The Significance of Marriage

Guest: Al Mohler
From the series: God’s Purpose for Marriage (Day 2 of 2)
Air date: January 23, 2015

Bob: When you get married, you enter into a unique kind of relationship—a covenantal relationship. Dr. Al Mohler says, “The marriage covenant is designed to point to an even greater covenantal relationship.”

Al: When we say, “I do,” we’re not just affirming a contract. We are avowing a covenant. That covenantal understanding of marriage is actually a picture—and here’s the incredibly marvelous thing—a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church because it’s Christ, who is described as the bridegroom; and His church is described as the bride of Christ. Brothers and sisters, we are saved only because, when on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior said, “I do,”—He did and He does.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Friday, January 23rd. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. Someone has said that every marriage is making a statement about God and the gospel. The only question is “What kind of statement are we making?” We’ll hear more from Dr. Al Mohler today. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Friday edition. Dennis—

Dennis: Bob, our listeners are in for a real treat today as they hear Dr. Al Mohler, who is the President of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. I have to tell our listeners—let them in on a little secret here. We asked Dr. Mohler if he would speak at three events, late last summer and fall, at what was called I Still Do®.

Bob: Right.

Dennis: And he said, “No.”

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: A few weeks later, he called us back; and he said, “You know, I so believe in what you guys are doing and what our nation needs to hear today, from the Scriptures, about how God designed marriage and He knows how to make it work—that I’m not taking any outside speaking engagements for a couple of months—but I’m going to take these three.”
Bob: Yes. The message we’re hearing this week is rooted and grounded in Genesis, Chapter 1, and Genesis, Chapter 2—which is where the definition of marriage comes from. That’s the same place that we started when we put together The Art of Marriage® small group study. We went to Dr. Mohler and others—Paul David Tripp, and Michael Easley, and Crawford Loritts, and Voddie Baucham—and your wife is a part of it—Mary Kassian. We asked all of these folks to speak into the issue of marriage as we put this six-part series together for couples. If you’re going to talk about marriage, you’ve got to go back to the beginning; don’t you?

Dennis: You have to go back to the Book of Genesis. Not only is that what you are going to hear today, but it’s also what you’re going to get if you choose to take advantage of a special offer we are making about The Art of Marriage small group. It’s a video-assisted small group series. If you are looking for some relevant, practical, high-entertainment value—but great biblical teaching like you are going to hear today—you ought to check out The Art of Marriage and find out more about how you can bring this to your small group.

Bob: Yes, it would be great for your group to go through this year. You can find out more when you go to TheArtofMarriage.com. It's TheArtofMarriage.com. Find out about the small group material that we have available.

Here is Part Two of Dr. Al Mohler’s message on God’s design for marriage—presented, originally, in Portland, Oregon, back a number of months ago.

[Recorded Message]

Al: “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” So, you have leaving in the old King James and cleaving. There is a necessary leaving of one relationship. When you think about it, many people think the most primal relationship of all is the relationship between parents and children. For, at least, part of the human life span that is certainly true.

But in terms of God’s trajectory in creation for the human being—either a man or a woman—the ultimate relationship that trumps all other relationships on earth is the relationship between the husband and the wife. There is a leaving, even of mother and father, and then, a cleaving—a uniting / a coming together—of the one and the other—the man and the woman. Then, not only is there a leaving / not only is there a cleaving, there is a union—“...and they should become one flesh.”

One of the most important issues about all of creation—and especially about what it means to be human—and one of the most important issues about family is the complementarity that is here built in. The one is for the other. The woman is for the man; and therefore, the man is also for the woman.
There’s an order in creation. Adam has the opportunity to name Eve. There is a different set of roles and expectations for men and women made clear in Scripture. But together, they are perfectly united in the complementary relationship of marriage.

It’s not just a relational complementarity / it’s not just an attitudinal complementarity. It’s not just that they were made for each other in terms of likes and dislikes and abilities. They are made for each other, even physically, such that the union of the man and the woman is pictured, without any embarrassment at all in Scripture, as the union of a man and a woman, physically, in the act of marriage.

And then, that next verse that is just spectacular. “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” That’s one of the most incredible verses in Scripture. It makes teenagers laugh / makes younger kids scratch their heads. It should make all of us see the glory of God. A man and a woman, naked without shame—it happens only in the Garden of Eden, in the context of marriage. That shows the glory of God—the God who said, not only of this creation He made—that, “It is good”; but that “It is very good.”

Had sin never happened and if all who had ever continued in life were living—if all of Adam and Eve’s descendants were living in Eden and sin had never entered the picture—it would be all like this. There would be nothing but human beings, made in God’s image—who, reaching the right point in life would be united, one to the other, in the pattern of leaving and cleaving. They would all be naked in the Garden and not ashamed. But that’s not where we live. We do not live in the Garden of Eden.

The narrative of Scripture moves immediately from the glory of God and the perfection of creation to the entrance of sin into the world. And here is something we need to keep in mind—if marriage is one of God’s greatest gifts in the Garden of Eden, it is not less preeminent in a fallen world but more urgently important. We often don’t think about that.

In the Book of Common Prayer—that’s where most of us get our language about the marriage ceremony. All kinds of people get married. They have no idea of the Book of Common Prayer; but they are using that language because almost every protestant marriage ceremony uses the language from the Book of the Common Prayer. And yet, we’ve edited—we leave a lot of it out. One of the things we leave out—that should be put back in—is where the Book of Common Prayer, based upon Scripture, says that marriage is one of God’s greatest gifts to us because it is—and these are crucial words—a remedy for sin. And it is—it is a remedy for sin. It’s a remedy for sin in two ways.

Number one—it’s a remedy for sin in that it allows human beings, as human beings, to relate to one another, and to build a civilization, and to raise children in a situation in which sin is minimized. That goes back to that secular understanding of marriage. Even sociologists understand that what they call antisocial behaviors or pathologies—we
understand by the name of sin—those things are lessened where marriage is present. It is a remedy for sin.

But not just sociologically is it a remedy for sin for the man and for the woman—because there are desires built into us that, in a fallen world, are not possibly going to go awry—they are certainly to go awry but for the graciousness of God and the gift of marriage.

But the entrance of sin into the world also explains why marriage is not as peaceful, and glorious, and always harmonious and unitive as it would have been in the Garden of Eden because sin, not only explains why marriage is now so important as a remedy for sin—it also explains why sin can infect our marriages. That’s why we understand that, in a sinful world, marriage, important as it is, isn’t enough. That’s why we are not here merely in the name of marriage. We are here in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—for marriage protects us—but it doesn’t save us. Only Christ can save.

And then, the atonement that He accomplished on the cross and in His resurrection from the dead / the resurrection power of Christ—which is the promise of our resurrection yet to come for those who are in Him—the promise of salvation to all who believe and repent of sins—that is the promise that comes to us. It is as necessary for married people as it is for unmarried people.

But that takes us to the next movement in Scripture. After creation and its perfection, and then the fall and its horror, comes God’s act of redemption and its power. It’s a power—not just to save us from our sins and not just to transform us as we read in Scripture from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His marvelous light. It’s not just so that there is a before and after in terms of our personal relationship with Christ.

It’s also so that marriage is now understood, in the Christian church, to be Christian marriage—where we understand that we have a responsibility to Christ in our marriage, where we understand that there is a third party in our marriage. It’s not just the man and the woman. It is the man and the woman, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why we are told not to be unequally yoked—but rather that we are united, not only to each other, but by the power of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the promise of His resurrection, and in His indwelling gift—we are united also with Christ. Then, that’s what makes Christian marriage different than every other marriage because there is a higher accountability.

We know that, when we fail in marriage—we are not merely failing society, we are not merely failing our children, we are not merely failing each other—we are failing Christ. We are bringing harm to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bringing disrepute upon the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ because—here is something important to keep very much in mind—the Scripture does not present marriage the way the secular society understands marriage as a contract. As a matter of fact, the historians of marriage will trace the development of the understanding of contract—and this is one of
the fundamental problems in terms of the marriage culture today—people can make a contract / they believe they can make a contract.

In the Scripture, marriage is not a contract it is a covenant. In the Scripture, where there is a covenant, the covenant is a solemn oath / a solemn vow—it is an absolutely unbreakable commitment to be ended only by the death of one party. God makes His covenants with His people—we are only redeemed because God makes covenants and He keeps covenants.

As the man and the woman come together—and especially as we understand within the Christian understanding—as we stand before each other, and we stand before believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and watching is the larger world—when we say, “I do,” we’re not just affirming a contract—we are avowing a covenant. Covenantal understanding of marriage is actually a picture—here is the incredibly marvelous thing—a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church—because it’s Christ, who is described as the bridegroom; and His church is described as the bride of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, we are saved only because, when on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, said, “I do,” He did and He does. The covenant that God made with Israel was only secure because when God said, “I do,” He did. Through the prophet, Ezekiel, He says, “When I am faithful to My covenant in the face of your unfaithfulness”—He said—“it is not because I am worried about your reputation. It is because I am zealous for My Name; and because I made this covenant, I will keep it.” The steadfastness of God’s covenant-making love and His covenant-making commitment is a testimony of what’s expected of us in marriage. It’s also a testimony to the goodness of God’s gift.

When you think about marriage and you think about what brings us here today, you recognize that, when you look at all the analysis, it’s clear that marriage is more important than the world can ever understand it. It is infinitely actually more important because it’s actually eternally more important because we understand that marriage is also the context, in the Christian church, of disciple-making.

I mean, we know how husbands affect wives and how wives affect husbands; but do you recognize that, in Christian marriage, we are actually agents of sanctification, one for the other? Now, in one sense, that’s true for the entire bride of Christ—that’s true for the entire church. In the fellowship of the church together, we are to be agents for the sanctification of the other; but there is nothing like the possibility of a husband and a wife sanctifying one another, by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, within the context of marriage.

And you know what? Let’s just be honest—sometimes, sanctification isn’t comfortable because—speaking as a man, I can simply say our wives know things about us we didn’t think they’d figure out.
Over the process of time, I—I’m going to tell you—my wife, Mary—she is the most marvelous creature. I just can’t tell you how thankful I am to be married over 30 years to Mary Mohler. But you know what one of the strangest things to me is—that I now like things to eat I didn’t like before. [Laughter] There were things that I ate because she loved me and she made them. Now, I like them—I ask for them—and it’s amazing.

Over a period of time, you really do kind of grow to look like one another—I don’t mean in the wrong ways. I mean, you just see things the same way. How does that happen?—because I wasn’t thinking that way when we got married—I didn’t like to eat that, and I wouldn’t have even touched that! And you know, it works the other way as well.

We have an effect upon one another in the covenant of marriage, and we change one another. We actually—let me put it this way—I’ve been married to my dear wife far longer than I was old when I got married. The vast majority of my life has been married. I, now, would not know who I am without her. But here’s what’s more important—I wouldn’t be who I am without her. [Cheering] I could not possibly be the man I am today if God had not sent into my life, in the year 1983—well, that’s when we said, “I do,”—two years or three years before that since I had gotten to know her and to know, “I want to be united with this woman for the rest of my life.”

And in 1983, we looked each other in the eye, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, before our family and friends / before the church, and we said, “I do,”—and we still do. But the man who stands before you today is not the man that I would have been without her. I don’t know who that man would be. I just know how thankful I am that, in the context of marriage, one of the agents of my sanctification has been my wife.

But you know, as important as that is, it’s not the end of the story—because if we think that all of our satisfactions in life—and this is so very important—if we think that all of our satisfactions in life have to come from this lifetime, then, we are going to be doubly dangerous. We are going to be dangerous in the first way because we are going to be sad in this life that we don’t get ultimate infinite satisfaction.

Here is the reality—if you don’t get ultimate infinite satisfaction out of your marriage, it just means you’re waiting for glory. We’re not promised infinite ultimate satisfaction in this life because, as much as Mary Mohler has been an agent for my sanctification by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in my life and her life and in our marriage, I am still a sinner. And so, is she; and so, are you. But one day, for those who are in Christ, in the twinkling of an eye, those who are the redeemed will be glorified. At that point, we’ll know infinite ultimate satisfaction.

Between here and there, it’s hard to come up with anything on earth that’s more important than marriage and getting us there; but that’s not the ultimate goal. As a matter of fact, we’re here because, not only did we one day say, “I do,” but because we still do—but we’re also here because, even as we still do, we know that the promise that
we made then was “until death do we part.” But that’s not the end of the horizon—it’s not the end of the Scripture.

We turn to the Book of Revelation. In Revelation, Chapter 19, we read in the beginning of verse six:

Then, I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude like the roar of many waters and like the sound of great peals of thunder crying out, “Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, “Write this: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” Then, I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that. I am a fellow servant to you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.”

On earth, it doesn’t get any better than this.

In our determination, brothers and sisters, as we are here, is the fact that we are going to be saying, “I still do,” until the very end—when we take our final breath and one of us goes to be with Jesus. But the ultimate horizon of our marriage is—not just to be able to say that “Until death parted us, we still do,”—it is to say that “At the marriage supper of the Lamb, we’ll be there.”

So, until you die or Jesus calls you home, we still do—I still do. And when that happens, we will see the One who said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. Welcome to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

[Studio]

**Bob:** Well, again, we’ve been listening to the President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, Dr. Al Mohler from a recent FamilyLife event—an *I Still Do* event. And I’ll tell you, listening to Dr. Mohler—some profound stuff that he had to say—I think some profound stuff that is included as a part of *The Art of Marriage* small group series. Dr. Mohler is a part of that series.

**Dennis:** Right.

**Bob:** Some of his interview segments in *The Art of Marriage* are those moments where you go: “You know, I hadn’t thought about that before. That really changes the equation.”
Dennis: His teaching does. And I just want to throw out a challenge to every person, who’s listening right now, and say: “You know if you are concerned about the direction our nation is heading, spiritual and morally, and you want to do something about it—you’re kind of tired of feeling like you are playing defense. Well, why don’t you go on the offense and get four or five couples, in addition to yourself?—get The Art of Marriage video series.” You don’t have to be a great teacher—just a person who is able to facilitate healthy conversation in the midst of a group. You’re going to find what a lot of people have found. In fact, 97 percent said they would recommend this to another person.

Bob: Yes, if you can read a question out of the discussion guide, then, you can lead a small group through The Art of Marriage. You don’t have to know the answer. All you have to do is be able to ask the question, and the group can work together to answer the question. You can learn, and you can grow, and you can study what the Bible has to say about God’s design and God’s purpose for marriage.

You can find out more about The Art of Marriage when you go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link at the top part of the page that says, “GO DEEPER.” The info about The Art of Marriage is available right there, and we’ve got some special offers going on right now. So, why don’t you plan to go through this six-week study with your small group this winter or this spring? Get more information or order, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link that says, “GO DEEPER,” to find out about The Art of Marriage. Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY—1-800-358-6329. That’s 1800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then, the word, “TODAY.”

As we wrap up this week, one of the groups of folks that we are very grateful for, here at FamilyLife, are those of you who, not only listen regularly to this program, but those of you who have heard us long enough—talking about marriage / talking about family—you have caught the vision for what it is we’re doing—providing practical biblical help for marriages and families—and you’re pitching in to help make that happen. We appreciate your financial support for this ministry—those of you who are Legacy Partners and those of you who get in touch with us, on occasion, to make a donation. We’re grateful for your support. In fact, we couldn’t do what we do without your participation.

Right now, we’d like to say a tangible “Thank you,” when you help support us with a donation by sending you a copy of Dennis and Barbara Rainey’s devotional guide for couples called Moments with You. It’s designed for a full-year—365 daily devotions you can go through, as husband and wife. There’s an article you can read together, some questions you can discuss, and a setup for you to pray together, as husband and wife. Again, the book is our thank-you gift when you make a donation right now.

Go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link in the upper right-hand corner that says, “I Care.” You can make an online donation that way. Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY. Make a
donation over the phone; and request the book, *Moments with You*. Or request the book when you mail a donation to *FamilyLife Today* at PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; and our zip code is 72223.

And with that, we’ve got to wrap things up for this week. Thanks for being with us. Hope you have a great weekend and that you and your family are able to worship together this weekend in church. And I hope you can join us back on Monday when we are going to begin a look at the different chapters that a woman goes through in her life.

We’re going to look at it by looking at how Barbara Rainey went through these chapters. We’ll talk about the college years, and about her post-college years, as a single adult, about being engaged, about being a newlywed, and about being a young mom for the first time. Those are all distinctly different chapters, and they require some adjustments on the part of the woman involved. But we’ll talk about that next week. Hope you can be here for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back Monday for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you’ve benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider [donating today](http://www.familylife.com/donate) to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2015 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com