

The Moment of Marriage

by Tyranny Powers, M.F.T.

What is the exact moment when a woman can truly be called “married”? This question came up in the *Act of Bedding 102* class at the School of the Sons of the Prophets and I thought it was a question worthy of being tackled in an article for *Glossarrhea Review*. When exactly can we say that a woman passes from the life of singleness to the married life?

There are many possible answers to this question, but only one of them can be right. There comes a moment in the life of a woman when she passes from the life of singlehood to the life of married devotion to her spouse. There is a critical moment, a split second of time when she is instantly transformed into a married woman, leaving the life of singleness behind. When is that moment and why is this question of utmost importance?

First of all, why is it important to know when a woman is truly married or not? Well, it has to do with faithfulness. You see, up until the exact moment when a young lady is transformed into a married woman, that young lady is up for grabs. She is the potential wife of any man who would pursue her affections and seek her consent. But there comes a time in a young lady’s life when all of that potential comes to a screeching halt and she suddenly, in a flash, becomes the wife of one man, forever unavailable to any other save her husband. If she ignores this fact after that specific point in time, she becomes an adulteress. And if she ignores that fact before she has experienced that specific point in time, she is either a mercenary or unmercenary harlot. So, the reason why the specific, transforming moment of marriage is so important is that it determines whether one is living in sin or not, shacking up illegally while unmarried or stealing the husband of another. For the saved it means less rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ and for the unsaved it means a deeper, darker, and hotter place in the Lake of Fire.

So when is that crucial moment of marriage? Another way to ask this is, When is a young lady bound to be faithful to the man she is with in such a way that if she turns aside from him, it is counted as sin unto her? In the *Act of Bedding 102* class, the students identified five possible areas to

consider in attempting to answer this question: 1) engagement and wedding ceremonial traditions, 2) the very act of bedding itself, 3) communal recognition of a marriage, 4) state laws, and 5) the spiritual condition of the heart.

In considering this question, I want to say that the most important consideration is, “What saith the Lord?” For the limits and boundaries of sin are only identifiable by looking into the Word of God. Now the Word specifically says that “the two shall be one flesh” and that this happens at the moment of cleavage when the man cleaves unto his wife. So when exactly is the moment of cleavage?

There is a moment in the life of a young lady when she says “yes” to the marriage proposal of her beloved and becomes engaged to him in the prospect of marriage. Now under man’s law, she is not truly married yet for there has not even been a marriage ceremony or the signing of a marriage license. But what about under God’s law? The Word of God also mentions another condition of marriage when it says that “a man shall leave his father and mother.” Can a woman be considered truly married if her husband is still living at home with his parents and she happens to move in with him after a marriage ceremony and the signing of a marriage license? Not according to the Word of God, she isn’t. The man must first leave his father and mother and then “cleave,” the Word says, “unto his wife.”

I dare say that simply saying “yes” to a marriage proposal doesn’t make a young lady “married.” There are certain conditions which must take place according to the Word and one of them is that the man have already left his parents and be living on his own. But despite the fact that there are conditions to be met, there must still be an identifiable moment in the life of a young lady when she passes from being single to being married. Again, we must ask, when is that moment?

If we say it’s the wedding ceremony itself, when exactly in the ceremony is the decisive moment? Is it when the man says, “I do”? Or is it when she says, “I do.” Some may argue so, but according to the Word, does saying, “I do” constitute “cleaving.” What do the words “I do” have to do with cleavage? It doesn’t sound like a whole lot of cleaving going on up at the altar. Some might argue, well, it’s when he puts the ring on her finger or it’s when the minister pronounces them man and wife, but, again, according to the Word, there must be a cleaving taking place. Not to deny the power of calling those things that are not as though they were, but it

seems evident that placing a ring or making a pronouncement has nothing to do with cleaving.

One of the female students in the *Act of Bedding 102* class argued that maybe the act of saying “I do” or placing the ring could be considered an act of cleavage because it puts a clear break between the single life and the married life. But when the Word of God talks about cleaving, it’s the man that cleaves and the object of his cleaving is the wife. I don’t see the man cleaving his wife when he places the ring or when the preacher makes the pronouncement, even if the pronouncement is made in faith believing. Even if the community pronounces it so in faith, it does not make it so according to the Word of God. The essential element is cleavage outside of the home of the man’s parents.

Another male student said that under state law, the couple is considered marriage at the signing of the marriage license. But again, and I stress, there is no sign of cleaving the woman or cleaving unto the woman in the act of putting pen to paper in the signing of the marriage license. Yet another male student said that it’s when the man carries his wife over the threshold of his own home. But even that manly act of bearing the woman over the threshold as queen of his home does not show the signs of cleavage. Rather the signs of cleavage are set forth in the Word of God in Deuteronomy 22:13-21:

¹³If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, ¹⁴And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: ¹⁵Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel’s virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: ¹⁶And the damsel’s father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; ¹⁷And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter’s virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. ¹⁸And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; ¹⁹And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. ²⁰But if this thing be true, and the tokens of

virginity be not found for the damsel: ²¹Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of he father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

You see how that, according to the Word of God, the act of bedding is the act of the man cleaving unto the woman. I shared with the class how under Jewish tradition, in accordance with Deuteronomy 22:13-21, the signs of cleavage, or tokens of virginity, are the bloodied sheets which result from the cleaving of the maidenhead on the marriage night. Only that act constitutes the act of cleavage. So the girl is transformed into a woman through the penetration of the male member.

How much penetration is necessary according to the Word? Apparently, there must be the signs of blood. There must be a breaking of the maidenhead resulting in an issue of blood through the shedding of blood. Just as there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood, so there is no marriage without the shedding of blood.

But one of the female students in the class raised an objection. She said, "What happens if the girl isn't married and she is penetrated by the male flesh?" I could see by her question that she did not believe the Word. "What do you mean she 'isn't married'?" I asked. "If she is penetrated by the male flesh she is married according to the Word."

"But what if she's raped?" asked the student.

I thought about it for a moment. "If the rapist has left his father and mother and is living on his own and there's an issue of blood, then she's married to him according to the Word."

Another male student injected his thoughts. "But doesn't the Bible say that a rapist should be stoned?"

"Yes," I said. "The marriage is to be quickly ended through stoning because he unlawfully took by force from the woman rather than allowing her to offer her temple as a gift. So once, he's dead, the woman is free to be married to another according to Romans 7, but until the death penalty is carried out on him, she's still married to him."

"What if she isn't raped, but she is a harlot or very promiscuous?" asked the male student.

“Then, according to the Word, she is married to the first independent man that brought forth an issue of blood in the act of bedding her,” I said. “And anybody else she beds with is an adulterer and she is engaging in adultery every time she is bedded by someone other than the first man who bedded her.”

Another male student, a young, Caucasian pastor, inserted himself in the discussion. “What is the definition of fornication then?”

I responded with a knee-jerk reaction without meditating upon the Word. “Sex outside of marriage,” I said.

“But I thought you’re saying that sex outside of marriage results in marriage...” he said with a challenging tone.

“Well,” I said, “the Word is very clear that marriage, in other words, the two becoming one, results from one man who is independent of his parents cleaving unto his woman, bringing forth an issue of...”

“But what makes her ‘his woman’?”

“Well, according to the Word, it’s when the woman gives her consent.”

“But I thought you said that the woman would be married to a rapist even when she didn’t give her consent just because he cleaved her...”

I heard a whirlwind of rustling and looked over to see one of the other male students rummaging around in his Bible as if frantically trying to find a verse. “Well, let’s think about this according to the Word,” I said. “Deuteronomy 22:13-21 talks about the tokens of virginity playing an important role in establishing a marriage. It seems to me that unless the sign of bloodied sheets takes place, there is no marriage.”

I could see the young pastor getting all worked up. “So you’re saying that if a young, independent man goes to a prostitute and there’s an issue of blood that he’s married to her?”

“Only if she has never been cleaved by another man prior to that act of cleavage.”

Suddenly the young man who had been rustling and rummaging through his Bible spoke up. “Look at First Corinthians 6:16,” he said and then started to read,

16What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

“Does that mean that a man is married to every prostitute he sleeps with ?” he asked.

“Well,” I said, “in the Old Testament, men could be married to more than one wife...”

“But look what Jesus says about lusting after another woman in your heart. He said it was adultery. What if the woman isn’t married? Is that adultery too? Jesus said if you do it in your heart it’s as if you already did it. What if the man was imagining the act of cleavage in his heart with an unmarried woman?”

“If he imagined cleavage with an issue of blood and he is no longer living with his parents than according to Jesus, they are, in fact, married in his heart.”

The young pastor piped up. “But look at Deuteronomy 22:16,” he said. It says that the father of the damsel says, ‘I gave my daughter unto this man to wife.’ How can there be any marriage unless the father gives his daughter away in marriage? Isn’t that what makes a woman married—the act of her father giving her hand in marriage...?”

I really felt put on the spot by this young pastor. It felt like he was trying to take over the class and usurp his authority to teach the class. It seemed like the men of the class were ganging up on me. I felt rebuked by him and the other men, but I stood my ground in the authority of the Word. “Okay,” I said, “what you’re bringing up is just another condition necessary for the act of bedding to constitute marriage, but the act of her father giving her hand in marriage doesn’t make her married. It only provides the possibility of it.” I took a marker and wrote on the board the conditions necessary for marriage:

Conditions of Marriage

Man leaving father and mother
 Father giving daughter to man
 Man cleaving unto his wife
 Bloodshed and tokens of virginity

“These are the conditions of marriage, according to the Word,” I said.

One of the female students asked, “What about the woman’s consent? Doesn’t there have to be her consent for there to be a true marriage?”

I and the class remained silent for a very long 30 to 40 seconds. No one was speaking. I couldn’t think of one verse of Scripture mentioning the importance of the woman’s consent. If it were really that important, why would the Word not mention it? Finally, I spoke, “Can anyone think of a verse in the Word that mentions the woman’s consent as having any relevance at all as a condition of marriage?” The class remained silent.

“Finally, one of the female students raised her hand and said, “How about Ruth 1:16-17?”

¹⁶Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

¹⁷Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

We all looked it up in the Word and discovered that Ruth was speaking these words, not to Boaz in the marriage ceremony, but to Naomi, when Naomi was moving back to her homeland in Bethlehem.

We racked our brains over the Word, but couldn’t find one, single verse to support the idea that a woman’s consent is important for there to be a marriage. Then the white, male pastor raised his hand. “So if a man is still living at home with his parents, he and his wife aren’t really married, even if the other conditions are met and the woman’s father gave her to him, and he cleaved her, and there was shedding of blood?”

“That’s what the Word indicates,” I said.

He continued. “So wouldn’t the moment of marriage occur, in that case, when the man moves out of his parents home since all the other conditions have already been met?”

I pondered what he was saying for a moment and decided that his reasoning was spiritually in accord with the Word. “Yes,” I said, “that’s what the Word indicates.”

“Doesn’t the Word tell us to obey the laws of the land too?”

“Amen,” I said.

“Well, according to the laws of the land, the signing of the marriage license is a necessary condition to be met in order for there to be a marriage so that, if the man has already cleaved her and all the other conditions have already been met, the actual moment of marriage when the woman passes from singleness to being married might be with the signing of the marriage license.”

As I thought about it, according to the Word, I had to agree. “Yes,” I said, “in that case the moment of marriage would be the signing of the marriage license.”

He wouldn’t let up. “So doesn’t all this mean that if all the conditions have been met except for the shedding of blood, that the man and woman are still unmarried and are living in the sin of fornication just because there has been no sign of the bloodied sheets?”

I thought about it for a few seconds. Silently, I pled the blood, placed a prayer covering over my mind and the minds of the other students, and claimed a word of wisdom on the matter. Finally I spoke. “Look,” I said, “the Word of God likens salvation to marriage in Romans 7:4 where it says,

⁴Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

I continued, “The Word says here that the spiritual marriage takes place through the body of Christ. You see, that’s the cleavage and the shedding of blood. It’s a physical thing. When we’re talking about salvation, there are conditions, but the exact moment of being born again takes place at the moment a person confesses Jesus as Lord, believing in his heart that God raised him from the dead, according to Romans Chapter 10, Verse 9. That’s the decisive moment. There are other conditions also, though. Mark 16:16 says that ‘he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.’ Now does that mean that salvation takes place at the moment of baptism? No, it can’t mean that because of Romans 10, Verse 9.

The young, white pastor raised his hand. “That passage in Mark 16 isn’t in the earliest manuscripts,” he said.

“So I’ve heard, but does that mean it’s not the Word of God? Obviously, the churches included it in the Word of God at some point. Maybe it was the words of Jesus recorded separately and since it was so short, they decided to use it as the ending to Mark’s Gospel. Just cause something wasn’t there before doesn’t mean it’s wrong. After all, the book of Revelation wasn’t considered part of the Bible until several centuries after it was written...”

The young, white pastor interrupted, “But isn’t salvation a matter of the heart? Wouldn’t that imply that marriage is a matter of the heart also? After all, can a woman really be considered truly married if she’s living like a harlot?”

“Well,” I said, “we already saw that Jesus says that it’s possible to commit adultery in the heart. It seems to me it’s also possible to be married in your heart too.”

“Isn’t that the most important thing?” asked the pastor.

“Yes, but, just because you believe you’re married in your heart doesn’t mean that you are according to the Word. There’s got to be the cleavage with bloodshed. The cleavage with bloodshed is an outward sign like the bloodied sheets. That’s just as necessary as any matter of the heart when it comes to marriage according to the Word of God.”

“So you’re saying that we’re saved by faith plus confession, not by faith alone...”

“I’m just repeating what the Word says in Romans 10:9,” I said. “Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth and Bingo! You’re saved. The man cleaves the woman with the shedding of blood and Presto! she’s married. The other conditions are only secondary.”

“That’s what I thought you were saying,” said the young, white pastor. “I still think it all depends on the condition of the heart. If a person is married in their heart that’s all that counts. All these other things are just symbols or points of contact.”

“If you can show me the verses to back it up,” I said, “then I’ll have to agree.” So ended our class discussion. The Lord had given me a mouth and wisdom based on his promise. I hope this write-up has been a blessing to your heart. 