

***Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel*** by Ray Ortlund (Crossway, 2016). (20 Quotes selected by Ivan Mesa, The Gospel Coalition (www.gospelcoalition.org))

**1. Marriage Is a Divine Revelation.**

“Marriage is not a human invention; it is a divine revelation. Its design never was our own made-up arrangement of infinite malleability. It was given to us, at the beginning of all things, as a brightly shining fixity of eternal significance. We might not always live up to its true grandeur. None of us does so perfectly. But we have no right to redefine it, and we have every reason to revere it.” [page 11]

**2. Society’s Need for Christian Care.**

“As our society departs increasingly from the ways of God, more misery will deeply injure and depress human experience. May the Christian church be ready always to care for sinners and sufferers without a self-righteous ‘I told you so.’ May we who follow Christ receive all penitents with tenderness and practical help. But we need more than an emergency room for people wounded by the sexual revolution. We also need a widespread return to the ancient wisdom we all have foolishly disobeyed.”[page 13]

**3. Dance of Complementarity.**

“The head-with-helper dance of complementarity sprang from deep within the intuitions of God himself. We men and women today do not automatically know the steps to this dance. We must learn. But if we will receive it by faith, trusting in the goodness and wisdom of God, we can then explore its potentialities for joyful human magnificence.” [page 23]

**4. Aggravating one another’s weaknesses.**

“Here, then, is the ultimate reason for our broken promises, shouting matches, resentments, abuses, separations, divorces, and all marital tragedies: God gave us up to the powers of our own sinful confusion. These sad words he declared in Genesis 3:16 predict our cycle of dysfunction whenever a wife steps in to fill the void created by her husband’s failure to care and provide, with the husband resenting his wife for the implied criticism of his own passivity and silently or aggressively punishing her for it. Each one aggravates the weakness of the other, as they spiral down into

mutual incomprehension, bitterness, alienation. Both defiant feminism and arrogant patriarchy fall short of the glory of Eden. And we husbands and wives will never get ourselves back to the garden by pointing an accusing finger at the other.” [page 49]

### **5. Romance and Belief.**

“The key to a lasting romance is not endless sex but believing hearts.” [page 54]

### **6. Marriage Is a Gift from God.**

“The most remarkable thing about marriage today is not that it can be troubled but that we still have this privilege at all. When God justly expelled us from the garden of Eden, he did not take this gift back. He let us keep his priceless gift, though we sometimes misuse it. But what every married couple needs to know is that their marriage is a remnant of Eden. This is why every marriage is worth working at, worth fighting for. A marriage filled with hope in God is nothing less than an afterglow of the garden of Eden, radiant with hope until perfection is finally restored.” [page 54]

### **7. Divine Intent of the Divorce Law.**

“Jesus’s understanding of the divine intent behind this divorce law [Matt. 19:7–9] repositions us to interpret the entire law with deeper insight. God was not taking highly civilized people who spent their Sunday afternoons reading Shakespeare and singing madrigals and degrading them with the law of the jungle. Instead—with thanks to J. R. R. Tolkien for the imagery—we can think of the law of Moses as God speaking into an orc culture, regulating its worst features as the beginning of a long process of restoring them to their lost elf culture. God does not accomplish this miracle all at once, because the change he has in mind is not a simple matter of polish and manners. God intends to re-create his people from deep within, and then cultivate their behavior in every respect, so that ultimately Mordor is transformed into Lothlórien. This merciful purpose of God runs through stages of time, as the Bible progresses from the lost garden of Eden to the provisional law of Moses to the glorious culmination in Jesus. And God wisely started with his old covenant people Israel right where they were in history. From there he patiently led them step by step toward the better world he had promised, a world Jesus alone can create.” [page 61]

## **8. Biblical Marriage is Resilient.**

“Rather than quenched by the dreary waves of monotonous daily life, real love sweeps us away by its overwhelming power. Falling in love is a kind of temporary insanity, hurling us into the reckless abandon that marital commitment truly is. Fortunately, in a healthy marriage, though we recover our right minds to some degree, the sweet craziness never completely leaves us. As the years roll by, a married couple inevitably suffers the buffetings of this life. But biblical marriage is resilient, for ‘many waters cannot quench love.’” [page 72]

## **9. Shocking Reality.**

“The shocking reality is this: it was the people of God who made the garden of Eden into the brothel of this world.” [page 77]

## **10. Jesus’ Definition of Marriage.**

“When Jesus treats Genesis 2:24 [in Matt. 19:3–10] as definitional of marriage in the world today, every true follower of Jesus will pay attention.” [page 81]

## **11. Imperfect Marriages Are Sacred to God.**

“If you are married, even if your marriage in some ways disappoints you, still, God was the one who joined you two together. Your imperfect marriage in the world of today is as sacred in the sight of God as was the perfect marriage between Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Your marriage is a grace from above. Your marriage is a miracle. Your marriage came to you with the touch of God upon it, and it remains dear to him. Your marriage has the potential, by his grace, to bring redemption into the broken world we all live in now. Your imperfect marriage is, therefore, worth celebrating. Jesus thought so.” [page 84-85]

## **12. Honoring the Body.**

“The Christian gospel creates strong sexual integrity not by despising the body but by honoring the body.” [page 87]

## **13. Nourishing One’s Wife.**

“A loving Christian husband cares so deeply about his wife that he makes sure that her life is moving in a desirable direction, even as Christ nourishes

us all. Marriage to a Christlike husband is, for a woman, the opposite of a dead-end life. A woman married to a nourishing man comes to the end of her days as an older lady, and as she is sitting on a porch somewhere in her rocking chair looking back on her life, she is praising God and thinking, ‘Being married to my husband opened my whole life up. Yes, we suffered. Yes, we made mistakes. But in it all, my husband thought of me. He cared about how my life was going. What a great run we had, living together for Christ!’ That is nourishing one’s wife.” [page 97]

#### **14. Marriage Is for Christ and His Church.**

“Marriage may be common to us, but it is why the universe was created, and not for Adam and Eve only, but even more for Christ and his church.” [page 99]

#### **15. Marriage as the Biblical Love Story.**

“The eternal romance—not, in the final analysis, the love of the couple getting married but the love of Jesus for us and our joyful deference to him—the eternal love story is why God created the universe and why God gave us marriage in Eden and why couples fall in love and get married in the world today. Every time a bride and groom stand there and take their vows, they are reenacting the biblical love story, whether they realize it or not. The Son of God stepping down out of eternity, entering time, taking on flesh, pursuing and winning his bride as his very heart and body with his inmost, sincerest love so that he can fit her to be with him forever above—that dramatic super-reality is the breathtaking reason why human marriage exists. It is truly profound. And Christian married couples have the privilege of making the mystery of the gospel visible in the world today by living out the dynamic interplay of an Ephesians 5–quality marriage. We should not think that Christ and the church are the metaphor in this passage, but the reverse. Christ and the church are the reality of realities, and our Christian marriages are the metaphors.” [page 100]

#### **16. Metaphorical Marriages.**

“Every faithful Christian marriage points beyond itself to the perfect union we all share with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our little metaphorical marriages can always draw strength from the real marriage we share with our Savior.” [page 101]

**17. Human Marriage a Prophetic Whisper of Eternal Marriage.**

“If the Bible is telling us the truth about reality, then the universe we live in was created primarily with marital romance in mind. The heavens and the earth were created for the marriage of Adam and Eve. The new heavens and the new earth will be created for the marriage of Christ and his bride. The whole of cosmic reality exists as the venue for the eternal honeymoon of the perfect husband with his perfect bride in marital bliss forever and ever. This is the breathtaking claim of the Bible. . . . Human marriage has always been intended by God to serve as a prophetic whisper of the eternal marriage.”  
[page 111-112]

**18. Display of the Gospel in Marriages.**

“If we love the preaching of the gospel from pulpits, then we will also love the display of the gospel in marriages. Churches must not be neutral or casual about what so rejoices the heart of God.” [page 113]

**19. Married Sex a Metaphor of Heaven.**

“Married sex, with its intimacy and desire and pleasure and intensity and adoration and satisfaction and rest, is a glorious metaphor of heaven.” [page 115]

**20. The Gospel and Sexuality.**

“Everyone who reveres the gospel has compelling reasons to champion biblical sexual ethics. It is falling to our generation to raise up a prophetic counterculture in the face of the sexual revolution’s direct attack on Christ and his marital appeal at the heart of the gospel. The fact that we too are sinners does not exempt us from taking this stand. Our own sinfulness simply means that we take our stand with humility and honesty. But we must not be silent. What is at stake in our sexuality is nothing less than the gospel itself.” [page 115]