

Marriage and Family Study
Heritage Christian Fellowship
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Three Distinct Views of Marriage

- I. Marriage as a Sacrament
- II. Marriage as a Contract
- III. Marriage as a Covenant

To this point in our study we have looked at marriage considering what Scripture says for the purpose of knowing, understanding and implementing in our lives what God has designed, established and ordained. We have also looked at what marriage is not and the effects of the fall. In addition we have looked at human relationships, their order and priority.

Tonight we will be looking at three distinct views of marriage, and as we have done with our previous studies, the purpose is to examine ourselves, our marriages and relationships to make sure our lives are a faithful reflection of our relationship with our Lord, and His Word.

O & A:

Now tonight's study:

Andreas J. Kostenberger along with David W. Jones have written a book entitled: God, Marriage and Family, Rebuilding the Biblical Foundations

It is from this book that the information I am about to present comes. I will only be highlighting the salient points. I highly recommend this text.

Many of us recognize with these three words: Sacrament, Contract and Covenant, however if pressed for a definition we might find ourselves struggling to clearly define what they mean in the context of marriage. At best we might say: It is like.....followed by a comparison missing the meaning or confusing the hearer and maybe even ourselves. Therefore, we need to know and understand what the three mean.

- I. Marriage as a Sacrament
 - A. Largely a product of church tradition
 - 1. Sacrament is the Latin term used by Jerome in the fourth-century Vulgate to translate the Greek expression *mysterion* (mystery). The idea that those who enter marriage according to this model believe that “God wills to make himself present and to confer his grace upon us in a particular way whenever a sacrament is properly enacted with the church”
 - B. Problems
 - 1. This model presents marriage in a mystical way believing that it dispenses God’s grace and that Christ is personally present in a mystical way
 - 2. There is nothing in the Scripture that states this idea of the dispensing of God’s grace through a “sacrament”.
 - 3. This model subjects the marriage, the husband-wife relationship, to the control of the church not to Christ who is the head of the church and of marriage.
- II. Marriage as a Contract
 - A. This is a secular view of marriage in Western culture.
 - 1. The contractual model does not necessarily (or typically) seek to invoke Scripture as its source or grounds of authority.
 - 2. The contractual model views marriage as a bilateral contract that is voluntarily formed maintained and dissolved by two individuals.
 - 3. Gary Chapman in his book “Covenant Marriage: Building Communication and Intimacy” lists these five general characteristics of contracts:
 - a. They are typically made for a period of time.
 - b. They most often deal with specific actions
 - c. They are conditional upon the continued performance of contractual obligations by the other partner.
 - d. They are entered into for one’s own benefit.
 - e. They are sometimes unspoken and implied.
 - 4. This model has roots marriage in civil law reflecting what was happening during the Enlightenment.
 - a. The state is charged with overseeing the institution of marriage and has authority to grant both marriage licenses and certificates of divorce.
 - b. In many cases the officiating minister only has power to marry by the authority vested in him by the state.

5. Problems:

- a. This model is not found in Scripture
- b. This model attacks the idea of permanence, security and stability and provides an out without careful consideration of what Scripture teaches.
- c. This model opens the door for marriage to be defined by civil law instead of what Scripture teaches.

III. Marriage as a Covenant:

This model defines marriage as a sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God, normally consummated by sexual intercourse. (Mal.2:14)

Here are some implications of a covenant view of marriage:

1. The permanence of marriage, it involves a solemn promise before God to one's marriage partner.
2. The sacredness of marriage, it is a relationship before and under God (Gen.2:22)
3. The intimacy of marriage, it is the most intimate of all human relationships in a one-flesh bond
4. The mutuality of marriage, involves a free self-giving of one human being to another. It is concerned about the other than self.
5. The exclusiveness of marriage, it is not only the above but it is exclusive. It means that no other human relationship must interfere with the marriage commitment between husband and wife.

Homework:

Examine your marriage or concept of marriage to determine which model presented above best describes what you are living. If you are planning on getting married examine your ideas to see if they are biblical.

What changes do you need to make?

