

# (A Heavenly Home) 2. Make Three Choices in Your Marriage

by Zac Poonen

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*To have a happy marriage, you must make the right choices, such as being centred in God, accepting each other, and doing things together.*

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 4:9

**Topics:** "Marriage Counseling", "Christian Unity"

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## Description

Zac Poonen delivers a powerful message at the wedding of Santosh and Meghan, emphasizing the importance of seeking guidance from the Bible in all aspects of life, especially in marriage. Drawing from the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis, he highlights the crucial choices couples must make to have a happy marriage as ordained by God. Poonen stresses the significance of being centered in God, accepting one another without masks, and doing things together to overcome the challenges posed by Satan, ultimately leading to a marriage filled with God's love and unity.

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## Transcript

(Message given at the wedding of Santosh (my second son) and Meghan)

God has given us only one Book. If we really believe that, we will look in that Book for instruction for everything in life. We read in the Bible that it was God Who ordained marriage for man. He was the One who first thought of it and He was the one who created man and woman with a desire to be united together. And He has given us warnings and instructions in His Book on how a married couple should live.

In Genesis chapter 3, we read about the marriage of Adam and Eve. As soon as God united them in marriage He sent them into a beautiful garden. In three things that happened in that garden, we see three choices that you, Santosh and Meghan, must make - and that all married couples must make - if you want to have the happy marriage that God planned for man.

Such happy marriages are rarely seen on this earth, because most people don't read the Scriptures, and many who do, don't meditate on them, to find out exactly how God wants them to live as married people.

When God sent Adam and Eve into this garden, although He gave them ample freedom, He did make one restriction. He forbade them from eating of one tree. There was a reason for that. Without choice, no-one

can be a son of God. No-one can be holy without personal choice. So when God sent Adam into that garden, if He had not given Adam the opportunity to choose, Adam could never have become the son that God had wanted him to become. We don't realize how important the choices we make are - for our life on earth and even more for eternity.

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is the power to choose. And He will never take that power away from anyone. You can choose to be a son of God or you can choose to live for yourself. But whatever you choose, at the end of your life, you will reap the consequences of your choice.

The Bible says, "What a man sows, that will he also reap". The Bible also says that "it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment". But God will not judge men arbitrarily on that final day. His judgments will be based on the choices that each man has made.

This principle applies in marriage too. You can choose whether you want to have a happy marriage or a miserable one. That choice is yours, not God's. Adam could choose whether to yield his life to the devil or to God.

So I want to speak to you, Santosh and Meghan, about three choices that you must make in your marriage:

#### 1. Be Centred In God - And Not In Yourselves

First of all, choose to be centred in God in all areas of your life.

There were two trees in the garden of Eden - and they represented two ways of life. The tree of life symbolized a life centred in God - where God would be the centre of every decision made by man. The tree of knowledge of good and evil on the other hand, symbolized a life where Self would be the centre, and where man would live without consulting God and would determine himself what was good and what was evil. God sent Adam and Eve into that garden and told them, as it were, "You can choose now which of these two ways you want to live by". And we all know what Adam chose. He chose to live a life centred in himself.

All the misery, sorrow and murders and every other wretched thing that we see in the world around us, is due to man having decided to choose for himself what is good and what is evil. He doesn't want God to tell him. And that is the reason for every unhappy marriage as well - even among Christians. Multitudes of Christians live with Self as the centre of their life - and they reap what they sow.

When God made Adam He wanted him to rule over the earth. Adam was created to be a king, not a slave. And God wanted Eve to be a queen beside Adam. But what do we see today? Men and women are slaves everywhere - slaves to their passions and to the corruptible things of earth.

When God created this earth He made everything beautiful. The forbidden tree was also beautiful. When Adam and Eve stood in front of that tree, they had to make a choice: Would they choose the beautiful things God had created, or would they choose God Himself?

That is the choice all of us have to make every day. If our life is centred in ourselves, we will pursue after God's gifts (the things He has created) and not after God Himself. Most of the quarrels that take place in homes are over earthly things. Such quarrels arise because the husband and wife choose created things instead of God Himself - and they reap the consequences of their choice. They sow to the flesh and so

they reap corruption. Man becomes a slave when he chooses created things over his Creator.

Jesus came to deliver us from this slavery. Man is a slave today to the power of money, to illegitimate sexual pleasure, to the opinions of others, and to many other things. He is not free. God created him to be like the eagle that flies high in the sky. But everywhere we find man in chains, unable to conquer his temper, unable to control his tongue, unable to control his lustful eyes. Jesus came, not just to die for our sins, but also to deliver us from this slavery.

I want to say to you, Santosh and Meghan, you can have a supremely happy marriage if you refuse to make the choice that Adam made, and if you will say to God, "Self will never be the centre of our lives, Lord. You alone will be the Centre. Everything in our lives will be centred in You."

The Bible says that God is Light and God is Love. God's Love is His Light. In a dark room, the power of light drives away the darkness. God's power is like that. Life without God's power, without His love, will only be darkness.

Our whole life on earth is a period of testing and probation, to prepare us for a kingdom in eternity, where everything will be ruled by the law of love. Every situation and circumstance that God takes us through now is therefore designed by Him to test us in one area - whether we will live by the law of love. And that is why God allows so many trials and difficulties in our lives. God is Almighty and He could have made life on earth such that we never had any trials at all. But God in His great wisdom has ordained trials as a means by which we learn to love. If we overcome our selfishness and determine that love alone will guide our life, God will be able to prepare us to be rulers in His coming kingdom. We have to think about that now, or else we will find in eternity that we missed the opportunities that God gave us on earth - and never learnt what we were supposed to learn.

So the choice you have to make in your marriage is this: Will you live by the law of love or by the law of selfishness? If God is the Centre of your life, His love will guide every single thing that you say and do.

## 2. Accept One Another - And Don't Wear Masks

The second thing I want to say is this: Accept one another and don't wear any masks.

Before sin came, "Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed". They were open and honest with each other and had nothing to hide. But as soon as they sinned, things changed. They covered themselves with fig leaves immediately. Why did they do that? There were no "peeping Toms" in that garden. And they were certainly not covering themselves from the animals. Why then did they need to cover themselves with fig leaves? They were covering themselves from each other.

One of the results of sin is that we hide from one another. All people hide the parts of their personality that they feel are ugly. They would be embarrassed if others knew those details about them. And so they wear masks. They put up a front, appearing to be relaxed, cool and happy, when all the while, they are miserable and defeated beneath the surface.

You must determine in your marriage to be yourself with each other - never wearing any masks. Let there be no pretence and no fig leaves.

Inside everyone is a desire to find someone who will love him even when the other person knows him fully. We wear masks because we have had bad experiences with other people. We know that people will not

accept us if they know everything about us. And so we put up a front before people, so that they will accept us. This is true among Christians too. When Jesus was on earth, He found many religious people wearing masks - and that was why He could not help them.

I want to urge you both to make a decision today - never to wear a mask, but to accept each other always just as you are. Santosh, will you accept Meghan when you see faults in her? Meghan, will you accept Santosh when you see faults in him?

The wonderful thing about God is that He accepts all of us just as we are. A religion that teaches that you've got to improve, before God accepts you, is a false religion. Jesus did not come with such a religion. He came with the message that God loves us just as we are. God knows that we cannot change ourselves. And so He receives us just as we are - and He changes us Himself. The Bible urges both of you, Santosh and Meghan, to "receive one another just as Christ received you."

I read an article some time ago that addressed this issue. I don't remember the author's name. The article said:

"All of us go through life playing a 'hiding game'. Because we are ashamed of what we are, we hide from each other. We wear masks so that others won't be able to see the real person living inside us. We look at each other through our masks and call that 'fellowship'. We give people the impression that we are secure and undisturbed, but that is only a mask. Underneath that mask we are confused, afraid and lonely. We fear lest others see through us. We are afraid that if they saw the real person inside, they would reject us and perhaps laugh at us - and their laugh would kill us. So we play the 'pretending game' - appearing to be confident and assured, but all the while trembling like a child within. Our whole life becomes a front. We talk and joke with others, telling them all the un-important things about ourselves and nothing about that which is really crying out within us."

"We long to be accepted, understood and loved by others. But we have found in experience, that whenever we expose our real selves to others, they reject us. We keep searching for someone who will accept us, even when they know everything about us. But we never find such a person. We hear of born-again Christians talking about love, and hope rises within our hearts that perhaps they might accept us. But when we join them, we discover very soon that they too are wearing masks. And they only find fault with us.

"What is the solution to this? We need to see ourselves accepted and loved by God just as we are. God is Love. To experience the love of God will make us bold. And we will no longer need to pretend. We will then be ourselves - with God as well as with man. The love of God will never force us to do anything. God recognizes all our imperfections and He still accepts us without condemning us. On the other hand, He wants to perfect us. To know that we have been accepted by God in spite of all that He sees in us and knows about us, is the root of a happy Christian life. This is the abundant life that Jesus came to give.

"Knowing the love of God will also bring a permanent end to our seeking for acceptance from man. We will be filled with confidence. Our guilt will be gone and our fears will be driven away. We may be alone sometimes, but never lonely, for God has promised never to leave us or forsake us."

There is something crying out within your marriage-partner - a longing to be accepted. And so it is important that you give a listening ear, not only to the words that your partner speaks, but also to the words that remain unspoken - to the silent words in the heart that are never spoken.

The great tragedy is that we don't believe that even God will accept us as we are. And so we hide from Him as well. That is what Adam and Eve did. They ran behind a tree to try and hide from God.

Many husbands and wives cannot love each other because they have not found the joy of being accepted by God, themselves. They have got religion but not Christ. One of the devil's masterpieces has been to give people an empty shell of a Christian religion without Christ - and that has made people miserable. Multitudes turn away from such a religion, which is not true Christianity. True Christianity is Christ Himself.

Every home where Jesus Christ is the Centre will be a peaceful home. It will be a home where husband and wife understand each other, where they accept one another because they are secure and confident in the fact that God has accepted them both. That is the type of home you must build.

Jesus loved you when you were ugly and ruined - not when you pleased Him, but when you were evil, not when you gave Him pleasure, but when you gave Him pain. God is now calling you to love your partner in the same way - freely, without looking for any grounds in your partner for your love.

As you live with each other, you will soon discover faults in each other that you don't see right now. And the thing that will help you to love each other then, will be the assurance that God accepted you in spite of all that He saw in you. God sees things in you today that you still can't see in yourself - and He still accepts you.

If you love each other like this, you will break down every prison-wall that each of you may be hiding behind. God's love in you is stronger than those walls and it will gently break them all down. And then both of you will become truly one.

And now let me read the concluding words of that article:

"Your kindness and gentleness and the fact that you care enough to try and understand your partner's feelings, will make your partner grow wings - small wings and feeble wings initially, but wings. And if you don't give up, those wings will grow, so that one day both of you will fly up into the sky as eagles - the way God intended you to."

### 3. Do Things Together - And You'll Overcome Satan

The third choice you must make is to do things together.

When Adam and Eve went into the garden, God sent them there together. But Satan came along and separated Eve and talked to her alone. Adam stood there and allowed his wife to make a fatal choice all by herself. He should have said, "Wait, darling. You remember what God told us. We are not supposed to eat from that tree". What a different story it would have been, if he had only said that.

It is when husband and wife begin to act independent of each other that many problems arise. You cannot confront Satan alone. Satan is looking for opportunities to mess up your life and your home. The home is the place where he attacked first - and that is where he attacks even today. As Jesus said, Satan comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. But if both of you stand together, you can overcome Satan.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says : "Two are better than one, for if one falls, the other can pull him up. One who stands alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three is even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken"

These verses are closely connected to an amazing promise in Matthew 18:18-20. Most husbands and wives are unable to claim this promise, because it requires that they be united with each other. I want to pass on this promise to both of you - because it has brought wonderful answers to prayer to Annie and me in the 38 years that we have been married.

It says here that if the two of you are united and agreed in your spirit, you can ask for anything, and your Father in Heaven will grant your request (verse 19), because Jesus Himself is in your midst (verse 20). The two of you (along with Jesus as the Third Person in your midst) can also bind Satan's activities and they will be bound (verse 18). The three of you will then be like a triple-braided cord that cannot be broken.

God can solve every problem in your life. You may come across numerous problems that man cannot solve. But there is no problem that God cannot solve. But both of you have to be united if God is to solve your problems. So do everything together.

Forgive one another as soon as you realize that you have hurt your partner. Don't wait. Ask for forgiveness immediately. Preserve your unity at any cost - no matter what else you may have to lose on this earth. Keep your unity, and then when you pray, you will get answers from God - quickly. And Satan will never be able to enter your home. That is God's promise.

Let me say one more thing in conclusion: Every thought, word and action in your marriage that was not done in love will be destroyed one day.

God's love in you will enable you to overcome every difficulty. It will open closed doors and break down walls. If you pursue after this love, yours will be the happiest marriage in the whole world.

It is not enough to choose the right person - you have done that already. Now you have to make the right choices, all through your married life

If you adopt this principle of love today, that will be finest start that you can make for your marriage. And if you continue along this way each day, you will prove to an ungodly generation that the love of God can overcome all things and will never fail. And God will be glorified in your life.

I pray that your home will be a great testimony for the Lord. I pray that these words will not be mere words that you have heard, but words that become flesh in your life, so that your home can be a light unto others.

The world is full of needy people. If God can work out something in your life and manifest His love through you, He will use you - mark my words - He will use you to help many needy homes in the world around you.

May God bless you both. Amen.

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