

SIX COMMITMENTS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MARRIAGES

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. A wife asked her husband, “Our new neighbor always kisses his wife when he leaves for work. Why don’t you do that?” The husband said, “How can I? I don’t even know her.”
2. Marriage can be challenging, so that’s why we’re doing this sermon series, “For Better, For Worse.” We’re looking at God’s wisdom for marriage.
3. Let’s begin with this thought this morning: Marriage is a good thing.
 - i. **Genesis 2:18** “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.”
 - ii. **Proverbs 18:22** “A man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.”
 - iii. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** “9 Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. 10 For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. 11 Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? 12 And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.”
 - iv. Many people today don’t view marriage positively. More and more people are choosing not to get married, or to delay marriage for as long as possible. But the Bible says that marriage is a good thing.
 - v. Even science shows that marriage is a good thing.
 1. A 2023 study by Sam Peltzman from the University of Chicago found that married people are happier than non-married people.
 2. A 2022 study called “[The American Family Survey](#)” found that some of the happiest people in America are married moms. The study found that married moms are more than twice as likely to say they were completely satisfied with their lives than single women with no children.
 3. Studies also suggest that married people are healthier than single people. A 2023 study found that lifelong bachelors don’t live as long as married men.
<https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2023/02/24/study-lifelong-bachelors-have-lower-life-expectancy-than-married-men/>
 4. A 2017 study (Institute for Family Studies) found that married men are happier, healthier, and richer than unmarried men, and also have much better sex lives. The same study found that men who get and stay married live almost 10 years longer than their unmarried peers.

5. In 2015, [Ron Haskins](#), a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington said, "It's a plain fact that people who are married have more income, wealth and savings that last into their retirement."
- vi. Marriage is a good thing. A wonderful thing. It is something that young people should desire and look forward to. It is something that parents should desire for their children. It's not something to avoid; and it's not something to put off for as long as you can stand it. Marriage is a good thing.
4. Here's another thought: Marriage can break down if you ignore God's instructions. A car can be a very helpful tool. But if you don't take care of it properly, then it will break down and cause you a lot of stress and grief. The same thing goes for marriage. If you don't take care of it, it will break down and cause you a lot of grief.
5. How do you take care of your marriage?
6. **One person** said, "The secret of a happy marriage remains a secret (Henry Youngman)."
7. That's funny, but not true. The secret to a happy marriage is in God's word. If you will commit yourself to following God's instructions, then you can have a wonderful marriage.
8. This morning I want to teach you six biblical commitments of highly effective marriages.

II. THE SIX COMMITMENTS

1. Permanence.

- i. Highly effective marriages are committed to the permanence of marriage. They are committed to the ancient marriage formula, "till death do us part." They are committed to never getting a divorce. In highly effective marriages, divorce is not an option.
- ii. This comes from the teachings of Jesus.
- iii. **Matthew 19:6** "Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."
- iv. **Malachi 2:16 (NLT)** "For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. "So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife."
- v. A **husband** asked his wife, "Why do you keep reading our marriage license?" The wife replied, "I'm looking for an expiration date."
- vi. According to God, marriage has not expiration date. It is permanent. And effective marriages are committed to making marriage last a lifetime.
- vii. Effective marriages don't just commit to stay together until they fall out love, or until they find someone better, or until they no longer get along, or until they become unhappy. Effective marriages commit to "have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live."

- viii. Committing to the permanence of marriage doesn't just prevent divorce, it increases the health of your marriage. It motivates you to make the most of your marriage. When you realize you are stuck, and you have no way out, and this is your only chance for love and marital bliss, then you are pushed to make it work. When you are committed to the permanence of marriage you limit yourself to two options: Be happily married or be miserably married. Faced with this decision, most couples choose to do whatever it takes to be happily married.
- ix. When my dad proposed to my mom, she said yes! Then he said, "Hold on! If we get married, this is for keeps. There's no turning back; no going back; no getting out; divorce is not an option." Again, my mom said, "Yes!" For the past forty-nine years their marriage hasn't just gone the distance, but it has been a wonderful blessing to them both, and that's a big reason why.

2. Exclusivity.

- i. Effective marriages are committed to reserving all sexual activity and energy for their marriage.
- ii. **Somebody** said, "Marriage is like deleting all the apps on your phone except one."
- iii. **Hebrews 13:4** "Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers."
- iv. We live in crazy times. Things like pornography, swinging, polygamy, and polyamory all used to be unthinkable but now are commonplace. Yet all of these are a rejection of the Bible's teaching that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, and all sexual activity is to be kept in the marriage bed (Mt 19:4-5; Heb 13:4).
- v. **Chris Burns** said, "Marriage is like a video game. Starts off easy, then gets harder, and eventually you go online and find a way to cheat."
- vi. Unfortunately, that's what happens in many marriages. But God commands us to keep the marriage bed undefiled. Reserve all sexual activity, and all your sexual energy for your spouse.
- vii. Remember, God's commands are always beneficial. When you are sexually pure, it spices up your marriage. When your marriage is your only outlet for sexual energy and activity, then your love life is exponentially more fun, your trust is higher, your intimacy is deeper, and your spouse is infinitely more attractive. But when you squander your sexual drive on thoughts, pictures, and people outside of your marriage, then you have less energy and desire for your spouse. Your love life becomes less exciting and less frequent. Your spouse becomes less important.
- viii. When I was a kid my mother wouldn't let me have a snack close to supper time. She'd say, "You'll spoil your dinner." That's exactly what happens when you live in sexual sin. You ruin your appetite for your spouse. Your spouse

becomes less desirable. Your love life becomes less satisfying. When you get in bed with your spouse, you are already "full." But when you "fast" from sexual sin, your marriage becomes a gourmet meal, your favorite food in the whole world, and you look forward to "feasting" with eager anticipation.

- ix. If you want a healthier marriage, fight with all your might for sexual purity – physically, mentally, visually, and emotionally.

3. Selflessness.

- i. Highly effective marriages are committed to selflessness. They are devoted to pleasing their spouse. They are committed to making each other happy.
- ii. This principle comes from words of the apostle Paul.
- iii. **1 Corinthians 7:33-34** "But the married man is concerned about the things of the world -- how he may please his wife... But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world -- how she may please her husband."
- iv. Paul says that your responsibility in marriage is to please your spouse. This is what marriage is supposed to mean.
- v. This is where many couples fail. They don't understand why their marriage is failing. They look at people who are happily married and say, "They're so lucky." It's not luck. It's selflessness. You have to swallow your pride, die to yourself, and put your spouse's needs before your own. But many couples are not devoted to making each other happy. They are selfish.
- vi. Let me explain selflessness this way. Selfless means you are committed to consistently making your spouse feel good, and to not making them feel bad.
- vii. Do you know why your spouse fell in love with you initially? Because you consistently made them feel good, and eventually they found you irresistible. In the beginning, you broke your back to please your spouse. There was no mountain you wouldn't climb; there was not wall you wouldn't scale; there was no problem you wouldn't solve; there was nothing you wouldn't do to make your spouse happy.
- viii. Do you know why couples fall out of love? Because they stop making each other feel good, and consistently make each other feel bad, and eventually the love is lost. You fall out of love when you stop trying to make your spouse happy, and when you continue to do things that hurt or bother or annoy your spouse.
- ix. The good news is that you can fall in love all over again. All you have to do is focus on making your spouse feel good and avoid making them feel bad. If you do that consistently, long enough, they will find you irresistible again.
- x. That's what selflessness is all about. It's about focusing on your spouse and doing whatever it takes to please them.
- xi. Let me give you some practical examples of what this looks like. If your husband doesn't like tattoos, then don't get a tattoo. If your wife doesn't like

cigarettes, then stop smoking. If your husband likes it when you wear high heels, then buy some more pumps. If your wife doesn't like your job, then find a new one. If your husband doesn't like your cooking, then take some lessons and learn how to cook what he likes. If your wife doesn't like your friends, then drop them. If your wife doesn't like what you watch on the TV, then change the channel. And if your husband wants you to lose some weight, then go on a diet.

- xii. Living like this requires selflessness. To have an effective marriage you must be willing to give up your preferences for your spouse's; to give up your desires for your spouse's; to give up your comfort for theirs.
- xiii. The instant you tell your spouse, "No, I'm going to do this even though you don't like it," is the instant your marriage will begin to break down.
- xiv. Let me ask you something. What are you unwilling to do for your spouse? What are you unwilling to change for your spouse? The only thing that you should be unwilling to do for your spouse is sin.
- xv. The length that you will go to please your spouse will determine the strength of your marriage.

4. Priority.

- i. Effective marriages are committed to the priority of marriage. After their relationship with Jesus, their marriage comes before any anything and anyone else.
- ii. This comes from Jesus' teaching on marriage.
- iii. **Matthew 19:5** "a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."
- iv. The King James Version uses the terminology of leaving and cleaving; a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. Before marriage, your parents are the most important people in your life. But when you get married, your priority switches from your parents to your spouse. There is a transfer of priority. Your marriage becomes the most important thing in your life, even before your parents.
- v. At least, that's how effective marriages work. But many marriages break down at precisely this point. They attempt the cleaving without the leaving. They try to have a healthy marriage without putting their marriage first, and it never works.
- vi. Most of you know who Tom Brady is. He is retired now, but he is the most successful NFL quarterback of all time. His family life was closely followed by the media because he married another celebrity, Gisele, a beautiful, wealthy, successful super model. They got married and had kids, and everyone ate it up. But to everyone's surprise, Gisele left Tom and they recently got a divorce. Why? Tom had promised Gisele that he would retire after the 2022 season, and then he broke his promise. That was the final straw, and Gisele

left him. At that point, many men would have reversed course and said, "Okay honey, you win. I'll quit." But amazingly Tom Brady stuck to his guns and chose football over his marriage.

- vii. To have an effective marriage, you must put your spouse before your parents, before your siblings, before your children, before your friends, before your career, before your hobbies, etc. Your spouse has to come before everyone but Jesus.
- viii. But there's more. Not only must you put your spouse first, but you need to make sure that your spouse knows that they are first. You may think your marriage is your priority, but what does your spouse think? That's all that matters. If your spouse isn't convinced that they are the most important thing in your life, then you have some important work to do.

5. Oneness.

- i. Effective marriages are committed to oneness. I'm specifically talking about financial oneness. Effective couples are committed to mutual ownership of all money and property. His things are her things, his money is her money, his assets are her assets, and vice versa. In an effective marriage, there's no longer "yours" and "mine," but "ours." Your spouse should have complete access, control, and ownership over everything you have.
- ii. This principle is based on the teaching of Jesus.
- iii. **Matthew 19:5** "and the two will become one flesh."
- iv. In marriage you must give up your independence, your freedom to do your own thing, and give your entire self to your spouse. Don't just share a bed, share your entire life.
- v. Financial oneness is essential because money touches just about every aspect of your lives together. Most divorces are due to money fights and money problems.
- vi. Why do couples fight about money? Because they refuse to surrender their finances to each other and work as a team.
- vii. There are three signs that indicate a couple is not committed to financial oneness.
 - 1. First, you make significant financial decisions without agreement.
 - 2. Second, you hide aspects of your finances from your spouse.
 - 3. Third, you keep your finances separate; you have separate checking accounts, savings accounts, credit card accounts, etc.
- viii. It used to be taken for granted that a couple would combine their finances when they got married because there were far fewer dual-income marriages. The vast majority of women were full-time homemakers and did not bring in an income. That's how it is in my marriage, so it's not even possible to have separate accounts. But today more and more married couples are living on dual incomes, and a slight majority (57%) of married couples are choosing to

keep their finances separate. But this is not good for your marriage. A 2022 study by Cornell University found that married couples who combine all of their money are happier and less likely to break up.

- ix. Keeping your finances separate leads to four problems in marriage.
 - 1. First, inequality -- whoever earns more will be tempted to have a higher standard of living. Imagine a husband buying himself toys but refusing to buy some of the things that would improve his wife's life.
 - 2. Second, fights. Couples may fight over who should pay for what, or whether both parties are contributing and sacrificing equally. They may criticize and resent each other's spending habits.
 - 3. Third, selfishness. Having separate accounts can make you think that there is separate ownership, which can lead to hiding purchases, or making significant purchases without agreement.
 - 4. Fourth, manipulation. "If you don't do what I want, I won't share my money with you!"
- x. Let me put it this way. If you don't want to share all your money with your spouse, if you don't trust your spouse with all your money, then those are signs that you have serious problems in your relationship that could eventually destroy your marriage.

6. Piety.

- i. I saved the most important for last. Highly effective marriages are committed to piety. That is, they are committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They are committed to loving and obeying Jesus Christ. In an effective marriage, Jesus is King, and the top priority is loving and serving and pleasing Him.
- ii. This principle is based on the words of Jesus.
- iii. **John 14:15** "If you love me, you will keep my commands."
- iv. Your marriage will likely go through some tough times. There will be times when your spouse won't seem very attractive to you. You may lose that "loving feeling" and fall out of love for a season. You will get very angry with your spouse. Your spouse is going to hurt you. You will not always want to serve your spouse, or be kind to your spouse. There will be times when you will think to yourself, "Why did I marry him? I wish I could get out of this!" When you go through the hard times, where will you get the strength to keep loving your spouse? Where will you get the strength to keep going and not give up? It will have to come from outside of yourself, because everything within you will be screaming, "I done!"
- v. When all else fails, it is your commitment to Christ that will give you the strength and motivation to keep going, to keep fighting, to keep doing what is right. In the dark days of marriage, you will love your wife not because she is lovely, but because you love Jesus and He told you to. You will respect your husband not because he is respectable, but because you love Jesus and He

told you to. You will be faithful to your spouse and not run off with another person not because your spouse is more attractive, but because you love Jesus and He told you to. You will forgive your spouse once again not because they deserve it, but because you love Jesus and He told you to. You won't walk out and file for divorce not because of your love for your spouse, but because of your love for Jesus.

- vi. In the end, the most important thing you can do to have an effective marriage is to pursue full devotion to Jesus Christ. Put Jesus first and strive to keep growing spiritually.
- vii. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** “9 Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. 10 For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up. 11 Also, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; but how can one person alone keep warm? 12 And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.”
- viii. We looked at this verse earlier. It talks about the benefit of marriage. But notice something interesting. The entire passage is about how two are better than one. Then the last phrase says a cord of three strands is not easily broken. Marriage is two people. So, what’s the cord of three strands? The third strand is Christ. As you both remain committed to Christ, He makes your marriage stronger and healthier.
- ix. Research backs this up. A 2021 study by [Barna Group](#) found that practicing Christians are happier with their marriages than non-Christians. 59% of all adults report being very satisfied with their marriage, but among practicing Christians that number is 73%.
- x. Sociologist Rodney Stark from Baylor University found that the divorce rate among Christians and non-Christians is about the same. But if the Christian couple attends church weekly, which is an indicator that they are serious about Christ, their divorce rate drops down to 14%.
- xi. Get serious about Jesus; make your life all about Him. That’s the best thing you can do for your marriage.

III. CONCLUSION

1. There’s no such thing as a perfect marriage. Every marriage has problems, and challenges. Even if you make all six of these commitments, your marriage will not be perfect.
2. But marriage can be a wonderful blessing if you do it God’s way. And that’s what I want to encourage you with this morning. Make a commitment to do it God’s way.