

Visionary Marriage

By Rob and Amy Rienow

Can a Christian man and a Christian woman be married to one another, but not have a Christian marriage? Absolutely. Two Christians can say “I do,” but not have a shared, compelling, Bible-driven vision for their life together.

Find a Christian engaged couple. Ask them, “Why are you getting married?” You will likely hear responses such as, “We love each other.” “He completes me.” “She makes me laugh.” The answers are frequently the same as those given by atheist couples! The lack of truly Christian marriages is hindering the Great Commission, stagnating our churches, and robbing faith from the generations to come.

True Unity

In Genesis 2:24 God says that for the reason of marriage, “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” We leave, cleave, and become one. The order is vitally important. Satan has accomplished a great victory in shaping our culture so that many couples do the exact opposite. They start having sex, then build a relationship, and finally move out of their parents’ house!

The truly Christian marriage is supernaturally unified. In Ephesians 5, God speaks of the marriage relationship as being a picture of the unity that Christ desires to have with His bride the church.

However, many Christians have only experienced the first two stages. They have moved out of their parents’ home. They have had a wedding ceremony and moved in together. But they still have largely separate lives, separate identities, separate communities, and even separate ministries. The husband meets with other men from the church for prayer and Bible study. The wife has her group of ladies who serves as prayer partners. She shares her heart with her friends in ways she would never share with her husband. He receives challenges and spiritual encouragements from his friends, but if his wife were to say the same thing to him, he would become defensive and disregard it.

How far we have fallen from a truly Christian vision of the nature and mission of marriage! If a person is married, the vast majority of that man or woman’s need for relationship, community, and support can be and should be met in the supernatural unity of marriage. Yet, even in some churches, married men and women are taught to find their community, purpose, and support in Christian friendships rather than with their spouse. We hear the constant message to find a prayer partner, or join a Bible study, all the while most Christian couples struggle deeply in worshipping God at together at home.

Shared Ministry

When a couple begins to experience supernatural unity, the word “ministry” is redefined. If someone were to ask you, “What kinds of ministry are you involved in?” they are expecting an answer having to do with the things you do to volunteer at church. Ministry at church is wonderful, but the Christian mission to “make disciples” and “love your neighbor” begins at home. If a person is married, their calling from God to make disciples begins with the soul of his or her spouse.

In Ephesians 5:25-26, God gives a husband his divine job description, to love, serve, and to nurture faith in the heart of his wife. Her soul is to be his most important ministry. In Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5, God gives a wife her calling, to help, respect, and submit to her husband. Her most important ministry in the world is helping her husband become the man that God created him to be.

We hope that the next time someone asks you, “What kind of ministry do you do?” that you will respond by telling the person about all the ways that you are seeking to bless and encourage your spouse. Don’t ever allow your spiritual opportunities to overshadow your spiritual responsibilities.

Shared Mission

Why is this supernatural unity so vital? Why does God want husband and wife to live and think less as two, but as one? He tells us in Malachi 2:15. In speaking of marriage God says, “Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.”

God brings men and women together in marriage for a shared mission – to raise the next generation for the glory of God. God’s call for marital unity is not primarily about creating a happy relationship. The mission is far more important than that. The faith of the next generation and with them the expansion of the Gospel around the world is determined in large degree by the spiritual unity of their parents. If we are serious about the Great Commission, we will be serious about living and building supernaturally unified Christian marriages.

A Bible-driven, Gospel-expanding, Christian marriage begins when a man comes to a woman and says, “Let me tell you why I think God made me. He made me to glorify Him, and the most important way that He wants me to do that is by loving you, serving you, and nurturing faith in your life. I believe that God has brought us together for Kingdom purposes! My prayer is that God will bless us with many children, through whatever means He chooses, and that we might partner together in the mission of raising the next generation for the glory of God. My dream is that our family would impact this world for Christ for generations to come. *Will you help me succeed?*”

To this the heart of the Christian woman cries, “Yes!” The man understands that his ministry in the world begins with the soul of his wife, and then the souls of his children. The wife enthusiastically joins him as an equal and vital helper in the mission – all for the glory of God!

The First Step

What is the first step toward this kind of visionary marriage? Prayer. Ask God today to turn your heart to your spouse, and to your children. Repent if your best efforts in ministry have gone to other people rather than your family. Be prepared for God to answer this prayer, for Him to bring supernatural unity to your marriage, and for your entire family to become a transformational force for the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Rob and Amy Rienow believe their primary ministry is encouraging faith in one another, and seeking to impress the hearts of their six children with a love for God. They are the founders of Visionary Parenting (www.VisionaryParenting.com) and are the authors of the books *Visionary Parenting*, and *Visionary Marriage* (Randall House, September 2010).