

# MARRIAGE AND THE CULTURE

BY AARON GRAY, SR.

**C**ome out from among them and be ye separate. This is the command given by God through the apostle Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). This command is a thread throughout the history of the people of God for Moses also wrote that God's people were not to intermingle with the people of the land where God was leading them into but they were to drive them out. Unfortunately these passages of scripture have been misunderstood and/or misinterpreted. Some have stated that the instructions to Moses were God's prohibition against interracial marriage. Others have determined that God is some type of cosmic killjoy who does not want us to have any "fun."

Both conclusions are erroneous in that the scriptures clearly teach that God did not want His people to intermingle with the inhabitants of the land because they would cause their hearts to go whoring after strange gods (Exodus 34:16). God knows and understands the heart of man. When we look back to Israel selecting a king it was for the very purpose that they might be like other nations that had a man to go out before them to fight (1 Samuel 8:4-6). Imagine that! Here you are led by the Sovereign of the universe and you desire to have a fallen, created being lead you over a holy, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God.

Sadly, over the years that desire has not changed. We, the church, still want to be like other nations, the world. Rather than set the standard for the world, the church has begun taking its marching orders from the world. This is evident in our music, our dress, our work ethic, and yes, even our marriages. According to a George Barna poll the divorce rate for born-again Christians is statistically equivalent to that of non-Christians.<sup>1</sup> The largest percentage of these divorces occur in the "Bible Belt."

The culture has affected Christian marriage greatly and with devastating effects. The Bible states that whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7). The culture we live in has thrown off all restraint. It has elected to indulge itself in every desire imaginable. While these desires readily fall under three distinct categories: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16), they seem to be insatiable which agrees with scriptural teaching (Romans 1:27).

## GOD'S DIVINE ORDER

God is the creator of everything and the crowning jewel of His creative work was man (Genesis 1:26-31). God placed the man He created in the Garden of Eden to tend it and to keep it. He gave man a portion of his creative genius in that He brought all of the animals to the man to be named. In the process of obeying God's instruction, it became apparent to

man that he was lacking something very significant. He saw that every male animal had a female counterpart and there was no female counter part for him. It is then that God stated it was not good for the man to be alone and that He would make a helper, suitable for him.

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon man and He took a rib from the man and fashioned a woman. This woman whom God made from the man was presented to the man and he exclaimed this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken from the man. Herein is the institution of marriage. Marriage was created by God to meet very specific needs of mankind. The first need being that of companionship. God said at the completion of man that everything he made was very good.

Marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman. Our culture today is aggressively promoting same sex marriages as an acceptable lifestyle. Never in a million years would we have thought that marriage would need to be defined as being between a man and a woman; that was a given.

## **BUILDING OF RELATIONSHIPS**

Marriage is a very unique union in that it is the first human relationship. Every other relationship between human beings stems from this one and it is from marriage that the family evolves. The family is that place of security where each member gets their needs met. The husband is the God ordained leader, the wife is his support, (1 Corinthians 11:3) and children are the fruit they produce (Psalm 127:3-5). It is the responsibility of parents to teach and train their children to know God (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) and to become productive citizens (1 Peter 1:13-17) in society, for as goes the home so goes the church and the world. Parents are to equip their sons and daughters to leave and start their own families. They are lent to us by God for a very brief time that we might love and instruct them.

## **INFLUENCE OF CULTURE**

The cultural trends we are seeing today are a direct result of the failure of marriage which leads to the failure of the family, the church and the society. The underlying cause, as we know, is sin but what are the specific events and how have they manifested themselves in our culture? One event is war. War has had the most profound effect on marriage - from the internal wars within every human being (Romans 7) to the wars without between others because of our minor differences which we have allowed to become monumental (James 4:1-2). Wars have taken the lives of many men (women and children as well) leaving families decimated. The effects are more profound today than in biblical times because of

cultural living arrangements. In biblical times families were communal. This meant that there were whole tribes of people pulling together. If men were killed in war those that were not were there to carry on where the deceased left off. That is not the case today. When men go off to war it changes the family dynamic. The absence of masculine leadership forces women to emerge into leadership roles they were not designed to handle.

## THE BREAKDOWN

Women have held down the fort and done a tremendous job for which we are grateful. However, a woman cannot make a man. Boys become men in the company of a man. As women became heads of families, it gave them a sense of independence they had not experienced and it changed the marital relationship. This newfound independence changed the wife's view of and needs from her husband. Rather than seeing him as her source, she became her own source. Today, many women are choosing career over family. While it is not wrong for a woman to desire a career, if she desires to be a wife she must consider the demands of both. The wife that works and produces from the sweat of her own brow may not have the same view of her husband as the wife who stays home. By God's design a wife was created to be a responder and a supporter of her husband. She was designed to submit and willingly surrender leadership to her husband. The "S" word is not taught in homes today, even Christian homes, primarily because it is not properly understood and it has not been seen modeled.

Likewise, the man has forgotten to love his wife as Christ loves the church. He no longer anticipates her needs and then meets them. The Word of God tells us that a man who finds a wife finds a good thing (Proverbs 18:2). When we find something "good" we should cherish and take care of it. Unfortunately, many men have fallen woefully short in appreciating the "good thing" they have found. Many husbands are equally as guilty of placing career and individual goals for advancement over leading and guiding their family spiritually and socially. Many men have handed over the leadership of the home to their wives by not being the examples that God has called them to be, thus forfeiting their responsibilities. An even greater offense is the number of men who consider themselves Christians who have abandoned their families completely, leaving the woman to fulfill a role that God had never intended for her to fulfill.

## REPAIRING THE BREACH

If we are to be the church that God intends us to be then we must get back to the teaching of the Word of God; we cannot follow the trends of culture. We must pray and repent before God for our failure to live biblically and we must begin to apply the word of God and not the opinions of the culture. Marriage is still honorable in the sight of God (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is still a union between one man, one woman, and one holy God (Genesis 2:24). Marriage is still until death do they part (Romans 7:2.) Marriage still supports that headship of the husband and the submission of the wife (Ephesians 5:23) of her professional

advancement. The husband must still love his wife (Colossians 3:19) and dwell with her according to knowledge (I Peter 3:7). The wife must still reverence (Ephesians 5:33) and submit to her husband (Colossians 3:18). †

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(1) "Barna By Topic: Family". The Barna Group. <<http://www.barna.org>>