

The Tie
That
Binds

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The Tie That Binds

Building a Strong Marriage

Jeffrey Pedersen

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International Correspondence:

Baal Hamon,
27 Old Gloucester Street,
London,
WC1N 3AX,
England.

www.baalhamonpublishers.com

publishers@baalhamon.com

This book is in memory of Lyle Mellor. He was devoted to his family, country, community, and church.

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PREFACE

The Tie That Binds is a book on marriage. This book will give couples the tools that will build and strengthen their marriages for a lifetime. Couples want a nice wedding ceremony, but what is most important is having a strong marriage that will endure the tests of time. God is the designer and builder of marriage, and wants each couple to experience the blessed joy that his presence brings.

When a couple gets married, I hear people say, “You got hitched.” We don’t use hitches to unite a couple in marriage. There is a bond that does bind the hearts of couples together, and that is the love of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' love is the tie that binds.

The chapters of this book will help couples work on their marriages. Each chapter will focus on an important marriage topic that will help couples avoid pitfalls that can weaken and destroy their marriage, while developing the skills to nurture a healthy marriage. At the end of each chapter are study questions that will help foster discussion on each topic.

This book can be used by couples who are preparing for marriage, couples who are looking to strengthen their marriage, small group settings, marriage retreats, and marriage care programs at your church.

I rejoice with couples on their wedding day, but my prayer is that each couple will be there for each other at the end when death finally parts them. May God bless your marriage as you read and study this book.

Jeffrey P. Pedersen

THE TIE THAT BINDS

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)

God is the designer and builder of creation. The word “creation” implies a creator, meaning something outside of itself had to create it. All created things are of intelligent design. A car does not just appear in our driveway as a product of a two-billion-year accidental process. The car has a designer and builder. Every part of the car has an important part of the overall working of its mechanical precision. Creation is like the car, it is intricately made by a designer and builder, who is God.

We can place two lumps of clay on a table. A potter works with the one lump of clay, while the other lump of

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clay remains untouched. The potter will take the one lump of clay and create many things. The lump of clay that has no potter will remain a lump of clay throughout time.

Creation is to work and serve God's creative purposes. Creation gives glory to God through worship. Worship is how we are in fellowship with God. The beauty of the flowers, the singing of the birds, and the gathering of God's people in the sanctuary, are expressions of worship. Creation pays homage to God, our creator.

Creation serves God's creative purposes. Everything has an important function in the order of God's creation. The seeds, soil, sunshine, rain, animals, plants, rocks and humanity, all have important roles in God's creative plan. God has given a part for humanity to play. God gives the seeds, the soil, the rain, and the sunshine, but has given the farmer the part in sowing and reaping the harvest. God has given the ability for our bodies to heal, but has given the doctor the part of binding the wounds, performing the surgeries, and prescribing the medicine. God has given materials, but has given the carpenter the part of building.

Humanity has fallen to sin. The original sin is the desire to be God, so humanity's nature is now one of rebelliousness against God, and to use creation for self-centered interests. Sin brings a separation between humanity and God, a separation between humanity with itself, and a separation between humanity and creation.

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Sin wreaks havoc with God's creative order. As a result of sin, people do not know whom or what to worship, and they misuse the creation that God has blessed them with. Sin changes humanity's attitude from being loving stewards of the earth to having a dominance that brings destruction to creation.

I have a key that was made for the purpose of unlocking my truck's door and starting its engine. Sometimes I will use my key as a box cutter to open packages that I receive in the mail. The key does a good job of opening the boxes, but that was not the purpose for its creation. Like the key, humanity uses creation for purposes other than what God intended. God is creator, and we are the created. God is the owner, and God has called us to be the managers of creation. Creation works best when it is living in harmony with God's created purposes.

Marriage is part of God's creative order. God has established marriage for a husband and wife to live in a loving, committed relationship. Marriage establishes family, allowing for procreation and a nurturing environment for children. Marriage is a foundation for societal order, as it passes Christian values from one generation to the next. A couple worships the Lord as they share in God's love, and they serve God as they minister to the needs of each other, their children, and

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their community.

Marriage is defined as a covenant between one man and one woman. A couple exchanges faithful promises to each other and before God that are legally binding.

A man shall leave his parents, as a woman will leave her parents, and they shall be united together as one. The word used to describe this is “cleave”. Cleave is a word that has two opposite definitions. Cleave is defined as, “separating.” Cleave is also defined as, “uniting.” Cleave in its two definitions best describes marriage. There is the "leaving" of his and her parents, and a "uniting" with one's spouse. This doesn't mean that a couple cannot maintain a relationship with their parents and in-laws, but there needs to be a separate identity from them.

I once knew a couple who got married, and the bride insisted that they live with her parents. They would share the same home, eat at the same table, and share in all the traditions of her family. Her mother was a very controlling person. Their marriage did not last, because they failed to make a healthy separation from her parents. They lacked an identity of their own.

It is healthy when a couple can meld the values and traditions of their respective families, and have an identity of their own. God is able to meld couples through his love. It is like taking primary colors and melding them together to form a new color. When we mix the colors red

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and blue, we get the color purple. God mixes the respective colors of a husband and wife, and gives them a new color.

A husband and wife are to cleave. They are to leave their parents and be united together as one. What bond can unite two people together? There are many strong physical bonds. A rope can tie a ship to its dock. A chain can bond a bike to a rack. A hitch can bond a tractor and trailer together. Glue can bond two pieces of wood together. A weld can bond two pieces of metal together. As strong as these bonds may be, they cannot bring two people together as one. I have been the officiant at many weddings, but never have I welded a couple together. What bond can bring a husband and a wife together? The bond that God uses to bond a husband and wife together is love. Love is the strongest bond that the world has ever known. We are spiritual people. It is God's spirit, the Holy Spirit that bonds our spirits together as one. The strongest bonds are the ones that we cannot see, they are spiritual in nature.

The nature of God's love is that it is eternal. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "And now these three remain faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." Love is the greatest because it is everlasting. Love is a gift of heaven that we experience in this world, and we will also experience in heaven. It is

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this love that sustains marriage for a lifetime. God has established marriage to last until death parts us. A lifetime is not too long to live as a married couple. When we try to bond our marriages with things of this world, rather than God, the marriage doesn't have the strength to withstand the tests of life. When a couple bases their marriage on worldly things, such things cannot hold us in the midst of our changing lives and world. When God is the designer and maker of marriage, we must remember that marriage is a good thing. God doesn't give us things that are impossible to fulfill, but rather, things that are attainable within his creative purposes. Our lives are mortal, but God's love is eternal. It is God's love that will bond and sustain marriage for a lifetime.

The second nature of God's love is that it cannot be destroyed. Not even death could keep the love of God in Jesus Christ in the tomb. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:37-39:

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In metal fabrications class, the students were taught to

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weld. The test on welding was not a written one, but rather, the test was to weld two pieces of metal together. They then would put the welded metal into a press. A good weld is stronger than the metal itself. If the metal broke and the weld remained strong, then the student would pass. If the weld broke first then the student would fail. When Jesus is the bond of our marriage, we as an individual may break, but the bond of Jesus' love will never break.

The third nature of God's love is that it grows. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Jesus is the vine that gives all the nurturing love for marriage. As we abide in Jesus, our love continues to grow and branch out in life. As much as a couple loves each other on their wedding day, when they live their lives in Jesus' love, they will love each other more as the years go by. In John chapter 15, Jesus teaches us to remain in his love, remain in his command, and remain in his word (the Bible). In marriage, as we practice what Jesus instructed, our love will continue to grow in marriage until life's end.

It is from love that we get other bonds that are so important in marriage. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does

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not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

These are all byproducts of love that are so important in marriage. It is out of love that we have the virtuous bonds of patients, kindness, joy, truth, trust, hope, and perseverance.

A question that needs to be asked is: “Are you marrying Jesus?” Jesus would make the perfect spouse, and as the Bible teaches us that Jesus is the bridegroom and we the church are the bride. Our relationship with Jesus is very intimate to where we are called the bride of Christ. We are not married to Jesus, but when a person grows and matures in his relationship with Jesus Christ, he becomes more Christ-like. A person is not married to Jesus, but as a married couple is nurtured in the love of Jesus, they are.

The Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:12-14, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect

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unity.”

People look nice on the day of a wedding. They are wearing rented tuxes and beautiful dresses. It is important for a couple to look nice on their wedding day, but it is even more important that the couple is dressed in the way that Paul describes on all the days that follow. When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, they will be clothed with the virtues of God. These are Christ-like virtues that will make for a strong marriage. This will allow a couple to live in the purpose that God intended for them. When you marry a person who is clothed in the way the Apostle Paul describes, you will be married to a Christ-like person. This person continues to mature and grow into the person that God wants him to be. This is a person who is operating not out of the conditional love of the world, but rather the unconditional love of God. This person has a love of God and has a love for you. This person worships and honors God and will honor you. This person will be of high moral integrity. This person will make it his aim to do the right thing. This person will serve you in sickness and health, be considerate of you, and show kindness. This person will show compassion, understanding, and perseverance in times of struggle. This person will be accountable to God and take his promises very seriously. This is a person who is living his life in accordance to the purpose, life, and marriage which God

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intended for creation. Your marriage is bonded in the love of God, the love that raised Jesus from the dead. God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Jesus' risen presence in us. Jesus' presence will mold and make us to be the people that God intends for us to be.

My definition of a Christian comes from the Apostle Paul's words written in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." It is the risen Jesus Christ who dwells in the Christian. A believer is full of the salvation life of Jesus. This is also the life that fills and bonds marriages.

A soda pop can, when filled with its contents, is valuable. When the can is emptied of its contents is of no value. We do not want sacred rituals such as: baptism, confirmation, and marriage to be empty formalities that people now pass down from one generation to the next. We do not want marriage to be like an empty pop can. We want marriage to be what God fully purposed and intended for it to be. When Christ fills a marriage, it is full of the most valuable contents, the life of God. When a couple is bonded in God's love, they will live in God's creative purposes for marriage.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Is there something about creation that convinces you of divine intelligence?
2. God has created everything to have a purpose according to his plan. What are examples of created things being used for purposes other than what they were intended for?
3. The word “cleave” has its two definitions. What is hard about leaving your parents? What are some of the difficulties of uniting to each other?
4. Love is the bond that God uses to unite us. God’s love is eternal and indestructible. What are ways that you nurture God’s love in marriage?
5. Are you marrying Jesus? What are Christ-like qualities you see in your spouse?
6. At a wedding, everyone is clothed with beautiful dresses and handsome suits and tuxes. How are you clothed in the virtues of Jesus?