

## Do Pastors Have The Power To Marry People?

The procedure for getting married is pretty well understood: you have to go and get a marriage license, and then you have to find someone to marry you. When it comes to performing the marriage ceremony, people typically have two options: they can go down to the courthouse and get married by a justice of the peace, or they can go find a pastor and have him do the job. This procedure is so commonplace that people don't even think twice about it. If you ask someone "Who married you?" they will typically give you the name of their pastor – because people believe that pastors have the ability to take two people and join them together in marriage.

But do they *really* have that ability? Stop and think about it. What gives pastors the ability to join people in holy matrimony? Who gave them that magical power? I am being serious here. Where did this ability come from?

You can check the Bible, but you won't find it there. The Bible charges pastors with many responsibilities: they are to preach the gospel, take care of their flocks, baptize people, and so forth, but the Bible *never* tasks them with marrying people. It's never even *mentioned*. Jesus Christ charged the Church with going into all the world, making disciples, and baptizing people, but He *never* mentioned the idea that His Church should be marrying people. He didn't even hint at it.

The apostles wrote a lot of letters to various churches, instructing them in how to follow the Lord, but they never mentioned the idea that churches ought to be involved in marrying people. Oh, they talked about feeding the poor, healing the sick, making converts, and even church discipline, but they never mentioned churches holding marriage ceremonies – *not a single time*.

In fact, no church in the entire Bible is ever said to have performed a marriage. No disciple, apostle, or deacon ever performed a wedding in the Bible. You *never* see a pastor taking two people and marrying them. *It never happened*.

What I am trying to say is this: the idea that pastors have a magical ability to unite two people in marriage *does not come from the Bible*. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible that says that pastors have that ability. There is also nothing in the Bible that says that churches ought to be involved in performing marriages. *It's not there*. I understand that churches have taken this role upon themselves, but God never gave them that responsibility.

This means that pastors *do not* have the power to unite people in marriage. Pastors have no more power to marry people than garbage collectors or tax accountants. I understand that people commonly believe "I need to go to a pastor in order to get married", but there's no Biblical basis for that whatsoever. It may be traditional, but it's man's tradition – not God's.

So who *does* have the power to marry people? Well, according to Jesus Christ, only one person can do that:

**Matthew 19:4:** "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,  
5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?  
6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore **God hath joined together**, let not man put asunder."

Do you see that? Who takes two people and joins them together in marriage? *God does*. Only God has that power. No man can unite people in marriage; it is God who does the joining. How does it

work? Well, it's pretty simple: a man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife, and God unites them into one. That's literally what the verse says. At that point they have been joined together. They are no longer two people; instead they are one flesh.

Now, here's what that means in practical terms. In the marriage ceremony, the marriage license itself means nothing. It may be required from a legal standpoint, but that piece of paper carries no weight with God. Having a signed marriage license does not make you married, and *not* having one does not mean that you are unmarried. After all, Adam and Eve didn't have a marriage license, but the Bible tells us that they were husband and wife. There are countless societies that never had marriage licenses, but that didn't mean the couples were living in sin. To God, a marriage license is just a meaningless piece of paper. It carries no weight and has no authority.

Likewise, at the end of the ceremony, when the pastor says "I now pronounce you man and wife", his pronouncement means nothing. Saying those words does *not* make the couple married, and *not* saying those words does not render them unmarried. What the pastor says is *utterly irrelevant*.

The key part of the marriage ceremony is when the man takes the woman to be his wife, and the wife takes the man to be her husband. The two make a covenant together in the sight of God – a lifelong covenant. When they do that – when they exchange their vows and commit to being husband and wife – at that point they are married because at that point *God* joins them together.

Now, the consummation of the marriage is important, but it is *not* what makes two people a couple. We know this because Adam and Eve were referred to as husband and wife long before they ever consummated their union. Take a look for yourself. This is Genesis 2:25:

**Genesis 2:25:** "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Eve is referred to as Adam's wife *immediately* – as soon as she was created and given to Adam. However, we don't see that relationship consummated until much later:

**Genesis 4:1:** "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord."

If that's not enough evidence for you, here's something else to consider: God has always been very clear about the fact that sex is only permissible *within* marriage. Sex within marriage is good; sex outside of marriage is a serious sin. In other words, you have to *already be married* before you can have sex. Therefore the marriage must take place *first* – which means that the act of the physical union *cannot* be a part of the marriage process.

Adam and Eve was a great example of how marriage actually works. God brought Eve to Adam, Adam accepted her as his wife, and they became a married couple. This is despite the fact that there was no marriage license, there was no pastor to pronounce them married, and there weren't even any witnesses (although I'd like to point out that witnesses are a very good idea; they will hold the couple to their vow). All it took to marry them was their covenant to each other, made in the sight of God. That was enough.

The reason all of this matters is because we've come to believe that people are united in marriage *by other people*, instead of by God. This leads to the idea that since the marriage was *created* by other people, it can also be dissolved by other people. Since the State grants the marriage, the State can grant the divorce.

But as we've seen, the State has absolutely *nothing to do* with uniting people in marriage.

Likewise, pastors are also *not* a part of the process (no matter what they claim). It is *God* who unites people in marriage – and only God can dissolve the marriage. You can go down to the courthouse and get a divorce, but all the State can give you is a meaningless piece of paper. The courthouse is not the one who married you in the first place; it was God who did that. This means that *God has to grant your divorce*. If He doesn't then you don't have one; you are still married to your original spouse.

I have a lot to say about divorce, but since I've already written about that extensively elsewhere (see my book *The Lost Doctrines*) I won't repeat it all here. The point I want to make is that getting a divorce is not the simple process that people think it is. God is the one who united you in the first place, and only God can separate you. If you divorced your spouse for an unbiblical reason (which is too complicated a subject to get into here), then God does not recognize your divorce *and still considers you to be married to your original spouse*.

Should you decide to get married, keep in mind that the State and the pastor plays no role in uniting you in holy matrimony. God is the one who is joining the two of you together – and He is doing it *for life*. A marriage is not as easy to get out of as you might suppose. Just because you consider yourself to be divorced and are now “married” to someone else, does *not* mean that God agrees with you. If you did not get divorced for a Biblical reason then God considers you to simply be having an affair and living in sin with someone you are *not* married to. That may not matter very much to you now, but I assure you that on Judgment Day, when you stand before God and give an account for your life, it will matter a *great deal* to you then.

Incidentally, there is another point to all of this: since God is the one who marries people, that means it is impossible for two men or two women to get married because *God doesn't recognize that as a marriage*. Sure, homosexual couples might be able to get a legally valid marriage license, and they may even be able to find a pastor who is willing to perform the ceremony – but only God can unite two people in marriage, and God does *not* recognize homosexual unions. This means that same-sex marriage is an impossibility. No matter what the law says, no homosexual couple can ever be united in marriage. The best they can do is hold make-believe weddings that hold no sway with God whatsoever. The laws may change, but God never changes. You can call it a marriage all you want, but it will never actually *be* a marriage.