

July 10, 2016

Is Marriage Obsolete? Ephesians 5:25-30

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

A recent report _____ that four-in-ten Americans say that marriage is obsolete. Is marriage obsolete? What is God's _____ for couples who wish to live with each other? Does marriage matter? The Bible provides us the _____ way and the _____ way to live. That's why we go to it again and again. A Pew Forum survey released in November said 39 percent of Americans say marriage is obsolete. This change in thinking profoundly impacts our country and especially _____. In 1960, 72 percent of the _____ in America were married, but today only about half are married. Many are waiting until _____ in life to marry, and the number of single people who are divorced has tripled since 1960. More than that, the number of couples living together without marriage has _____ dramatically.

God gave Eve to Adam in the beginning because it was not _____ for him to be alone. Marriage; that is, one man and one woman for life, was and is today God's _____. The home made up of a married father and mother still provides the very _____ foundation for the happiness and the prosperity of the whole family.

God has _____ my wife Jackie and me with 42 years of happy marriage and four wonderful daughters. We now have twelve grandchildren. I consider my wife Jackie as God's precious _____ and a treasure. I'm so thankful for her. I've often wondered, though, how she's put up with me. When we married, we made a _____ to God and to each other that we would live together as husband and wife until death do us part. After all these years, we still love each other deeply and are even more determined to _____ that promise.

Our reading today comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 25 to 30.

When I was a teenager growing up in Shawnee, Oklahoma in the 1960s, we used a _____ that I don't hear much these days. It described a _____ behavior that was considered sinful and shameful. We used the term "fornication" to describe all kinds of sexual intercourse outside of _____. Today nearly 60 percent of American adults _____ that "fornication" or sex between an unmarried man and woman is morally acceptable. Only forty percent think it's _____ to have sex outside of marriage.

This change in thinking reminds me of what happened at Corinth. **Read what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5:1-2.** Rather than be _____ of sin, people have become arrogant! We've assumed that we have moral _____ to do as we please without spiritual or physical consequences.

I think that explains in part why we're seeing some significant social _____ in America. The number of couples who are living together has _____ dramatically! Cohabiting has nearly doubled since 1990. More than _____ of adults between the ages of 30 and 49 say that they've lived with someone at some point in their lives. Even many people who call themselves

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Christians have turned a _____ eye to the common practice of cohabiting.

As in the days of Jeremiah, many Americans today have no _____ about anything. Jeremiah 6:15 says, “Were they ashamed because of the abomination they’ve done? They were not even ashamed at all; they didn’t even know how to _____.” From our movies, to our television sets, to the internet, there’s a constant _____ that sexual immorality is now morally acceptable. But is it? When did God change His mind? Has God ceased to be _____? Habakkuk 1:13 says about God, “Your eyes are too _____ to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor.” My friends, God hasn’t changed!

The National Center for Health Statistics reports that nearly 44 percent of births in 2014 were to _____ mothers aged 15-44. In 1960, that number was only _____ percent. Today, one in four children is growing up in the home of a _____ parent. Children who grow up in single-parent families often face _____ social, financial, and moral challenges than other children do. People who value marriage less are more likely to value other family relationships less as well. Those who don’t want a _____ often don’t want a relationship with his cohabiting partner’s family either.

Two-thirds of the children entering stepfamilies do so in the _____ where adults are cohabiting rather than married. Studies show that children who live in cohabiting homes show _____ emotional development than children do from married, two-parent families. Cohabiting means people can _____ their partner rather than face the challenging responsibilities of a home and family. Cohabiting families, unfortunately, rarely think of their spiritual lives or giving their children a spiritual _____.

Even when two people have lived together a long time in cohabitation, they don’t feel obligated to _____ with this partner forever. Couples who live together often define their relationship as “_____” and do not feel the need to remain exclusively loyal to their partner. Cohabiting couples, frankly, are less willing to _____ or be financially responsible for their partners. Such couples usually take steps to keep their _____ separate from their partners. A woman who lives with a man without marriage may be his girlfriend, but a girlfriend is not a wife. She is not yet _____; she is only a live-in lover. Many couples say they want to live together for a while before marriage to see if they’re _____. They assume that if they can get along _____ marriage, they can get along after they say “I do.” They figure that they need to see if they can handle the down times as well as the good; and breaking up before marriage is better than going through a messy _____. All of this sounds good, but there is a substantial _____ between “trial” marriages and real commitment for life.

A trial is just that...a trial. Somebody slips up and the other person _____. Marriage is much deeper and _____ than that. It has levels of _____ that the couple who is cohabiting will never know. Marriage is for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, and until _____ do us part. Cohabiting means I’ll put up with you as long as you keep me _____. In the meantime, we’re on a month-to-month agreement. No assurance, no security, and no long-term commitment.

If you get sick, lose your job, or become unable to take care of yourself, your live-in partner will feel less responsible for your _____. They may even abandon you when you most _____ them. One live-in partner said to the other, “If you ever need me, we’re going to be in trouble.” Couples who cohabit want the sexual _____ but not the responsibility. This selfish, self-absorbed attitude means it’ll be harder for them should they marry to have a _____ and _____ marriage.

Studies show that two people who deeply love each other and are willing to _____ their lives to each other in marriage will live longer, healthier, happier, and more prosperous lives than those who are not married. For instance, sociologists Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher cite a study that showed ninety-percent of married men at the age of forty-eight would live to be sixty-five; but only sixty-percent of never-married men at forty-eight would live to see retirement at sixty-five. Among married women, nine in ten at 48 percent reached 65, but among those never-married or divorced, only 80 percent reached 65. Married people, generally speaking, live longer than those who do not marry.

Some cohabiting couples end up marrying, but they _____ far more frequently than do couples who wait until marriage to live together. In their book, *The Case for Marriage*, Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher show substantial evidence that married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially than those who choose other lifestyles. They cite hundreds of studies showing marriage is indeed a _____ of God. Marriage has not failed us; we have failed it.

Waite and Gallagher conclude their book with these words: “Decades of social-science research have _____ the deepest intuitions of the human heart: As frightening, exhilarating, and improbably as this wild vow of constancy may seem, there is no substitute. When love _____ permanence, a safe home for children who long for both parents, when men and women look for someone they can count on, there are no substitutes, for the word that we call marriage.”

In reality, what some people have tried to _____ for marriage is simply living in sexual immorality with the same person. The Bible says, “Let marriage be held in _____ among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will _____ the sexually immoral and adulterous” (Hebrews 13:4).

God’s _____ is that people marry rather than live in sexual immorality. First Corinthians 7:2 says, “But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own _____ and each woman her own _____.” Paul advises widows and the unmarried to live as celibate singles as he did. Then he said, “But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should _____. For it’s better to marry than to be aflame with _____” (1 Corinthians 7:9). The Bible never _____ of cohabiting outside of marriage.

Some today repeat what the Corinthians said long ago, “All things are _____ for me.” The apostle Paul quotes this saying because the people thought they were _____ to commit acts of fornication. But the inspired apostle Paul answers them, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are _____. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be _____ by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of

them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:12-13).

The Bible says, “Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man _____ against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a _____ of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a _____: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). The Lord expects those who follow Him to live a _____ and _____ life, not like the people of the world. **Read what the Bible says in Ephesians 5:3-6.**

When people marry, they publicly _____ before God and witnesses that they will care about and care for each other. Married couples _____ together; they take _____ of each other; they provide for each other; they _____ common goals and dreams. The money they earn they _____ and spend together. They share their _____ and raise their children together. They worship together, pray together, and work together. They share their joys, their sorrows, their faith, and their love. They become one _____ and one in _____. My friend, this is the Lord’s way for people, both men and women, to live together.

God realized that it was not good for Adam to live _____, so He made a helper suitable for him. “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Genesis 2:21-22). When husbands and wives highly value their mates as _____ from God, they will find greater satisfaction in marriage.

But when couples live together without marriage, they snub their nose at the _____ of God. Many couples who cohabit stop going to _____ and push God out of their lives. It’s hard to draw close to God while you continue _____ in sin. Why not give up the sin and come back to God’s way? Why not turn your heart and your life around and live as God _____? You’ll never regret doing the right thing, but you will _____ regret your sins.

When Jackie and I married, we inscribed some words of a Scripture in our wedding rings: “Two are _____ than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9). **Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.** We believed this forty-two years ago. Today, we know it to be _____. The Lord’s way is the _____ way to live.

The Word of God _____ itself over time. The Lord Jesus said, “if anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself” (John 7:17). The Lord’s teaching is from God and has proven itself again and again. That’s why we must _____ God’s teaching on marriage, on salvation, and on the Christian life.

If you love the Lord, come out of sin and live righteously; _____ Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and do it before others; and then be _____ in water in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “you _____ be born again” (John 3:7). That new birth of water and the Spirit comes through the grace of God when one is baptized into Christ. God washes away our sins in baptism (Acts 22:16) and causes us to walk in newness of life, free from sin (Romans 6:4). Perhaps you’ve given in to the lust of the flesh and you need forgiveness. There’s never a better time than today to get things right with God. Won’t you do that?