



God's Purposes for Marriage
Bible Study
Leader's Guide

[Please provide: a copy of this study for each participant, Bibles, and copies of the *Lutheran Service Book* (LSB).]

Opening Prayer: Gracious God, we praise and honor You for instituting marriage to be a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the Church. Forgive us for the many ways we have fallen short in marriage and family life. We ask that You bless all homes in our land, that they may be shelters for the defenseless, a fortress for the tempted, a resting place for the weary, and a foretaste of our eternal home with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

To Begin

If you have been or are now married, how did you go about looking for a life-long mate?

Encourage participants to share.

According to statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, the average age for first marriages for U.S. women in 2017 was 27.4 years old. For men, it's 29.5 years old. In 1990, the average age of marriage for U.S. women was 24 years old; in 1980 it was 22 years old, and in the 1950's, it was 20 years old ("This Is The Average Age of Marriage Right Now," Macaela MacKenzie, *Women's Health*, March 26, 2018). Possible reasons include individuals focusing on careers, removal of many of the societal stigmas for living together outside of marriage, getting a college degree may take a person until their mid-20's, women are now better able to support themselves.

If you were 18-years-old and looking for a spouse, what top three qualities would you seek?

Answers will vary. Hopefully participants will include that their spouse is a Christian.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What do you think are the two or three main reasons why God instituted marriage? Answers will include for companionship, and to have children.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Searching Scripture

Read "Holy Matrimony," Lutheran Service Book (LSB), page 275.

The first purpose of marriage is to be a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the Church.

Read Ephesians 5:22–33.

- f) In contrast to the culture of that day, husbands are taught not to rule their wives, but to love them.
- g) The purpose of Christ dying for His bride was to sanctify her.
- h) To be without spot or wrinkle is to be forgiven.
- i) The first assignment of the Church and of earthly brides is to receive gratefully her husband's sacrificial love.
- j) What does it mean for a husband to leave his father and mother? Answers will include that a husband now puts first his wife and establishes his own family unit. However, he still loves and honors his parents.

True or False: The ultimate purpose of earthly marriage is to give glory to God. True.

The second purpose of marriage is for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

Read Proverbs 31:10–31.

What do we learn from the following verses about a wife with noble character:

- f) Verse 11: She is trustworthy.
- g) Verse 12: She is supportive and encouraging.
- h) Verses 13–27: She is industrious. She cares for her household and she cares about others in need. She is pictured as energetic, happy, and optimistic. She enjoys life and does her work with vigor. She goes out of her way to obtain the best for her family. She respects her husband.
- i) Verses 28–29: Her family praises her.
- j) Verses 30–31: Outward beauty is fleeting. What comes from fearing God lasts a lifetime and beyond.

Read Proverbs 1:7. According to this verse, the beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord. “Fear” in this instance means “respect and trust.”

How is this kind of knowledge (wisdom) beneficial in marriage? A Christian husband and wife share a common faith in Christ as members of God's family through Holy Baptism. When a husband and wife respect and trust in the Lord, they together turn to Him for knowledge and wisdom in all situations. Their decisions are guided by God's Word. Their love for one another is modeled after the love that Christ shows us.

The third purpose of marriage is to find a Christ-centered delight in each other.

Read Judges 14:1–3. Name three mistakes Samson made when he searched for a life-long mate.

1. Samson disrespected his parents' authority.
2. Samson disobeyed God by marrying outside of Israel.
3. Samson focused on the outward beauty of women instead of on whether or not they feared God.

In what ways do a Christian husband and wife “delight” in each other? A Christian husband and wife love, honor, and respect each other. They enjoy being together. They work together as one for the welfare of each other and of their children. They rejoice together when they are blessed. They support one another in difficult situations. Together they serve God. God also gifts them with a physical relationship to enjoy.

Why is such delight an important part of marriage? The delight with which God blesses them binds them together as one in Him.

Read Colossians 3:12–17.

Virtues are not ours to accomplish, but are gifts of God.

Why should we forgive others? We forgive others because Christ forgave us first.

Why bear with each other? We bear with each other because Christ bears with us.

Why be patient and kind with each other? We are patient and kind with each other because God is patient and kind toward us.

Why love one another? We love one another because in Christ, God loved us first.

Why serve one another? We serve one another because in Christ, God serves us first through the preaching of the Word and in the Sacraments.

Why are the virtues described in Colossians 3:12–13 so important in marriage? These virtues are the same ones our perfect Savior Jesus shows us. They are the foundation of respect between people. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they are what enable a husband and his wife to communicate effectively with one another, to solve and resolve problems together, and to forgive one another.

The fourth purpose of marriage is for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord.

How do the Bible passages referred to in the first three purposes of marriage aid in the raising of children who love and fear the Lord? Parents who follow the wisdom and knowledge shared in these verses set an example for their children. They base their teaching and discipline on what God's Word says. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they show their children the love and forgiveness that Jesus shows us. In a world where for many being married is no longer important in the having and raising of children, it is important to remember that God has placed marriage before children. In His infinite wisdom and unending love for us, God has designed a loving, Christ-centered marriage to be the environment into which children are to be raised.

Sing: “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” LSB 649, TLH 975, LW 464

Closing Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, we pray for all who search for a life-long mate in these days. Work in their hearts a confidence that You work everything out for the good of those who love You. Help them to be patient, wise, and mature in the choices they make. Help them to flee youthful lusts and to find their refuge and strength in You and You alone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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