

## Christian Marriage

From John Calvin, *Tracts*, Vol. II, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 123-126, English updated and emphasis added.

The following comes from the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, being a form of instruction for children in the doctrine of Christ, written and edited by John Calvin.

### FORM AND MANNER OF CELEBRATING MARRIAGE.

*It is necessary to observe that in celebrating marriage it is published in the Church on three Sundays, that any one knowing of any hindrance may timeously announce it, or anyone having interest may oppose it.*

*This done the parties come forward at the commencement of the Sermon, when the Minister says:*

Our help be in the Lord who made heaven and earth. Amen.

God, our Father, after creating heaven and earth, and all that is in it, created and formed man after His own image and likeness, to have dominion and lordship over the beasts of the earth, the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, saying, after He had created man, It is not good that the man be alone, let us make him a helper fitting for him (Genesis 1:26; 2:18, 21, 22). And our Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and while Adam slept God took one of his ribs, and of it formed Eve, giving us to understand that the man and the woman are only one body, one flesh, and one blood (Matthew 19:6). Wherefore the man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife, whom he ought to love just as Jesus loves the Church, or, in other words, the true believers and Christians for whom He died (Ephesians 5:25). And likewise the woman ought to serve and obey her husband in all holiness and honesty (1 Timothy 2:11); for she is subject to and in the power of the husband so long as she lives with him (1 Peter 3:5).

And this holy marriage, ordained of God, is of such force, that in virtue of it the husband has not power over his body, but the woman. Nor does the woman have power over her body, but the husband (1 Corinthians 7:4). Wherefore being joined together of God they can no more be separated, except for a time by mutual consent to have leisure for fasting and prayer, taking good heed not to be tempted of Satan through their lack of self-control (Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:5).

And they ought to return to each other. For in order to avoid fornication each one ought to have his wife (1 Corinthians 7:2), and each woman her husband, so that all who have not the gift of celibacy are obliged by the command of God to marry, in order that the holy temple of God, in other words, our bodies, be not violated and corrupted (1 Corinthians 3:9; 6:15, 16). For seeing that our bodies are members of Jesus Christ, it would be a gross outrage to make them the members of a harlot (1 Corinthians 6:16). Wherefore we ought to preserve them in all holiness. For whosoever pollutes the temple of God, him will God destroy.

You then, N. and N., (*naming the bridegroom and bride*), knowing that God has so ordained it, do you wish to live in this holy state of marriage which God has so highly honored; have you such a purpose as you manifest here before His holy assembly, asking that it be approved?

They answer: Yes.

THE MINISTER:

I take you all who are here present as witnesses, praying you to keep it in remembrance: however, if there is anyone who knows of any impediment, or that either of them is connected by marriage with another, let him say so.

*If nobody opposes, the Minister says:*

Since there is nobody who opposes, and there is no impediment, our Lord God confirms your holy purpose which He has given you, and let your commencement be in the name of God, who has made heaven and earth. Amen.

*The Minister, addressing the Bridegroom, says:*

Do you, N., confess here, before God and His holy congregation, that you have taken, and take N., here present, for your wife and spouse, whom you promise to keep, loving and maintaining her faithfully, as is the duty of a true and faithful husband to his wife, living holily with her, observing faith and lealty [faithfulness; fidelity] to her in all things, according to the word of God and His holy gospel?

Answer: Yes.

*Then, addressing the bride, he says:*

You, N., confess here, before God and His holy assembly, that you have taken, and take, N. for your lawful husband, whom you promise to obey, serving and being subject to him, living holily, observing faith and lealty [loyalty, fidelity] to him, in all things as a faithful and loyal spouse owes to her husband, according to the word of God and His holy gospel?

Answer: Yes.

*Then, the Minister says:*

The Father of all mercy, who of His grace has called you to this holy state for the love of Jesus Christ His Son, who, by His holy presence, sanctified marriage, there performing His first miracle before the Apostles, anoint you with His Holy Spirit to serve and honor Him together with one common accord. Amen.

Listen to the Gospel how our Lord intends that holy marriage should be kept, and how firm and indissoluble it is, according as it is written in St. Matthew, at the nineteenth chapter:

The Pharisees also came to Him, tempting Him, and saying to Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said to them, Have ye not read, that He who made them at the beginning, made them male and female; And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and the two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder [separate].

Believe in these holy words which our Lord uttered, as the gospel narrates them, and be assured that our Lord God has joined you in holy marriage: wherefore live holily together in good love, peace, and union, keeping true charity, faith, and loyalty to each other, according to the word of God.

*Let us all with one heart pray to our Father:*

God, all mighty, all good, and all wise, who from the beginning did foresee that it was not good for man to be alone, and therefore did create him a helper suitable for him, and has ordained that two should be one, we beg of You, and humbly request, that since it has pleased You to call these persons to the holy state of marriage, You would consent, of Your grace and goodness to give and send them Your Holy Spirit, in order that they may live holily in true and firm faith, according to Your good will, surmounting all bad affections, edifying each other in all honesty and chastity, giving Your blessing to them as You did to Your faithful servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that having holy lineage [children, descendants] they may praise and serve You, teaching them, and bringing them up to Your praise and glory, and the good of their neighbor, through the advancement and exaltation of Your holy gospel. Hear us, Father of Mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your very dear Son. Amen.

Our Lord fill you with all graces, and anoint you with all good, to live together long and holily.