

## Definitions

- **Marriage** means *the union of a man and a woman as one in a covenanted relationship primarily for companionship and secondarily for sexual gratification, purity and procreation.*  
It is a state of wedlock or matrimony; the act and status of a man and a woman in becoming and remaining husband and wife to each other.
- **The Law of Moses** generically refers to the dispensational guidelines before the New Covenant was enacted with the blood of Christ and specifically to the precepts received by Moses on Mount Sinai. Marriage under the Law therefore refers to how marriage was regulated before the New Covenant.
- To marry a woman is to wed her or take her as a wife; that implies a man has gone through some formal or recognized process / protocol in the society which now recognizes the duo as ‘husband and wife,’ irrespective of whether it is actually approved by God or not.  
Only those eligible to marry each other by God’s word are in a **lawful marriage** otherwise a married couple is in an **illicit marriage**.

## Introduction

Phases of Marriage: *Searching, Courting, Betrothal, Wedding, Togetherness* (in purity or with entanglements) & *Termination* (via death or divorce). Marriage involves:

- **preparation**, which requires maturity/stability emotionally, intellectually, physically, socially, financially and spiritually
- **an agreement** of giving, receiving and accepting in love,
- **a celebration**, or public wedding proclamation with or without a feast/party
- **a consummation**, or conjugal/sexual intimacy
- **a consolidation**, or building a new family-home with or without children
- **and is meant to be terminated by death.**

God gave the first woman unto her husband, Adam gladly received Eve. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh* - Gen 2:24. Soon, after men deviated and began to practice as they wish, engaging in polygamy (Gen 4:19-24) homosexuality (Gen 19:1-11), etc. Thus, by the time that God took Israel as His people, there was a need to regulate what they were already doing to bring some sanity into the system - 1 Tim 1:8-10, Mt 19:5-8.

**Thesis:** What the Mosaic Law says.

1. **Who to marry or not marry:** Ideally, a young man is to marry a virgin – Isaiah 62:5a.
  - God’s people were to intermarry, they were forbidden from marrying their neighbours who were idolaters - Deut 7:1-4. The purpose was to ensure purification of Israel’s worship and their lineage.
  - Even within themselves, they were prohibited from incest and marriages of close affinity or bestiality –Lev 18:6-23; 20:11-23.
  - A man was compelled to marry a virgin whom he seduced or raped except her father refuses –Exo 22:16-17, Deut 22:28-29
  - Priests “*shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel,*” were forbidden from marrying a whore, a profane woman, a divorcee, or any widow except the widow of a fellow-priest –Lev 21:1,7, 10,13-14 & Eze 44:22
  - An Israelite was permitted to marry two wives (Deut 21:15-17), or a bondmaid (Exo 21:7-11), or a woman taken captive in war (Deut 21:10-14), or the widow of his deceased childless brother or next of kin (Deut 25:5-10).

2. **How to marry:** God also said: “*Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.*” -Jere 29:6

Giving via parental consent was the norm and cause of celebration or feast. Giving ensures there are witnesses (Deut 17:6; 19:15) to the marriage covenant and transfer of authority. **When 'given in marriage,' authority or headship over a woman is transferred from her father to her husband but a widow has authority over her own life and may freely make decisions (Num 30:2-14).**

In the Bible it is actually the MAN who pays dowry or take gifts to his father-in-law. Remember the marriage of Isaac, Jacob, Samson, David, etc.? See also Gen 30:20; 34:12, Exo 22:17, 1 Sam 18:25. The practice of giving in marriage is seen in Gen 16:3, 25:20, 26:34, Josh 15:16-17, Judges 21:1,7, 1 Sam 18:17-27 & 25:44. This culture is pervasive even in Egypt and other lands -Gen 41:45, 1 Kg 11:19, 2 Chro 25:18. More examples:

- Isaac in Gen 24 and of Jacob in Gen 29:20-22, where the bride’s family made a feast
  - The good lesson from the Shechem & Tamar episode -Gen 34: 3-4,6,8-12, 14-16,18-19
  - Samson’s first marriage –Judges 14:2-10 where the groom made a feast
3. **After the wedding:** No national service such as war, a newly-wedded man is entitled to one year of honeymoon –Deut 24:5. A betrothed man likewise could not be send on risky assignment 20:7
4. **How to handle marital infidelity real or imagined:** adultery means to break wedlock vow. It occurs when a lawfully married person [historically, woman] has sexual intercourse with someone other than the spouse. It adulterates or pollute, **not** sever a marriage.

The punishment in the OT was severe.

- i. Promiscuity discovered on wedding night in a newly married woman (pre-marital sex); **execution by stoning** -Deut 22:20-21
- ii. Confirmed infidelity of a married woman (extra-marital sex); **execution by stoning** -Deut 22:22, Lev 20:10
- iii. Suspected infidelity of a married woman, drinking of ephod water before the priest may **absolve or afflict** her in life-threatening manner –Num 5:11-31

5. **Termination of Marriage** naturally is by death, in which case either may marry afresh. The permitted option under the Law was via Divorce. To “**put away**” **a wife is to repudiate her**; this is a renunciation of the marriage covenant by the husband; involves giving her a bill (certificate) of divorcement and sending her away from his home –Deut 24:1-3.

Recall that Christ lived and died under the law. Hence, he expounded the law of divorce in Mt 5 & 19 and was not over-turning it at that moment. Only illicit marriages constitute real uncleanness and are intended to be put asunder. This was exemplified in Ezra 9-10. It is the law of Lev 20:21 that John the Baptist referred to when he challenged Herod (Mk 6:17-18) so the king could put away Herodias whom he married illegally. Jesus gave a foretaste of forgiveness and forbearance of grace in His coming covenant in handling the case of the woman caught in adultery -Jn 8

## Conclusion

*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD... House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD - Prov 18:22; 19:14.*

*Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun (Eccl 9:9). The LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth... yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that **he hateth putting away**... (Mal 2:14-16). [For more information, see articles [1](#), [2](#), [3](#) & [4](#)]*