

SEARCH FOR INTIMACY - WEEK 3

The Intimate Marriage Part 1

In a world where marriage has become confused, we explore Jesus and Paul's vision for marriage as the sacred space where intimacy is played out.

Warm-up

This study addresses the issues of intimacy inside of marriage – God's ideals for marriage and problems experienced with intimacy in marriage. Not everyone has been married and some of us have gone through the pain of divorce or separation. If you are single, the application may be to ways you can support a married friend, how you can deepen intimacy with your current loved ones in your family or church family, and ways to grow in experiencing God's love.

What movies or TV shows or social media feeds have you seen that shape our culture's ideals of marriage? What message do they give?

Biblical overview of the purposes of marriage

When you look at these biblical purposes, how close or far away from these would our cultural views be? Our churches' views?

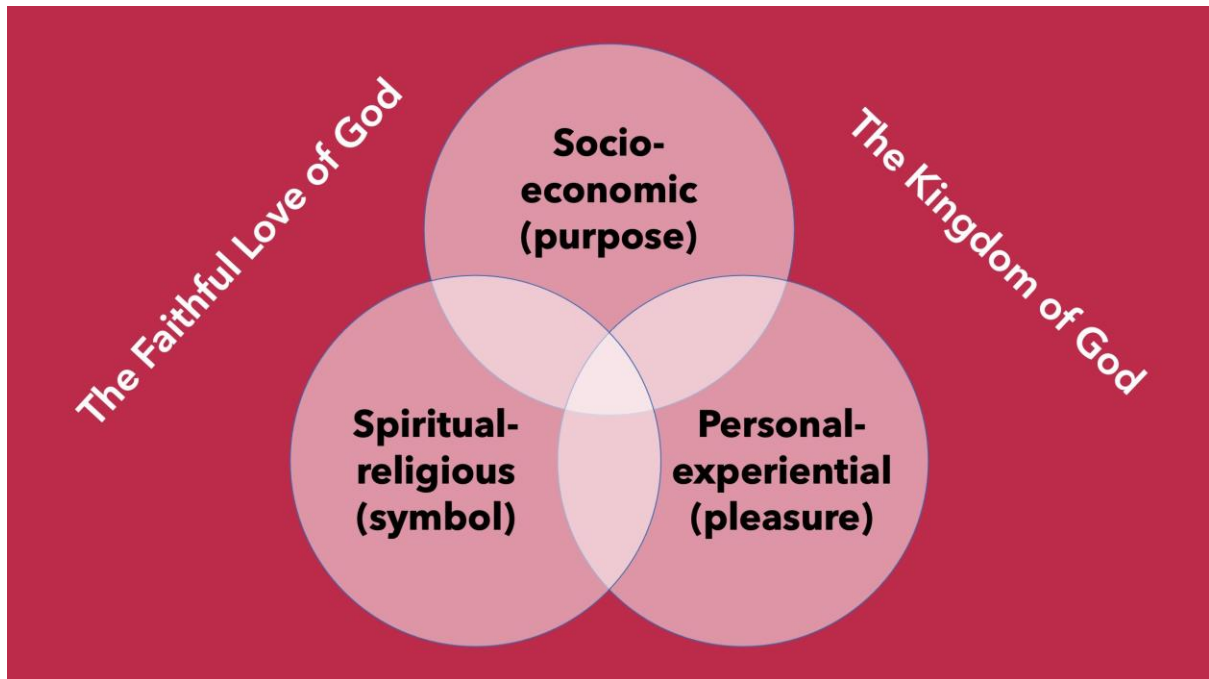
7 characteristics of marriage from the Old Testament:

1. Socio-economic necessity (e.g., Ruth and Naomi)
2. Arranged
3. Sometimes polygamous
4. Symbolic of relationship with God, Is 54:5, Hosea 2:19-20
5. Based on faithfulness, Lev 20:23-24
6. Kept in the (religious) family, Deut 7:1-4
7. For joy and delight, Prov 5:19, Song of Songs 1:15-16

7 characteristics of marriage from the New Testament:

1. Covenant, Matt 19:4-6, 11
2. Optional, 1 Cor 7:8-9, 38
3. Monogamous, 1 Tim 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6
4. Sexual, 1 Cor 7:2-5
5. Faithful, Heb 13:4
6. Symbolic of relationship between Christ and his church, Eph 5:24-25, 31-32
7. Temporary, Matt 22:30, Rev 19:6-8

The summary of these characteristics is seen in the following diagram:



Discuss ways you have experienced these three main purposes of marriage being expressed in your marriage relationship? Or in a marriage you have observed (e.g., parents or siblings or friends)?

Overcoming challenges to intimacy in marriage relationships

Read 1 John 4:18-19

1. God's love is perfect yet our human love is not. The failure to love as God does often creates fear and disconnection. What are some reasons we fall short in loving as God does?

(illness, stress, time pressures, bad habits learned from family of origin, trauma, abuse, rigid gender roles, pride, sin, selfishness, misguided ideas that intimacy equals agreement, etc)

2. 1 John 4:12 says if we live in God, his love is brought to full expression in us (NLT). How can we more deeply experience the Source of love so as to love in ways more similar to God's perfect love for us?

In all human relationships there is a movement between connection-disconnection-repair. We would like to repair our relationships, but even this can be challenging. We have a responsibility to seek repair in humility and with grace.

3. Our imperfect human love means we will have misunderstandings and arguments that can feel threatening to the intimate connection that we long for in relationships.

When our inbuilt threat system is triggered, we are in defence mode and very unlikely to be in a position to relate openly and with vulnerability which is necessary for intimacy. Which is your most frequently used defence mode – fight, flight, freeze or fix? Which is your spouse's most frequently used defence mode?

4. List some repair strategies that work in your relationships.

- Caring for self when triggered – take a walk, deep breaths, express your hurt feelings to God
- Asking a friend to pray and support you to repair
- Giving time and space to the other when they ask for it
- Making time to talk through the argument without interruptions
- Listening in a way that seeks to understand rather than defend
- Giving a sincere apology – no if's or but-you-did's, taking responsibility for our part in the disconnection/hurt
- Receiving an apology with forgiveness – even if it's not instant, processing and letting go of the hurt
- Prayer together – again may not be instant, but working toward re-connecting spiritually
- Do an online course or read a book to learn the skills of repair (see <https://www.gottman.com/couples/>)
- Professional help