

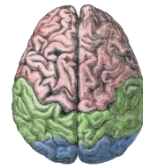
## Quotations, Scripture and Notes Marriage Conference 2026—Rolling Meadows

### Session #1—The Ground of Marriage—God’s design of marital unity

God’s greater priority is not your marriage...it is your transformation into the image of Christ, in righteousness, sanctification, and holiness, learning to be instruments of His grace to impact a needy world, and to build up other believers.

Gen 2:24 quoted in Matt 19:5 (see vv1-6) and Eph 5:31, and partially in 1 Cor 6:16  
-“cleave”/”be united to” is the same word as in Job 41:17 (see vv15-17)

*Marriage unity is like that of the brain.  
It contains two identifiable hemispheres that have significantly different strengths and roles. Yet it is really one entity.  
The body can't function right unless both sides do their part fully.  
One side is more about tasks and systems; the other side is more about relationships and beauty.  
There are vital connections between the two hemispheres that must be kept healthy.*



Marriage is a COVENANT with your spouse and God; not a contract.

Illustrations of how unity gets compromised or split:

- wedge in wood—either gentle taps are hit hard
- water in cracks in rock—freeze-thaw cycles
- stone/grit in water on a rock—swirling and eroding over time

Unity of Christians also applies to marriage: Jn 17:11, 21-23; Rom 15:1-7; Phil 2:1-5;  
- Eph 4:3, 13, 16 –foundational unity and functional unity

Unity requires trust & connection.

*“Connection first; communicate later.” (Bruce Muzik)*

*-“Emotions flow out of what we love. [More specifically...] they are the overflow of what is happening to what we love.” (Alisdair Groves, in ‘Untangling Emotions’)*

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*-“Pain will teach you what pride won’t allow you to learn.”*

Matthew Henry:

*“That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”*

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### **Session #2—The Glory of Marriage—God’s design of marital roles**

See the bigger picture of how God wants to use each spouse as a channel of His blessing & sanctification ...with 'mission' purposes for the church, not just the family.

The Ground of Marriage—about COVENANT—a commitment to God’s design for the foundational and functional unity of what it means for the two to be one

The Glory of Marriage—about CHARACTER—a commitment to God’s design for the greater purposes and dynamics that only Christians can achieve

Context of Eph 5:22-33 is 4:25-5:4 and 5:15-21 –evidence of a life live by the Holy Spirit’s influence

A calling to accept our roles (as also found throughout Eph 6). Angels are watching! (Eph 3:10)

Submit →

Love →

It not only makes for the best marriages, but it ultimately is a testimony of God’s love (in the Trinity and also between Christ and the Church) ...something the world needs to see, as do children.

Models of Marriage (what Eph 5 isn’t and is saying)

*“A Christian marriage is more than just a marriage of two Christians.”* (Beth Bolton)

A marriage on a mission: Matt 28:18-20 and Mk 12:30-31 (and, again, Eph 3:10)

When we have this grasp of God’s design for marriage, how do we view each other & communicate?

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- ✓ What are you doing as a couple to use your spiritual gifts mutually?
- ✓ How are you using your resources in promoting the Great Commission?
  
- ✓ Do we communicate our desires and goals of ministry and mission?
- ✓ How can I help strengthen my spouse? What causes fear or stress?
- ✓ Do I truly know and cherish her/him?
- ✓ What price am I willing to pay to become the spouse he/she needs me to be?

Avoiding failure is not the same thing as aiming for success → **goals** are needed

- ✓ Are we settling for mediocrity, or are we striving for excellence?
  - ▶ Choose to climb higher together
  - ▶ Play the long game with biblical goals in mind
  - ▶ Get a bigger vision of God's mission

God is more interested in His mission than your marriage...this includes shaping our character. A marriage developed and enjoyed within the bigger picture will be blessed by God.

It starts with being intimate with God and dependent on Him so that we can be channels of His character and design toward the other, keeping His grand plan in mind...and soul (since it needs to be a commitment of who we are, not just what we do).

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*“Any mature, spiritually sensitive view of marriage must be built on the foundation of mature love rather than romanticism. But this immediately casts us into a countercultural pursuit.”* (Gary L. Thomas, *Sacred Marriage: Celebrating Marriage as a Spiritual Discipline*)

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### Session #3— “How can I change my spouse?”

What kinds/categories of differences exist in your marriage and may even lead to conflicts?  
(Learn to distinguish between God’s hardwiring, nurture/training & habits, and moral choices.)

God’s design is to bring two different ones together, as complementary counterparts. Therefore, expect differences; learn who they are, and promote the conditions for greatest strength.

**We cannot change another person, but we can create an environment where change can happen ...and thrive.**

What is God’s greatest goal in our lives as Christians? → \_\_\_\_\_  
(Rom 8:28-29, with Eph 4:13)

Again, if that is God’s design, how do we see each other and how should we communicate?

It is more important to be righteous than right.

1 Pet 3:1-7 is in the context of 2:9-25 and 3:8-18

How does God want me to handle it if my spouse isn’t following God and is showing no signs of changing?

*-Failure or sin in your spouse is an opportunity for them to experience Christ through you.*

Practical things about taking ownership of *our* part so that God can more freely do *His* part:

- ✓ Inner attitudes, humility, and effort
- ✓ Grounded in God’s Word (like Lk 3 but unlike Gen 3)
- ✓ Be honest; and seek support and accountability from mentors
- ✓ Simple gestures and words given frequently
- ✓ “Think Win-Win” Rom 14:13-20
- ✓ Forgiveness and apologies which truly match the degree of hurt Ps 86:5; Matt 18:21-22
- ✓ Help regulate emotions of self and spouse
- ✓ Love...your spouse/neighbour/enemy , “overcoming evil with good” (Rom 12:21)

*“Support each other in our struggles rather than point out the weaknesses.”*

*“You can say whatever you need to say, but it must be with kindness and respect.”*

*“We repeat what we don’t repair.”*

Seek the Redeemer to intervene (in you and/or your spouse): 2 Cor 12:9-10 and Phil 2:12-13

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*"Couples don't fall out of love so much as they fall out of repentance." (Gary L. Thomas)*

→ *Is 30:15*

*"We must not blame our own ungodly or self-focused responses on our spouse (or others). The peace of God comes from walking with the God of peace (Phil 4). If we are away from that path, we need to repent...not blame or put up excess boundaries."*

*"Marital struggle is not a crisis of communication; it is a crisis of connection.*

*Therefore...Connect first; communicate later."*

*"Communication tools in angry hands just become weapons that make you better at hurting each other." (Bruce Muzik)*

*"I live by 3 simple rules: 1) Love needs action; 2) Trust needs proof; 3) 'Sorry' needs change."*

*"A good marriage is the union of two forgivers." (Ruth Bell Graham)*

*"Father, help us to realize that we are Your brushes; and You want to dip us into the pail of your grace and, through us, paint Your grace upon the hearts of our family. May we not be hard brushes; may we be soft brushes in Your redemptive hands." (Paul Tripp)*

*"I wouldn't be surprised if many marriages end in divorce largely because one or both partners are running from their own revealed weaknesses as much as they are running from something they can't tolerate in their spouse." (Gary L. Thomas)*

*"How quickly you can get to repair mode is a measure of the strength of the relationship. Relationships don't tend to fall apart from one big failure; they fall apart from the hundreds of micro-moments when repair could have happened but didn't." (Jefferson Fisher)*

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**Session #4— (Group discussions)**

1) Identify 3 things you have heard so far which you would like to prioritize to implement (or keep implementing)

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

2) What makes it hard to implement such things in your own relationship? Where do you struggle the most in your relationship? *(Note: please don't share private details involving your spouse without their permission)*

3) What tools have you learned in how to resolve conflict or increase the quality of your interactions and communication?

4) How can you make a priority on blessing/pleasing/edifying your spouse?

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The following question is a recommended study for each couple to do at home:

- 5) Consider 2 Pet 1:1-11. How can this passage guide you in creating an environment for the success of your marriage and the potential thriving of others (such as your family or church)?

Take an online Couples Assessment through ***Prepare/Enrich*** or through ***SYMBIS***

-read more about these and other resources at [Prepare-Enrich.com](http://Prepare-Enrich.com) or [SYMBIS.com](http://SYMBIS.com)

-\$35 USD per couple, paid online to the respective organization (does not go to a Facilitator)

1) a survey *without* the involvement of a Facilitator (an option Prepare-Enrich offers)

-create an account at [CoupleCheckup.com](http://CoupleCheckup.com)

2) if you want the more extensive Assessment, *with feedback from a Facilitator*, write Peter at [betterdecisionsmentor@gmail.com](mailto:betterdecisionsmentor@gmail.com) and provide an email address for each spouse, and tell him which organization's assessment you wish to try (*Prepare-Enrich* or *SYMBIS*). He will then arrange to have that organization send each of you the Assessment, and arrange a follow-up discussion, if you wish.

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#### **Session #5—Principled Parenting**

1 Thes 2:7-12 –ministry in family terms → there is an investment of one’s own life, with a mindset of their total well-being, and the paths and pastures that are best for them

Unity, Love & Respect are foundational

The Lord Jesus said, “*A house divided against itself cannot stand.*” (Mark 3:25)

Marital unity—living out the Ground, Glory and Growth of marriage WILL influence kids

“*The best thing you can do for the security of your children is to have a great marriage.*”

Parental unity—agreed principles & strategies; no wedges; Yes be Yes and No be No

-draw upon the strength of each spouse; don’t let fear or impulsivity drive

Family unity—cherish household identity; concepts of Phil 2:1-5 and Rom 12:9-21

“*You can say whatever you need to say, but it must be with kindness and respect.*”

“Love” = looking out for the best interests of the whole person → Phil 4:8 and Mic 6:8

-adults set an example of high standards of care, and a safe, healthy environment

-Eph 6:1-4 and Col 3:20-21

Prov 22:6 –“ \_\_\_\_\_ each child to the way \_\_\_\_\_ to them [by God], so that they find their life’s path to walk in until they are old.”

-will require time and discernment to notice the clues about each child...abilities, gifts, strengths, weaknesses, interests, fears, dreams...

-much more about character and the heart than about behaviours

Lk 2:52 coupled with Mk 12:30-31 Attention to the development of the whole person

“Shepherding a child’s heart”

-shepherding is a stewardship (1 Pet 5:2-4; Tit 1:7; Acts 20:28)

-Rom 11:36 –this includes children, who are a gift from God, yet are His

→ do children sense that the adults lead under the authority and manner of the Good Shepherd?

Children remember their *interpretations* of their experiences, and not necessarily the facts. So good intentions of our methods are not enough; our manner needs to reflect the integrity of Christ’s heart.

→ Environment AND Example are crucial for healthy growth

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Psalms 23

v1a

v1b-2

v3a

v3b

v4a

v4b

v5a

v5b

v6

How are they learning to move from being under authority to having responsibilities, and becoming influencers, using the gifts and abilities God gave them?

### Stages

Keep in mind that roles and dynamics change...

#### ***When little***

- experience the basics of living under God's design and delegated authority
- need to be secure in love and trust of adults, but parents are not their "friend" **[elaborate]**

#### ***Then in childhood***

- learn more about how to think through responsibilities of decisions and choices
- developing in their sense of being in communities, friends, and loving neighbours

#### ***Then in teen years and up***

- adults shift to more of a coach/mentor/facilitator, while still having God-appointed authority
- pray more with them about situations and decisions; ask them what wisdom they know from God's Word to help them going forward

In all stages, model wisdom in words and deeds

→ **1 Tim 3:1-8; 4:12; Tit 1:6-11 & 2:1-10; 1 Thes 2:7-12; 2 Pet 1:2-8**

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If we...

- a) have a lifestyle and goal of being worshipers of the One true God, in Christ **[Rom 11:36]** and...
- b) are genuinely seeking to set a good example ourselves...from our own heart (not just from our heads and outward behaviours), and
- c) seek to influence them to engage deliberately in the fullness of life such as in **Mk 12:30-31** and **Lk 2:52** and **Gal 5:22-23**

then we can prayerfully leave the rest with God, since they are really His sheep.  
**(1 Thes 5:23-24)**

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***Train them to hear the Good Shepherd's voice, first through parents, then through Scripture, supplemented by other Christian influences, and strategic use of media resources, so that they can discern the Spirit of God when hearing other voices...and that they settle for nothing less than God's best for them in body, soul, and spirit.***

**...so that they...as with our marriages... do more than just SURVIVE but THRIVE, and inspire the world to know the Redeemer!**

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Tedd Tripp quotation (from pages 15-17, 24 of "Shepherding a Child's Heart"), about our own expectations:

*"You make a grave mistake if you conclude that childrearing is nothing more than providing the best possible shaping influences for your children. Many Christian parents adopt this "Christian determinism". They figure that if they can protect and shelter him well enough, if they can always be positive with him, if they can send him to Christian schools or if they can home school, if they can provide the best possible childhood experience, then their child will turn out okay. These parents are sure that a proper environment will produce a proper child. They respond almost as if the child were inert. ...You must be concerned with providing the most stable shaping influences, but you may never suppose that you are merely molding passive clay...Children are never passive receivers of shaping. Rather, they are active responders. Your son or daughter responds according to the Godward focus of his or her life....Your children are responsible for the way they respond to your parenting....Your child's heart determines how he responds to your parenting....Human beings are creatures who are directed by the orientation of their hearts. The child is not inert during childhood. Your children interact with life. ...The story is not just the nature of the shaping influences of his life, but how he has responded to God in the context of those shaping influences."*

Let's consider some guidance about when they are teens and adults:

Teens

- Eccl 11:9 – 12:1, 11-14 → learn to make wise life decisions, God-conscious
- provide a safe place to question and grapple with issues of life & faith & friends
- provide resources to help with this...but not just 'echo chambers'

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- encourage skill development in the gifting God has given each one; service opportunities (e.g. missions trips)
- ask questions rather than make statements, shifting responsibility onto them to think through what will help them fulfill God's design for what is best for them
- learn to live out of comfort zones...since development of Fruit of the Spirit, etc., requires it
- "Don't try to be the Holy Spirit in their lives"

Adults

- leave & cleave principle (Gen 2:24)
- seek to build long-term heritage of generational influencers (Matt 28:18-20; 2 Tim 2:2)
- leave room for them to make their own decisions, while being available...less talk, more prayer
- if tensions or relational distance, be forgiving and open...know when to speak and when not to...trust God rather than always preach
  - "Keep the welcome mat out and your mouth shut"
- minister to grandchildren...know each child, build rapport...give parents a break...ensure your home and heart are a haven

"When your kid has an unmet need [in a stage of development], you have to give them a way to meet that need appropriately, otherwise they will misbehave [not out of rebellion but out of the wiring being developed at that stage]." (Best to anticipate the need before the child is frustrated.)