

Hebrews 13:4

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[0 : 00] Most folks have an opinion on marriage. When we got engaged a few years ago, a friend felt the compulsion to share with me his own views on the subject. And he said, David, the thing you need to know about marriage is that the first two years are difficult, but after that, it's impossible.

Well, I don't know how helpful that was or whether I agree with that particular opinion shared, I presume, in jest. Well, by hook or by crook, or more accurately by grace, we've clocked up 22 years and counting. Now, I know some of you have done a lot better than that, but I'm pretty pleased with 22 years and counting. The last couple of years in our own country have witnessed a significant debate in society at large on the subject of marriage. And in the midst of very disparate opinions, and that is not our concern this morning, there does seem to be a widely held consensus that marriage is a good thing. People almost seem to be tripping over each other to say how much in favor they are of marriage and how keen they are on celebrating marriage. Now, what people mean by marriage is, of course, a very different matter. But again, that's something we're leaving to one side today. But in the midst of many and varied opinions, what about God? Does God have an opinion on the subject? As the one who designed marriage, it's not surprising to discover that he does.

And this morning, I want us to consider one verse in the final chapter of the letter to the Hebrews that encapsulates in very brief compass, in very few words, fundamental truths concerning marriage as conceived and designed by God. We read in chapter 13 of Hebrews in verse 4, For marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. So there we have instruction in this matter on this subject of a marriage. And the verse, above all else, I would say, calls on us in clear and unequivocal terms to honor marriage. That is what we are to do. We are to honor marriage. Marriage should be honored by all. You are to honor marriage. God would have us all honor marriage. But what does that mean?

What does that look like? I think we can pose and answer four questions that will help us get our heads around this call to honor marriage. Let me suggest what the questions are, and then we can try and answer them in the light of what we find in this verse in particular. First of all, why honor marriage?

Why is that something that we should do? Another question that we'll deal with very fleetingly is, who is to honor marriage? Is this something that all need to do? Is it directed to any in particular?

[3 : 32] Who is to honor marriage? Then perhaps the fundamental matter is, how are we to honor marriage? Or certainly the matter that is dealt with very explicitly in the verse. The how, how we are to honor marriage. And then finally, and quite solemnly, what are the consequences of not honoring marriage?

So these are the questions that we hope we will find answers to in our text. First of all, then, why honor marriage? I want to direct your attention to three reasons in answer to the question, why honor marriage? One is in the verse, very clearly. The other two are to be found in a prior verse that I would argue introduces and underpins the call to honor marriage.