



# The Country Preacher's Newsletter

"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

## What Is Marriage?

By Randall F. Matheny

Marriage can only truly be defined by the Bible. Society in general cannot agree upon a definition, or even if the concept of marriage really exists. The Bible, however, has much to say.

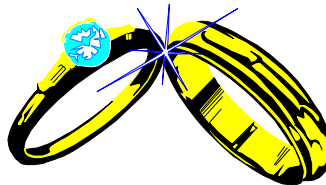
Marriage, by original design (authentic marriage), is between one man and one woman who are brought together by God. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mat. 19:4-6).

Marriage is more than a union, it is unity: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24; Mat. 19:5; Eph. 5:31). Marriage is more than companionship, it is

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commitment: "... yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant" (Mal. 2:14b). Marriage is more than a relationship, it is esteemed as "... honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). Those who encourage sexual immorality by cheapening marriage

will also be judged (see Mat. 18:6-7). In other words, marriage is to be held in honor



among all mankind as a unique relationship different from all others. Sexual relationships which violate God's design for marriage dishonor marriage and are condemned. Although many interpersonal relationships exist not all of them qualify as marriages, since marriage in general is ordained

of God and must meet His requirements.

Because all lawful marriages are joined by God, man has no authority, personally, civilly or socially, to break the covenant except according to the terms of God's will. A search of the scriptures reveals that God will dissolve the covenant only

because of sexual immorality (Mat. 5:32; 19:9), or due to the death of a spouse (Rom. 7:1-3). Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God, and is not to be entered into lightly, but reverently, discreetly, soberly and in the fear of God.

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## A Living Sacrifice

By Randall F. Matheny

Sacrifice is often confused with asceticism, which is the idea that giving up everything to embrace nothing is somehow the highest expression of religion. Sometimes this manifests itself in such things as taking a "vow of poverty," spending a few years in a monastery, or secluding one's self in some other way, or perhaps in giving up modern

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amenities to "get back to nature." Does God really want us to give up everything? Hardly. What He does require of us is that we make use of what we have, everything that we have, for His service. We learn from the parable of the talents (Mat. 25:14-30) that, having been blessed by the Lord according to differing abilities, He expects us not to give up what we have, but to put all that we have to use for Him. That's what it means to offer one's self "a living sacrifice," which is our "reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1-2).

Although some modern versions render the last phrase of Romans 12:2 as "spiritual worship" or some close variant, feeling that worship is implied, the better rendering is "service." The word usually translated "worship" does not occur in the verse. The emphasis remains on service which is to be rendered by living sacrifice. So then, the sacrifice that God requires of Christians is not that of asceticism, or even death, but to serve Him in living for Him. A fair commentary on this would be Colossians 3:22-25, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." Although spoken to servants with human masters, those who serve a divine

Master would be expected to be no less loyal. So, what is a living sacrifice? First, it is holy, meaning that the individual has been purified through obedience to the truth (1 Pet. 1:22; Jn. 17:17). Second, it means that we present ourselves to God's keeping and command (Mat. 7:21). Third, it means that we must recognize and desire the uniqueness of Christianity over "fitting in" with the world. Fourth, it means that we joyfully and eagerly accept the mind of Christ which is imparted to us through our study of the scriptures (Phil. 2:5; Jn. 20:30-31). And finally, it means that we must willingly allow God's will to be worked out through us every day, of every year (Heb. 13:20-21). When we use all that we have for God's service we will truly be living sacrifices.

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### *Tidbits*

"When you were born, you cried and everybody else was happy. The only question that matters is this: When you die, will YOU be happy when everybody else is crying?" -- **Tony Campolo**

"Every living creature that comes into the world has something allotted him to perform; therefore, he should not stand an idle spectator of what others are doing." -- **Sarah Kirby Trimmer**

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