

Adam meet Eve, you made for each other! Genesis 2:8-25, Mark 10:2-9



Adam was walking around the garden of Eden, moping. God asked him, "What is wrong with you?" Adam replied that he was lonely and didn't have anyone to talk to.

So God said that He was going to make Adam a companion and that it would be a woman. He said, "This person will gather food for you, cook for you, and when you discover clothing, she will wash it for you. She will always agree with every decision you make. She will bear your children and never ask you to get up in the middle of the night to take care of them. She will not nag you and will always be the first to admit she was wrong when you've had a disagreement. She will never have a headache and will freely give you love and passion whenever you need it.

Adam asked God, "What will this woman cost?"

God replied, "An arm and a leg."

Adam thought a moment and asked, "What can I get for a rib?"

In just a few weeks we will be celebrating that timeless Christmas tradition of attempting to assemble all the new toys, programming that smart t.v. or phone, and getting that new computer onto the internet. The only hope that anyone has in any of these processes is in our ability to follow the all-important instruction sheet; especially if it is written in clear English rather than the current trend of just using illustrative pictures.

Clear instructions are really important aren't they? We use recipes to make delicious meals, manuals to install computer software, and prescriptions to take our medicine. Without such instructions, we would have a real tough time in life. So doesn't it make sense that clear instructions would be equally important when it comes to something as serious as marriage, and raising a family? There are such instructions you know. They are found your Bible.

Indeed, the very first instructions for establishing marriage as a basis of the family are so important that they were placed right in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis.

Did you realize that the very next thing that God created after completing our world was the institution of marriage between a man and a woman as the means by which He intended us humans to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and have dominion over it.

In fact marriage is so important to God's plan for our world that is also the very first command given in our Bible; right here in chapter two as well.

Now before going further, I realize that in today's toxic culture which is open rebellion against any form of outside authority over the individual's life, talking about a God given guide for marriage can be a "third rail" kind of topic. I also realize that most of you reading or hearing this message are largely past the family raising portion of your life and already bear the scars and regrets of having struggled to make a successful marriage and raise a healthy family in a fallen world that has both overtly and covertly warred against such.

And yet at the start of this series I said that I would share with you all of the stories and lessons coming from the Bible (more than what you learned in Sunday School). I also realize that we do still have young people in this congregation who need to hear and take these instructions to heart. So let us give to each other grace for our failures and a humble heart willing to still listen and be guided by our Bible's teachings, as together we look at God's original design and purpose for marriage as it was expressed in the story of Adam and Eve.

What then is the purpose of marriage as it is defined by our Bibles?

God's purpose of marriage (between a man and woman)

1. To provide the intimacy and companionship for which we were designed
2. As the means by which we are to be fruitful and multiply
3. As the vehicle by which to care for and train the next generation

To provide us with the intimacy and companionship for which we were designed.

1. As the means by which we were intended as a mutually supportive couple to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion over the earth.
2. And as the best vehicle through which to both care for and train the next generation in our God given responsibilities (cf: Col 3:18-19, Ephesians 5:21-25, 6:1-4)

So let's begin by remembering that the first Genesis story tells us that God made male and female simultaneously, both in his image, and that He blessed them BOTH – as a couple – to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion over the rest of creation. Thus originally establishing the equality of men and women before God and also God's intention that as a married couple we were to fulfill His purpose for the human race.

So why then does this second story change the script having God first create Adam, and sending him through an instructional course showing his need for a "helper/ partner," before then surgically reproducing that partner out of one of his ribs?

Good question. The answer is that while I again affirm my belief that there actually was such a couple as Adam and Eve – the existence of which scientists much to their own chagrin have now confirmed – I also believe that this story of Adam and Eve was meant to be more allegorical than factual in its intention to teach us some very important lessons about our own need to be joined together in a faithful marriage.

That first reason for marriage being that neither men nor women were intended to tackle life alone. As a reflection of God's image in us, we were designed to live and work together in singular, lifelong, mutually supportive, relationship (a marriage) between a man and a woman.

God has always lived in a mutually supportive relationship (Father, Son, Spirit communing and working together as one). So God when designed us humans - made in His own image – it was to live in a similar dedicated relationship. Without cooperation and mutual support between men and women there would be no way for humanity to "be fruitful and multiply." That is why in the first creation story God gave His blessing and charge not to either individual but rather to the pair (male and female together): to *be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion*.

But the creation of the world was a long time ago, and now in the times in which these stories of Genesis are being written the world had already long been corrupted by the fall. **Men and women already had a long history of treating what should have been each other's complimentary qualities rather as competitive differences.** And while women, as distinct from men, possess many unique complimentary abilities such as a nurturing nature, greater pain tolerance, and the ability to both assemble, birth, and feed a baby right from their own bodies (*It is said that if men had to bear the children, we would*

all grow up in single child families ☺), Yet in a competitive situation all these female qualities are trumped by men's physical strength and domineering nature. So beginning with Adam's fall and all of history thereafter – as predicted at the conclusion of the story of Eve and the serpent – men have dominated the relationship and subjugated women to second class citizenship or even worse treated them only like property.

To the woman [God] said,
'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
**yet your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you.'**
Genesis 3:16

Commentators point out that this latter statement is often misread as God mandating man's headship over women rather than God's description of one of the results of the fall: that what had been intended as a *helper/partner* relationship would now become more like master and slave.

I saw this fallen attitude towards women clearly illustrated among rural Ethiopians. The Christian School where I was teaching had hired a contractor to construct a new building. Since the concrete for the foundation was both expensive and had to be mixed on site, as many rocks as possible were first placed in the foundation to take up space so that less concrete would be needed. For this task a workforce of four women were hired to carry in huge boulders which they then broke up with sledgehammers and fitted into the foundation; over which they then mixed and poured the concrete. Asking why the contractor used women rather than men for this arduous task, I was informed that legally he only had to pay each woman half as much as he would have to pay a man. Since Ethiopian women can and were expected to work as hard as a man, with women he got the same amount of work at half the cost.

Similarly in Ethiopian culture, women are the ones expected to carry the heavy burdens of produce – usually on their backs – to town to sell; while men often walked along with nothing more than a stick or ceremonial spear in hand. When Christian missionaries encouraged husbands to share the load with their wives, they were told that the men would lose face by doing so. The best alternative that the missionaries came up with was to design a large basket that husband and wife would have to carry together.

This domineering relationship was never meant to be. Thus the idea of a Godly marriage as taught in the Bible, is to restore that helper/partner relationship as it first existed, with husband and wife mutually supporting each other (cf: Ephesians 5:21-33).

But the Hebrew people coming out of Egyptian slavery did not know of this original godly way of relating to the opposite sex; men did not know that they needed women for other than menial chores and personal pleasure. So the second creation story sets out to re-educate these former slaves of a better way to live in relationship with their spouses.

The story of Adam naming the animals and not finding his own partner, then having the woman created out of his very side was God's way of teaching Hebrew couples that the right way they were meant to live together was in a lifelong mutually supportive relationship.

Then the man said,
'This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.'

Genesis 2:23

As Biblical commentator Matthew Henry pointed out...

"The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved." (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible)

And the very first command then given in our Bible is ...

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother
and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.
And the man and his wife were both naked,
and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2.24-25

That two people become "one flesh" – is a description of the spiritually singular quality of a true marriage. There would no longer be two individuals trying to figure out "who does what" but one singular, spiritually united, person living

together in a mutually supportive relationship by which together a man and a woman could be fruitful and multiply.

Also, that Adam and Eve were at first naked and unashamed described more than their physical dress but also their spiritual openness, in which they had nothing to hide from each other. This continues to be how a healthy marriage should work: completely open, guilt free, and with nothing to hide, as opposed to the many unhealthy, never-quite-real marriages that we can see all around us.

We humans were designed to live in relationship. Thus a good marriage reflects that mutually interdependent nature of God's image which He designed into us (it is not good for either man or woman to live alone). Also, a good marriage can help to recreate for the benefit of the couple a bit of that original, un-fallen, God blessed garden life where we were always intended to live. That is why a Christian marriage is considered sacred to God and based on life-long vows of mutual faithfulness

This is why in his rebuttal of the Pharisees casual attitude, Jesus branded any remarriage following a divorce as an act of "adultery," which literally means to add an impurity to that which was intended to be pure. We humans were designed to leave and cleave and become one before God; any violation of which brings impurity into that sacred relationship thus adulterating it; making it less than pure, less of a reflection of God's image in us.

But also notice the disciples' dismayed response to Jesus' strict interpretation of marriage. They asked him, "*why then should anyone bother getting married at all?*" To which Jesus replied that only a few people have been given the "gift" of living a celibate life; for the rest of us, marriage was the designed and expected God honoring norm for all humans (cf: Matthew 3:10-11).

This brings up the second obvious point about marriage, which is currently so strongly denied by our rebellious culture, that **humans were both physically and mentally designed to live together only as a man and a woman in that mutually supportive helper/partner relationship of marriage.** Because only as they have been joined together for life are a man and a woman fully equipped to make and nurture to maturity another human life in fulfillment of God's charge to be fruitful, multiply.

Neither men married to men nor women married to women can naturally create another human life. Nor can two of the same sex fulfill the mentally

complimentary helper/partner relationship for which men and women were designed.

Thus both the Hebrew people and the followers of Christ have been taught that polygamy, rape, fornication, adultery or any other sexual act carried on outside of a marriage would be a violation of that sacred bond intended to join a man and woman together as "one flesh" for life.

And that all other attempts at sexual or marital pairing, other than between a man and a woman, such as incest, homosexuality, or bestiality, would be an abomination of God's design for humanity.

In the Hebrew nation, most acts of sexual immorality resulted in capital punishment; with the death of all offending parties. And the Hebrew people were also specifically warned that it was because of such abominable acts that God was driving the other nations out of the land which He now was giving to them. And should they follow the immoral lead of those other nations, they too would be driven out.(cf: Leviticus 18).

Capital punishment and exile for sexual immorality seem awfully harsh punishments by our modern standards. But realize that with the Hebrew people God was attempting to build a holy nation in the midst of a badly corrupted world where women were treated as little more than property and rather than being cherished, children were offered as sacrifices to idols.

Which brings up the third reason for marriage. Because multiplying and having dominion over the earth requires marriages that not only produce children but also raises them to maturity while training them to carry on humanity's God given responsibilities.

Sadly, because of the fallen and broken nature of human culture many children have had to grow up in single parent homes, grandparent homes, foster or adoptive homes, or other less than optimal arrangements, but **there is no escaping the fact that a faithful marriage between a man and a woman provides the best home for raising and training children for responsible adulthood .**

Following the second giving of God's Ten Commandments, Moses summarized those commands into a singular command which continues to be daily recited by all those who retain their Hebrew faith.

Moses said...

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
Love the LORD your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your strength.
DT 6:4-5

These commandments are to be upon your hearts.
Impress them on your children.
Talk about them when you sit at home
and when you walk along the road,
when you lie down and when you get up.
Deuteronomy 6:6-7

God has given parents the main responsibility of teaching their children about Him. Unfortunately too many parents today are failing to accept this responsibility and have abdicated it to the church. Certainly the church needs to be involved in the spiritual education of our children, but Christian faith best first begins and is reinforced in the home.

Also only in a home where a man and a woman are living together in a faithful marriage can children learn what it is to be a godly man and a godly woman. Children grow up to live out what they have learned. Without the experience of living in a Christian home how can they learn to be a Christian adult and make a Christian home of their own? How can a boy learn to become a godly man without watching the godly example of his father? Where can a girl learn to be a godly woman without the aid of her mother (cf: Ephesians 6:1-4)

God intended the home to be a training ground for children, so that they may grow to love God and live for Him. But God's plan is not being lived in many homes today.

A growing number of sociologists and historians are telling us that the traditional home in America is on the endangered species list. And I believe that the majority of the social ills facing our country today actually began in homes that have failed in the task of raising their children to responsible adulthood.

Today, only 68% of all families with children under age 18, are led by a married couple (compared to 93% percent in 1950). Of the 32% of single parent families, 3/4^{ths} are single mother homes and 1/4th are single father homes.

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2016/cb16-192.html>

More than 8 million opposite-sex couples now live together without being married. Half of those couples will never get married and about 38 percent of those unmarried couples have a child under age 18 living with them.

Gay and lesbian couples are now raising four percent of all adopted children in the United States. <https://www.lifelongadoptions.com/lgbt-adoption/lgbt-adoption-statistics>

Regardless of media claims to the otherwise, research has shown that children develop best in a home with a mother and father present. Those children raised in single-parent, gay, or other alternative home styles show much higher rates of emotional and intellectual maladjustment.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4771005/>

We are on the verge of a society where a significant portion of young people will not know the family structure of a married father and mother. If their childhood is to be their training ground, in essence what we are doing is training our children to live failed marriages in failed family structures with no relationship with God and no understanding of the real purpose for their lives.

These are warning signs of the future of our society. Mothers, Fathers, our children are watching you. With few exceptions, they will live what they learn.

This inscription was taken from the tomb of a Bishop in Westminster Abbey (who died around 1100 A.D.):

When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits I dreamed of changing the world.

As I grew older and wiser and realized the world would not change I shortened my sights somewhat and decided to change only my country: but it too seemed immovable.

As I grew into my twilight years I settled on changing only my family and those closest to me, but alas they would have none of it.

Now as I lay on my deathbed I suddenly realize that if I had only changed myself first, then by example I could perhaps have changed my family, and from their inspiration and encouragement to me I would have been better able to help my country and from there I may even have been able to change the world.

That my friends is why God designed us male and female with the original intention that we find our fullest human expression in marriage.

- In order that we might provide each other the mutual faithful support and companionship that we instinctively crave.
- As the vehicle by which we can be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and have dominion over it.
- And as the best way to provide a secure God honoring home in which to raise the next generation.

Let's pray about all this and decide now how better to be involved in our children's life for the sake of theirs and our own country's future.