

The Design of Marriage

Today's topic is to answer the question: "Why marriage?" Why did God design marriage? Last week, we focused on the definition of marriage. Marriage is a divine institution. Marriage is a covenant. Marriage reveals deeper truths about God. Today, I have 2 big headings (truths). And I hope these truths will help us view marriage as God does, and serve as foundational as we live our lives.

1. Marriage is designed to display the glory of God. The glory of God is the goal of all things. It is God's purpose for himself. For there is no greater glory, no greater good, no greater purpose in the universe than to display the great glory of our God. In Is. 48:11 God says, "**My glory I will not give to another.**" It is the purpose of creation. As Ps. 19:1 says: "**The heavens declare the glory of God . . .**" Ps. 148:3-4: "**Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!**" In Isaiah's vision the Seraphim say to one another: "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!**" (Is. 63:3). As part of God's creation, it is also our purpose. This is why Paul says: "**So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**" (1 Cor. 10:31).

EVERYTHING is created with the purpose of displaying the glory (the greatness) of our God. When I look at a tree, I see strength, stability, life; and I praise God. When I see a beautiful sunset, I see beauty and peace and calmness; and I praise God. When I consider the hurricane, I see power and might; and I think of God. All of these things were created with this same purpose. So, when we come to marriage, there is no difference. God designed it to display his glory. This means that when we look at marriage, we also see certain things about marriage that display the glory of God. With this in mind, I have 2 particular designs that display the glory of God.

i. Marriage is how we fulfill God's command to fill the earth and exercise dominion. Look at Gen. 1:26-28: "Then God said, "**Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**" In these verses, God is speaking about Adam and Eve, the first marriage. Then in vv. 27-28: "**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**" They are commanded as husband and wife to have children (who have children, who have children, in their marriages) and spread the glorious image of God throughout the earth.

Brothers and sisters, what a beautiful truth. Creation, whether it be glorious mountains or grandeur trees, or the most creative animals of every species, displays God's glory. But, in a very special way, it is through the creation of man and woman, made in God's image, living together, having children, that the glory of God SPREADS throughout the earth. And this displays the glory of God in a DIFFERENT way, a way that ONLY man and woman in marriage can display! I think of the Psalmist who say: "**When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him,**

and the son of man that you care for him?” To simply think of mankind as God’s special creation is great in and of itself! But, to think God created marriage to be the special place given where we might live and thrive and spread his glory as we have children and move throughout the earth, is absolutely brilliant!

For the Christian, marriage is not simply for self-fulfillment and personal happiness; rather, it is an opportunity to glorify God with our lives as we continue the work he gave to Adam and Eve at creation. We fulfill this creation command as we have children and build our families under the Sovereign Lordship of God. I must ask, “Is this how you view marriage?” If not, you must. For this is God’s design! And when we view marriage in this way, we not only understand God’s design and how it displays his glory, WE are blessed.

ii. Marriage is a picture of the relationship between God and his people. I know this is repetitive from last week. But, it is so important! Out of all the things marriage is designed to do, it’s most clear design is to picture the great love of God for his people. In the OT, Israel is pictured as the “bride” of God (Jer. 3:6-10, 20; Ezek. 23; Hos. 1-2). However, in these passages, Israel is called out as “unfaithful,” “adulterous,” the one who “plays the harlot.” Nonetheless, God is the faithful husband. And the OT looks forward to a time when God will have compassion on his people; He will redeem his people and there will be a loving relationship. Is. 54:5-8 says, **“For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,”** says the LORD, your Redeemer.”

We see this fulfillment in the NT, the New Covenant, as Jesus is called the bridegroom. The Church is called his bride. Paul develops this picture further when he says to the Ephesians: **“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”** This is the great work of God in Christ as He came to lay down his life for his bride. This is pictured at the consummation when there will be a great feast called the **“Supper of the Lamb”** (Rev. 19:7-9). Brothers and sisters, no institution on earth pictures the great love of God, the plan of God from eternity, in the sending of the Son to accomplish the uniting of the church with himself.

2. Marriage is given for the good of humanity. Our catechism asks, *“Why does the Lord uphold, preserve, and govern all things in Heaven and Earth?” Answer: “God does all for his own glory, & for his peoples good.”* If our first heading concerning marriage is about the glory of God and what He does to bring glory to himself, our second heading fleshes this out in how marriage brings glory to God by ordering society and helping us. Marriage is given for our good! I have three truths. Marriage is given for our good because . . .

i. Marriage promotes the happiness of both husband and wife. I would like for us to consider three blessings of marriage, given by our wise and loving God. They are companionship, sexual relations, and children.

a. Companionship. It is interesting that in the beginning the focus is not sexual gratification or the need to produce children, but companionship. Gen. 2:18 says, “**Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’**” And, think about something very striking. Up until this time EVERYTHING was “good.” Now, the man being ALONE was “not good.” God created us to be social creatures. So, for the majority of us, it is “not good . . . to be alone.” Before the creation of the woman, there was NO ONE like Adam. But in his kindness, God provides Adam with the most beautiful wife; beautiful in every way. She was exactly who he needed. And, HE was exactly who she needed. In marriage, God provides a suitable person with whom we can live and go through the stages of life. (This is why, later on, Paul says that “singleness” is a “gift.” (for another topic another time.))

Adam, being alone, was INCOMPLETE without Eve, and vice versa. As popcorn is not complete without salt, so is man and woman incomplete without a companion. Quick application: This companionship is in the context of marriage. We have friends which are also God’s gifted companions. But, our first and best companion are our spouses. This companionship is captured in Gen. 2:24 which says, “**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**” I really believe God’s design for the husband and the wife is to be lifelong best friends. Eccl. 4:9-12 says: “**Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.**” (As I write this point, I am listing to a song: It goes” “Life is better with you.” “Some days are better than other days, but life is better with you.”)

As we think about marriage and companionship, I think of Christ, who is the ultimate companion to his people. In John 15:15 Jesus says: “**No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.**” Jesus walks through this life with us. He is our example in this regard. Husbands, what kind of a companion are you to your wife. Wives, what kind of companion are you to your husband?

b. Sexual Relations. In addition to companionship, God has given marriage for relations between husband and wife. From the beginning, this has been so. Gen. 2:24 says the “**two shall become one flesh.**” In our culture, the wedding ring is the outward sign of the marriage covenant. However, according to Scripture, this “physical” union is the sign. I won’t say much here with our audience. But, coming together physically is meant to be a picture of the oneness of life and relational intimacy enjoyed in the life-long marital relationship. This is another good gift from God to mankind IN THE context of MARRIAGE between a man and a woman. Every other expression is against God’s will and is a perversion of his wonderful design.

c. Children. In Gen. 1:28 God says: “**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth . . .**” How beautiful the gift of children! Procreation ensures the continuation of mankind on this earth. Ps. 127:3-5 says, “**Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.**” Some of the happiest times, memories, blessings, etc. are found in the life of our home with our children. And even when they move out, they are still our children. What a blessing!

ii. Marriage promotes the holiness of both husband and wife. Not only is our goodness and happiness bound up in marriage, so is our holiness. Let me ask, “*What is God’s will for your life?*” That’s a big question I know and there are lots of answers we can give. But, 1 Thess. 4:3 answers it this way: “**For this is the will of God, your sanctification . . .**” This follows the words of 1 Pet. 1:15-16: “**but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy . . .**” And, do you remember the words of Eph. 5? In the context of marriage Paul emphasizes this truth by saying: “**that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**”

Brothers and sisters, the best environment for your holiness is marriage. If you are married, this is the place you are “**being conformed into the image of Christ**” (Rom. 8:29). Now, there are often trials. And, marriage is very difficult in many regards. As we live with one another in close quarters, our weaknesses and faults are exposed. When you scream in anger, everyone knows your heart. When you go behind the back of your spouse to spend money on something you should not, and then are later found out, what a mess! When you break all of your spouses “pet peeves” in one day, how does it feel. When your habits, the ones you know are the most sinful and difficult, come to the forefront, oh, how you are exposed before God and your spouse. When the sins of your spouse . . . or the sins of your spouse’s family, are before your face, **STILL**, marriage is the place where your godliness and your sanctification are best nurtured and also displayed.

Brothers and sisters, I never knew how selfish I was, what a **SINNER** I am, until I got married! The reason marriage is so difficult is because I am a sinner! And, I married a sinner! And if I do not learn to live in this context, I will quickly sink and fall. And divorce may certainly follow, though the end of that scenario may be even more devastating. Brothers and sisters, marriage is given to us so that we may learn godliness. My first verse to mind is this one: “**Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you**” (Eph. 4:32). Through marriage, we learn to quickly confess our sins to God and to those we hurt. Through marriage, we learn to reflect the grace and mercy of God shown to us/me! (This is why non-Christians have such a hard time. There is no heart that understands the principles found in the gospel.) Marriage also teaches us to patiently overlook our spouse’s weaknesses and learn to please others instead of ourselves (Rom. 15:1-2). Marriage is the place where we really work out the “one another verses in Scripture.

iii. Marriage benefits the community. Families are the building blocks of society, even forming the basis of social institutions and even government. When marriage between a man and a woman, along with the blessings that follow, especially children, go well, society and culture at large, reflects the glory of God. And it is good! As the holiness of marriages go, so goes culture and society. And when we are good, and grow in holiness, how good is society? The answer to this question is not hard. I don't know of non-Christians who disagree with this one.

Application: God is glorified when husbands and wives do in our hearts, and in our actions, what we are designed to do. God designed marriage for his glory. God designed marriage for our good.