

God's Design for Marriage - Session Six

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

Welcome to our sixth and our final session in our marriage series, God's Design for Marriage. And we have a very practical topic of unity and agreement this week.

We do, when two people come together, they're bound to disagree from time to time. (Pastor Paul says, in jest:) I know we never do. But some couples I've heard actually do disagree.

And, a good marriage isn't determined by how often you agree; it's how you work out your disagreements. And we're going to give some really practical steps for dealing with times of disagreement so that you can walk in unity in your marriage. Let's get into session number six. Okay.

This is part six. The Christian couple, where we're talking about unity and agreement. And so when we talk about a husband and a wife being in agreement, we're talking essentially about them coming together for a common purpose. In fact, that is what the word, united, means, coming together for a common purpose. And the word 'agreement' means harmony or accord in both opinion and belief.

So you can see why these words, unity and agreement are important, but let me talk to you about why they're important from a Biblical standpoint. I want to start with an Old Testament passage from the Book of Amos.

Amos 3:3 (NKJV)

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

Quoting this actually out of the New King James Version, it says simply, "*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*"

It takes a level of simple agreement to say, We're going to walk this direction—together. Otherwise you got people going all kinds of different ways. And that agreement, that connectedness, is so important.

So if we have to ask the question, why is agreement important? I mean, I just made that statement. But that's just my opinion until we begin to look into the Scripture and see what it has to say about the importance of unity and agreement.

So, for that we turn to an interesting Scripture from Matthew chapter 12, where Jesus is speaking here and it says,

Matthew 12:25 (ESV)

Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand."

Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or (and this is the one that affects you) house divided against itself will stand."

Wow. I mean, I guess you can call that a promise. He's saying that if there is a division in the home, the home will not stand. Now, I have yet to run into a couple that's wanting to be married or a newly married couple who will express to me that they don't care about whether or not their home is strong.

If I ask them that question, Do you want your home to be strong and to stand through the difficulties of life? I've never had a couple say, nah, that's not really important to us. They're always just all about that, Oh yeah. We want to be strong. That's why we're here, pastor. That's why we're sitting down with you here, because we want to make sure our relationship is strong and stays strong—and that sort of thing.

But the real question to every couple is, eventually as they begin to walk out their marriage is, Are you willing to eliminate the things that threaten that stability? Because that's where the rubber meets the road.

I mean, it's an easy thing for a couple to say, Yeah, we want our marriage to be strong. Sure, of course. We want our marriage to be blessed by the Lord. Yeah, cool. That's a wonderful thing to say.

Are you willing to do what is necessary and to again, eliminate the things that are going to come against that strength in your marriage?

So let's look at the other side of this coin, the positive side of this coin. And for this, we go to a psalm. Psalm 133, which is a very short Psalm. This is the entire Psalm right here.

Psalm 133:1-3 (ESV)

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

And it says simply, *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For (and this is important, For) there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life evermore.*

Now it's— I understand that this is not a picture necessarily of marriage. It's actually a picture that's being painted for us about the ordination of Aaron as the high priest and when they would anoint him for that particular function.

And back in those days— we dab a little oil on somebody's forehead if we're praying for healing for them today— but they poured a flask over their head and it would run down on the head, on to the beard, on to the collar, and on to the robe, and it would work its way down, and there was a picture that was being conveyed with that anointing oil of the outpouring of the blessing of the LORD. And in fact this Psalm ends by saying, there the LORD commands a blessing. (Psalm 133:3)

Well here's the question for you and me, Why? Why does God command a blessing where there's unity? And the answer to that is: because unity is consistent with who He is. It's consistent with His nature. God is one. God is united.

When we begin to walk in that same attitude of unity and agreement, we can expect a blessing. Remember the Bible says, wherever two or three come together. When you agree together in prayer and so forth, and you gather with that sense of unity and agreement, Jesus said, *“there am I among”* you. (Matthew 18:20)

There's a blessing. There's a universal principle that applies, whether it's a church, or a business, or a kingdom, or a home. There are universal rules that apply, and God says, I will bless unity when you guys come together, and so forth. Understanding that this is the nature of God that we're dealing with here, and we want to cooperate with it.

But, if we're going to ask the question, What is one of the biggest hindrances to unity and agreement? Well, that's simple. It's disagreement. When two people come together and they frankly just disagree. And I shared with you in the last session that Sue and I are very different sort of people. And that has given us over the course of our marriage, many opportunities to disagree about a particular direction or whatever the situation might be.

But I think although disagreements are normal in a marriage relationship, and by the way, I tell couples, don't judge your marriage on how much you disagree. Don't let that be the barometer of whether you have a good marriage or not because that isn't a good barometer. The real barometer is what you do with your disagreements.

In other words, how you resolve them. But I think one of the dangers of disagreements in marriage is that we fail to understand the consequences of hanging on to disagreement and not resolving it. I'm a resolver by nature. I like to see things get squared away... but not everybody's like that.

And too many times I see in marriage relationships, disagreements happening and no resolution is ever brought to the forefront. There's an interesting passage I want to show you here in a second.

And again, it's not specifically about marriage, but it is about disagreements and it speaks of a particular attitude of understanding just how dangerous disagreements can be and it's all centered around the fact that in the Corinthian church people were allowing their disagreements to go public— to the point where rather than resolving it within the church they were taking their case before a secular judge.

And they were allowing those disagreements to go into the courts where it was brother against brother, and it was really ruining the witness of Christ in that city because these people were unwilling to resolve their particular issues.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning this issue of disagreement and their unwillingness to resolve: No, in fact, I'm going to hang on to my disagreement

to the point where I'll take you to court and I'll sue you because I know that I'm right. And Paul said something interesting, let me show you this on the screen.

He said,

1 Corinthians 6:7 (ESV)

To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. (And then he asks this very important series of questions.) Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

Now that's very interesting, isn't it? Why would the apostle Paul say, “*Why not rather suffer wrong?*” In other words, Why not let somebody just take advantage of you, just let them win? Let them win.

If you have to resolve them by just letting them win, then let them win. Why would he say that? Well, it's because he's trying to get us to see the serious implications and consequences that go along with holding on to our disagreements and demanding that we be seen as the one who's in the right: I will prove that I was right in this matter, at all costs.

And the fact of the matter is, you may get what you ask for. You may in fact, at the end of all things, be proven to be right. But at what cost? At what cost?

We've already looked at a Scripture that says any household or kingdom divided against itself won't stand. You've been told! You've been made aware about the critical consequences of division in the home.

You now know. You've received a very negative promise from God related to that, and He's told you what would happen. So here's the question: Is it worth it for you to be proven right? To hold on to your disagreement to the point where you're willing to injure your relationship as a husband and a wife and your home simply for the satisfaction of being proven, right?

That's really the big question that faces husbands and wives. And we have to think about the question that Paul asked to the Corinthians. Why not just be wronged? Allow yourself to be wronged. Maybe you are right and they're wrong. Fine. Big deal. Who cares? Is your relationship important enough to just let it go? Or do you not care?

I hope you guys know what's behind the need to be proven right. It's pride. And pride stinks to high heaven. And where there is a prideful attitude, there is usually destruction along that path because I've just... I've got to be right. I've got to, not just be right, I have to be proven right. That's just simply stroking my pride, that's all that's doing, stroking my vanity.

But if I'm humble and if I care more about my marriage relationship than I do about being proven right, I'm willing to say, you know what? It's okay. It's okay. Don't worry about it. We're not going to argue about this. I care more about you. I care more about our home than I care about this silly argument. And we're just not going to go there.

Now, obviously couples come to a place of disagreement on a fairly regular basis. And sometimes those disagreements can be silly and sometimes they can be huge. I mean, they can be absolutely big life changing decisions that the family has to make.

What I'm going to do as we go through this and talk about how to deal with disagreements is I'm going to put together an example, a scenario, that a family or a couple might possibly deal with in their marriage. And I'm going to talk to you a little bit about how that might be resolved.

Let's imagine for a moment that the husband has received a job offer in a distant state, not just a distant city, but a distant state. They've never lived anywhere else, these two, in their lives. They were raised, grew up in this area, but now he's being offered a job in another state that's a long way away from family. There's a lot of unknowns that come along with this. And yet he's very excited about this job because it's a promotion for him. It's good money. And he feels very positive about this thing, but there's a problem, his wife isn't convinced.

Let's just imagine this as a scenario. Now you could put any scenario in the place of this. And if this doesn't happen to necessarily speak to the things that you guys deal with as a couple.

But, I believe that what we're going to talk about here and how we're going to resolve, or how I'm going to share with you to resolve these things would apply to really any sort of a situation where you guys are at a place of disagreement about it.

He's excited. I just... Honey, I really think we should take this job. I think we should move. You'll be fine. I know you haven't lived away from your family

ever, but I think we'll— this will be good for us. We need a change of scenery. This will be good for our marriage.

And she is just completely unconvinced, I don't, I just don't want to move. I love this area. I have so many friends. Our family's here. I just don't want to move.

So what are they going to do about it? Because if they don't resolve it properly, it ends in resentment. frustration and isolation. I guess I just can't ever agree on anything with you. Maybe we weren't meant to be married... And all the other dumb things that we say when we just don't bring any kind of resolution to the issues going on in our lives.

All right, so let's put these up on the screen. This is going to be when you disagree. And I hope that these are going to be practical steps for taking care of it.

WHEN YOU DISAGREE

- BOTH: Pray about it

The first one is for both of you. This is a— and some of these are going to be for both of you, and some of them are going to be for just one of you, but for both of you: Pray about it.

This is one of those interesting things that we often forget to do as couples when we're not in a place of agreement, we forget to pray.

We just start launching into Here's what I think; No, here's what I think. And we don't pray. Rather than arguing about it, how much better would it be if a husband came to his wife knowing that she probably was going to struggle with this sort of an idea, but coming to her and say, honey, I need you to know that I've received a job offer. It's a long ways away, and I know this could be hard on you particularly.

I'm excited about it, but here's what I want to do before we even start talking about this. I want to commit a period of prayer to this situation. I want to just, we're going to take the next two weeks and we're just going to pray. We're going to pray every night before we go to bed and we're going to ask for God's direction. We're going to ask the Lord to make the path in front of us clear.

Now that's going to go a long way guys, to encouraging your wife or in our particular scenario that we're looking at, for this one partner who has misgivings or flat out doubts, to feel better about this because, I'm not trying to cram this thing down your throat. We're willing to bring this to the Lord. We're willing to pray about this and talk about it.

It's so interesting that we just— sometimes just forget, we forget to pray. I remember when our youngest son Tim was about nine months old. We were still meeting as a church in this room here and we were, Sue and I, were involved in worship in the early days of our church. And we were up here on this platform, in fact, right here and doing rehearsal on a Saturday. And Tim was cruising around the church area here in his walker.

He couldn't walk yet. So he was in his walker and he was cruising all over the place. Well, we put a door, or excuse me, we put a table against the stairway leading downstairs because we obviously didn't want him to hit the stairs with his walker.

Well, I didn't realize that there were women downstairs having a meeting. And while we were in worship— practicing, rehearsing, worship, I saw Tim go through the kitchen and I could see him right through the door and round the corner and I thought, okay. Well, I didn't realize that the women had taken that table away from the opening of the stairway. So I ran around the corner, got into that little hallway, just in time to see his chair going off that first step.

I followed him all the way down the stairs, just a half a second behind him, yelling for him, as if that was going to make a difference. And when he got to the bottom of the stairs, he started screaming, which was frankly a good sign. I picked him up out of his walker. He was bleeding in his mouth.

And I was immediately thinking, I got to get this kid to the emergency room. Well, Sue followed me down the stairs. She was another second or so behind me and she stopped me and she said, Let's pray. I was like, oh, yeah, that's right. I am the pastor here. (Pastor is laughing at himself)

That probably was something I should have thought of. But you know me, I'm just ready to go rush and do something. But sometimes we just don't remember to pray. And we have to get to the place where we're willing to bring things to the Lord first. All right.

So in an area of disagreement, We've been praying about this. Next what we've got to do is we've got to give time for both of us to talk about why we feel the way we feel about whatever situation we're facing.

WHEN YOU DISAGREE

- BOTH: Pray about it
- BOTH: Spend time talking

In this situation, the husband would talk about the pros of taking the job. and the wife would probably talk about the cons of moving away.

But it's important that we talk, maybe even get a piece of paper out, draw a line down the middle and put our pros and cons on a piece of paper so we can look at them together and say, well, do the pros outweigh the cons or do the cons outweigh the pros?

We've got to talk. And I have to be willing to listen, as a man, to whatever my wife may say, once again, even if I don't think what she has said is legitimate. I need to acknowledge her feelings as we talked about and what she's saying and allow her to have those feelings and be okay with it. But we're going to spend time talking, however long it takes.

WHEN YOU DISAGREE

- BOTH: Pray about it
- BOTH: Spend time talking
- HIM: Seek counsel

Next, this is something now for the man. In this situation, if there is still no agreement after praying, after talking, it's time for him to now go outside of the relationship and seek godly counsel. The Bible says that there's safety in a multitude of counselors. Now that passage assumes they're good counselors. And that's important because you've got to be careful.

Don't go to the world. Don't go to people in the world. You want to get godly counsel. You want to talk to somebody who has a track record of faithfulness and wisdom and good decision making. And you're not going to that person to have them make a decision for you. That's very important.

People come to me for counsel all the time. They want me to actually make up their mind and I'm not willing to do that. That's the Holy Spirit's job. My job, as a counselor, in those sorts of situations, is to help you think through things that

maybe you haven't thought of yet. And maybe to even talk about some of the experiences that I've had over the years that maybe you haven't had yet, but you need to think about.

That's what a counselor does. He or she helps you work through the dynamics of your decision so that you have a rounder, more comprehensive picture of what you're facing as a couple in this.

As a man, I would then be able to come back to my wife and say, I have sought counsel on this issue. We've been praying, we've been talking, and I've been seeking counsel and praying with others.

Now, what am I communicating so far to my wife? I'm communicating that I care, that I'm not just going to ram this thing through. I'm not just going to simply say to her, Well, I know you don't really want to go, but this is what we're going to do. We're going, so deal with it and just get over it.

That's not going to help my marriage, at all. In fact, that's going to shut my wife down. She's going to feel like her opinions and her feelings don't matter. So I'm communicating through these things that I care about this situation and I care about her. So I'm seeking godly counsel.

Now let's say that after we've been praying, after we've been talking, and after I've been seeking counsel on this matter, we're still at a place where we're at loggerheads to strongly disagree. We're just not in agreement yet.

WHEN YOU DISAGREE

- BOTH: Pray about it
- BOTH: Spend time talking
- HIM: Seek counsel
- HIM: Make sure you're 100% sure

Well, this is that point in time where, once again for the man, I need to be absolutely certain of my decision.

And that is— so this is once again, the man is the head of the home and it is his right to make these decisions and to direct the family. Again, he's not going to do it in such a way that makes his wife feel like he's run over the top of her head and didn't care about her. But at this point, if I'm still feeling that this is what the Lord wants us to do, I need to make sure that I'm really certain about this because I'm now about to ask my wife to come along with me, and to do it with

a joyful attitude and we're going to be okay. And I'm going to take care of her through this, but I need to be sure. And that's very important.

WHEN YOU DISAGREE

- BOTH: Pray about it
- BOTH: Spend time talking
- HIM: Seek counsel
- HIM: Make sure you're 100% sure
- HER: Submit out of love

And then the next point is for her, and this is where she chooses to submit out of love.

But why does she submit at this point? Well, she submits because she knows and understands that her husband loves her and cares about her and that he hasn't made a rash decision: We have prayed about it. We've talked about it. He has sought counsel and he has come to me in all honesty and sincerity and he said, Honey I am positive this is what the Lord has for our family.

At that point, she needs to trust that the Lord is speaking through him and she needs to be willing to go with the situation and be okay with it.

WHEN YOU DISAGREE

- BOTH: Pray about it
- BOTH: Spend time talking
- HIM: Seek counsel
- HIM: Make sure you're 100% sure
- HER: Submit out of love
- BOTH: Be united

And really that comes down to the next point, which is the final one, which is for both of them at this point to simply be united on this decision.

And what I mean by this and really this comes down more to the wife, but a wife's submission to this kind of a decision should never be confused with resignation. Do you understand resignation is the idea where I'm simply resigned to the fact that we're moving. I don't like it. I don't want to, but I'm resigned to the fact that it's going to happen. You guys all know what resignation is all about. That's not unity. It's not agreement. It's just resignation.

I've been operating as a pastor here with elders who helped me make decisions for this fellowship for a long time. And frankly, over the years, there's been times when, and I'm glad of this, that my elders, after hearing something that I suggest or lay out for them as a possible direction for ministry— I've had elders who have said to me, I don't know about that. I'm not sure that's the best direction for the church.

So we've got to talk it through. We've got to pray about it. And once we come to a decision as elders, if I happen to convince them that we're going to go with this thing, whatever it might be, once we leave that room though, that— wherever we're meeting as elders, I expect my elders to walk in unity because they know and understand that to do anything else is detrimental to the church.

In other words. The difference would be resignation. If we walk out of that room and somebody comes up to one of my elders and says, hey, I understand we're doing such and such, or we're going to purchase this or do that. And if the elder says, well, yeah, I guess that's the direction we're going; at least that's what Paul wants to do....

Do you hear that? That's resignation. And it just reeks of disunity. But if the elder, maybe even the elder who questioned this and wasn't totally sure this was what we should do, but decided in the end, okay, we're going to give this a shot. He needs to be the one to say, Yeah, that's exactly what we're going to be doing as a church. We've talked about it. We've prayed about it. We're going for it.

Do you hear what's there? That's unity. I'm not going to let anything seep in between this relationship that the enemy is going to get a hold of. And this is so important in a marriage. When you guys make a decision as a couple, even if you made the decision after a long time of prayer, talking, counsel, and you still weren't totally sold on the idea, but you made the decision anyway to go ahead and go for it, you need to be united from that point on.

You need to be careful not to let anything seep in, not to let anyone speak into this thing and say, I don't know, I hear you guys are doing this, but you just don't look like you're convinced that this is the best thing.

Don't go there. That is a temptation that you have to avoid. No, that's not what I'm going to do. I'm not going to say this. I'm not going to speak about my spouse in a way that conveys disunity or lack of agreement. This is what we're doing. We've prayed about it. We talked. We sought counsel and this is and we're doing. This is what the Lord's doing in our life.

It's so important why we come back to those Scriptures, that promise of blessing where there's unity, and the promise of destruction where there's none. And so as couples, we take the Word of God seriously. We recognize the consequences of our actions, our decisions, and our words, and we walk it out.