the dirt under your feet, but from the throne above your head.
2. Try as we might to get back to the Garden, we can't get there. But we can learn to live with a permanent gaze at heaven and the union of Christ and his church.

Brothers and sisters, there is nothing that will ground you in an ever changing world like the vision of glory in Revelation 21–22 . . . so look to that coming marriage and find community with a people in the church who will support that vision . . . and your marriage.

2. TRANSMISSION of Information and the Temptation of Endless Options ... threatens M.

Very similar to the impact that mass transit has had on marriage, mass information has also reconfigured romantic relationships.

From horrible hook-up apps like Tinder . . .
To the foolish Facebook friendship with old flames . . .
To the bombardment of beautiful, airbrushed images scrolling thru your device.

We are living in a world with unlimited options . . .

Some of them are benign . . . others invite betrayal.

All of them . . . unsettle our hearts and tempt us towards discontentment.

This impacts singles thinking about getting married:

Is she the right one? Will I be happy with him? What if someone better comes along?

Those questions are the fruit of our anxious age . . . where consumerism, buyer remorse, and endless upgrades teach us to always look for something better.

What is a pre-nuptial agreement but a kind of romantic service warranty?

Here's the deal . . . God's design for your marriage is to learn how to love someone whose body will sag, whose bowls will leak, and whose hair will grow in strange places . . .

That's why you make a covenant commitment before you unwrap the package!

When you are young and healthy . . . a covenant commitment may not mean much.

But when the years are hard . . . when the romance cools . . . and when the person you married changes FOR THE WORSE . . . that's when your covenant matters!

And again . . . your ability to keep those vows will depend on something greater than yourself.

It will depend on a glorious vision of a heavenly marriage . . .

This is what will empower you to remain faithful . . . when the years of marriage are hard!

Indeed . . .

When the world tells you, if you are not satisfied . . . just LEAVE.

Revelation 21–22 tells you . . . YOU WILL BE SATISFIED . . . so stay!

Your sanctification is more important than your satisfaction . . . so look long at the coming marriage with Christ . . . and find strength to keep your vows!

Next . . . there are two transitions that run together . . . because they both come from the sexual revolution of the 1960s . . . or more exactly they paved the way for that revolution.

3. The Transgression of the Marriage Covenant and the Legislation of No-Fault Divorce

4. The Transformation of the Family and the Separation of Sex and Procreation

. . .

In the same decade, no-fault divorce and the pill were introduced to our country.

It's safe to say, the collective damage of these two inventions is beyond calculation.

First, no-fault divorce made divorce cheap and easy. Which made marriage cheap and easy.

Whereas marriage was meant to be a covenant commitment unto death . . . the introduction of No-Fault Divorce reshaped the cultural landscape.

Not surprisingly, such a change in the culture has been felt in the church.

In fact, some report the divorce rate in the church is just as high as culture.
And they report that the divorce rate is around 50 %.

Thankfully, neither of those stats are accurate.

First: no one really knows the divorce rate . . . and it has never come close to 50%

According to Shaunti Feldham (*The Good News About Marriage*), she reports the number is closer to 30% . . . and has been on the decline in the last two decades.

Moreover . . . there's good evidence Christian couples who read the Bible and pray together do not get divorced like the world.

So take heart . . . Marriage is not an exercise in futility . . . it is STILL the best way . . . because it is God's way. And as God's way . . . the blessing is found in keeping covenant, not breaking it

That being said . . . no-fault divorce HAS dramatically changed marriage.

Instead of being a covenant which calls self-denial and maturity . . . marriage has become an accessory to personal expression.

And this is why . . . LGBT community fought tooth and claw to make SSM legal.

In the US . . . marriage has become the pinnacle of romantic love.

However . . . this too is a deviation from God's design . . .

A deviation enabled by the wide circulation of the birth control pill.

From 1957 to 1965, the FDA made a series of approvals for ‘the pill’ . . . making it possible for healthy females to regulate their fertility.

Chronicling the effects of the Pill, Mary Eberstadt wrote ***A + E after the Pill***

“It may be possible to imagine the Pill being invented without the sexual revolution that followed, . . . but imagining the sexual revolution without the Pill and other modern contraceptives simply cannot be done” (12).

In a world that celebrates the unfettered autonomy of the individual, the pill was a godsend.

It liberated women from the slavery of their fertility, thus freeing them for personal and professional opportunities they could not have enjoyed before.

It also liberated men . . . from . . . having to take responsibility for the women they had sex with and/or for the children that resulted. (14–15)

Now . . . let me say . . . I think there is a defensible argument for Xians to use contraceptives.

My point is not to debate the personal ethics of contraception and family planning.

My point is to say . . . the introduction of the pill changed sex in profound ways.

Never before was it possible to separate sex and procreation with 99% effectiveness.

But with the Pill . . . sex could become an end in itself.

Couples—married or unmarried—could engage in intercourse w/o regard for children.

In this way . . . marriage wasn’t denied . . . it was just transformed . . . From being the place where family was conceived . . . to the place where romantic love leads.

Add to this . . . the rise of pornography, the steady stream of music glorifying sex outside marriage . . . and endless movies glorifying romance w/ no connection to family. . .

Just consider the Disney Princes – they get married, but never have morning sickness, stretch marks, or labor pains . . . WHY? Because they don’t have children

So . . . we grow up in a culture taken captive by Walt Disney, Hugh Hefner, James Bond, and Beyonce . . . and the result . . . is a total misunderstanding of marriage.

In fact . . . I would contend

This separation of sex and procreation . . . created the context for SSM to make sense.

If marriage is the ultimate end of romantic love, instead of the beginning of a family, then there is no reason to oppose two men or two women from getting married.

In short . . . sex without procreation radically changed marriage . . .

I have to be honest at this point . . .

Thinking about the last 50 years in our country overwhelms me with sorrow.

We have fallen so far from God's design.

But again . . . things were far from perfect 50 years ago.

The goal is never a return to the good ole days –

In a sin-cursed world . . . looking back is never the answer . . .

Rather . . . we must look forward to the hope of a heavenly marriage. This is what Rev gives us

In **Rev 19** . . . we find the bride of Christ washed clean and dressed in white linen, sitting down to eat with the king who bought his bride with his blood and made her pure.

In **Rev 21** . . . we see the New Jerusalem “coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

In **Rev 22:15** . . . the people who make up that heavenly city, now call others to come and have their sins washed clean . . . to find a place in God's royal marriage.

This is how must respond to the brokenness and sorrow of marriages gone bad.

It is not by trying to reproduce Gen 2:24 . . . but by looking to Revelation that we find good news

Good news that says . . . the holy ones around the throne are not those who have never sinned . . . but whose sexual sins have been washed clean by faith in Jesus Christ.

In this way . . . even those who have made a mess of their marriage . . . can have sure hope of everlasting love in the marriage supper with Jesus Christ.

And this unchanging future . . . then . . . is our anchor. Our hope.

And . . . Our guide to navigate our ever-changing world.

Which brings us back to our 2 last transitions . . .

the impact of transgender and transhumanism.

5. TRANSGENDERISM and the Erasure of Male and Female

6. TRANSHUMANISM and the Possibility of Humanoid Partners

In our world today . . . one of these trains has come into the station,
but another one is barreling down the track.

Transgenderism is a word which describes a way of looking at gender a fluid.

That is to say, the transgender movement has said biology does not define gender.
. . . Rather, feelings do . . . And to fit their view of the world, we must exchange the binary
of M + F for a series of every increasing genders.

Well, this clearly erases God's view of gender and any marriage that come out of it.

So too . . . the **transhumanist** movement erases what humanity & marriage mean.

Transhumanism believes that humanity is evolving, hence it is in transition.
In our country right now, efforts are being made to create humanoid robots.

In Japan such robots are being used to care for the elderly –
And in US, there are people who have already married such creations.

As outlandish as this sounds . . . it must be said . . . marriage can only exist between a
man and a woman . . . flesh and blood is a prerequisite for marriage.

No matter how good technology gets or how lonely a man becomes, the union between
man and machine is not part of God's plan. It does not constitute marriage.

Such a partnership overturns almost every building block for marriage and only plays a
high tech game of make believe.

And why do we say that?

Because we submit that the maker of marriage . . . has told us how marriage works.

He defined marriage in Genesis . . . and in Revelation he has displayed its ultimate goal.

And in between . . . we are called to seek the substance to which marriage points . . . and
to help others do the same.

And the truth is . . . those who embrace divorce, intentional childlessness, SSM,
transgenderism, transhumanism . . . blind themselves from the thing they want most . . .

Lasting love . . . spiritual union . . . and covenant marriage.

Marriage is by no means convenient.

In a culture . . . where marriage is cherished and celebrated . . . marriage is hard.

How much more in a time and place . . . where culture is actively opposing marriage.

Brothers and sisters . . .

We must hold fast to God's good design for marriage.

We must beware of the winds of doctrine seeking to erase it.

But most of all . . .

We must behold with increasing intensity the vision of a final and glorious wedding between Christ and his church . . . **that we might become like what we behold**

To be sure . . . the way of marriage is hard, heavy, and at times costly.

But to follow God's way . . . is always worth it.

And more than that . . . to follow his plan for marriage enables us to know more of him and to invite others to know him too.

Therefore . . .

. . . let us fix our eyes on heavenly things, where Christ is seated

. . . let us run the race with our hearts enflamed with passion for Christ's glory.

. . . and let us pursue this glorious vision of marriage to Christ

. . . **so that** whatever our station in life,

THAT marriage would overcome any and all threats to God's design for M.