

**SYSTEMATIC  
THEOLOGY  
502  
DISTANCE**

**MARRIAGE**

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# MARRIAGE

Marriage is the only sacrament grounded in the order of creation. Ever since the beginning of creation, marriage between a man and a woman has existed as a God-ordained way of life.

- ‘But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” “for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.’ (Mark 10:6-9)
- The Prayer Book recognizes this when it says: ‘The bond of marriage was established by God in creation’ (‘79 BCP, 423) and in the rite of the ‘Blessing of a Civil Marriage’ where a couple whose vows solemnized by civil authorities seek ‘the blessing of God and his Church.’ (BCP 433)
- Sacramental Nature
  - Marriage is a sacrament because it is a covenant (i.e., ‘marriage contract’) before God and the Church in which the man and woman vow mutual fidelity and to give themselves to each other in an act of sacrificial love (*hesed*) for life
- Marriage is a Type of God’s Steadfast Love (*hesed*) for his People & of Christ’s Sacrificial Love for the Church
  - ‘I will be their God, and they shall be my people’ (Jer 31:33; Ezek 37:27, 14:11; Heb 8:10, 2 Cor 6:16)
  - ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (*hesed*) and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2)
  - ‘For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church.’ (Eph 5:29)
  - ‘This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church.’ (Eph 5:32)
  - This is a self-giving love and is why husbands and wives give even their bodies to one another (1 Cor 7:3-6)
- Celibacy and Marriage are both Gifts
  - ‘I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.’ (1 Cor 7:7-9)



# MARRIAGE IN ANGLICANISM

Anglicanism recognizes three purpose for marriage.

- ‘First, It was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.’
  - ‘Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such person as have no the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled member’s of Christ’s body.’
  - ‘Third, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.’ (1662 BCP 363)
  - The 1979 BCP reverses this order when it says, ‘The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.’ (‘79 BCP, 423)
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- Sacrament of Sacrificial of Love
    - As a type of Christ’s love for the Church, marriage is a Sacrament of sacrificial love of one person for one another
    - In Eastern Orthodoxy the priest is the minister, the consent the matter, and the blessing the form of the sacrament
    - In the western Church, the couple are seen as the ministers of marriage
      - The sign of the Sacrament of Marriage is the contract of marriage (the mutual declarations i.e., ‘I take you’)
      - The matter of the Sacrament of Marriage is the actual giving of the self to one another
      - The form of the Sacrament of Marriage is the acceptance of this self-giving by the other



# DIVORCE IN ANGLICANISM

Traditionally, marriage was seen as indissoluble, 'till death do us part', in Anglicanism. However, that is no longer the case, as divorce and remarriage are allowed with the bishop's permission. The Bible gives certain biblical allowances for divorce:

- In the OT divorce was allowed but God strongly discouraged it: 'I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel' (Mal 2:16)
  - When asked by the Pharisees about divorce Jesus answered, 'But for your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. . . . What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.' (Mark 10:5, 9)
  - Elsewhere Jesus teaches that divorce is unacceptable except for unchastity (Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Matt 5:31, 19:3)
  - When married and you become a Christian if your unbelieving spouse divorces you, you are free according to St Paul: 'But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound.' (1 Cor 7:15)
  - Divorce destroys the Sacrament of Marriage as a picture of God's sacrificial love, *hesed*, for his people (i.e., Hosea redeeming a prostitute)
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- Theological Reasoning for Divorce
    - Marriage is a sacrament of creation, it is a temporal good, not an eternal good
    - When asked a crazy question about a women with 7 husbands in this life—'In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife'—Jesus responded, 'For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven.' (Mark 12:23, 25)
    - As a created good marriage comes into being and goes out of being (i.e., death ends marriage, 1 Cor 7:39)
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- Annulment
    - Traditionally, the Church did not even allow divorce on grounds of unchastity, although a marriage could be annulled
    - Annulments were allowed on the ground of a defect in the original contract of marriage
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- Pastoral Response
    - Ministering to divorced people requires compassion as they have been deeply hurt (infidelity, abuse, abandoned, etc.)
    - Divorce is never God's best, but there is always forgiveness with God when mistakes have been made
    - Confession is a helpful way for a person to put past mistakes behind them

