

## ***WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF MARRIAGE, GENESIS 2:18-24***

series

◆Intro: I was all set to preach today about using your gifts for God, one of our biblical purposes, since we are holding our Ministry Fair today. The ministry fair is your chance to stroll around the gym observing all the various ministries going on here in Sunrise to see where God might be calling you to lend your efforts, give your resources, skills, and time. It was to be kind of the perfect wrap up to our series on the Treasure Principle. But I feel compelled to speak about something else. I hope you will stay to walk the Ministry Fair. I hope you will pray to God as you do, offering him your service and asking for his leading.

◆But today is the day after Valentines Day, on which our society goes a little nuts with the chocolate, and the dinners out, and the red hearts everywhere. We celebrate romantic love, which naturally leads to ... marriage, and families, and homes, and cultures. And as long as there has been recorded history, and even before that, every known culture on the face of the earth has recognized marriage, the exclusive union of a man and a woman, as foundational to everything else. Until our day. Now 1.6% of our population has succeeded in convincing nearly half of our population that any two people that want to be intimate friends are just as foundational to human life and culture. That any two men, or any two women, or for that matter, any potential number of them –constitute a viable option for raising healthy individuals who in turn will create a healthy country. This, in spite of the overwhelming data that says children do best in a home with their own father and mother.

◆Last week Oregon couple and bakery business owners Aaron and Melissa Klein were were found guilty of violating state law for politely

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declining an order for a same-sex “wedding” cake. Now they face fines of up to \$200,000.

◆When put to the vote of the people, 33 states have defined marriage as between one man and one woman. In 2006, for example, more than 80% of the state voted to keep marriage between a man and a woman. Two weeks ago a federal judge overturned the will of the people all by himself! Of 37 states that allow same-sex marriage, 33 of them are forced to by courts against the voted decision of the people in that state! I would call that a crisis.

◆In addition, it’s also National Marriage Week. And people are therefore much aware of the declining health of the marriage institution in our country. The NY Times pointed out that in 1960 seventy-two percent of the population was married. Today, only half of the population make a public, legal commitment. Needless to say, all is not at rest when it comes to marriage. And so I invite us to look again at the word of God on this topic, on this Valentines Day weekend to review his wisdom on the issue.

### **◆1. God’s designed marriage to produce human intimacy.**

◆The text shows the woman being “brought to the man” (22) much as a father of the bride brings her down the aisle to the groom. We should note that Adam’s lack of a companion is the first thing in the creation account termed “not good.” Day after day in the opening account we read that God “created...” and “it was good”. Six times! “God created...” and “its was good.” Then suddenly in verse 18 we get the first “not good” of the created world in the Bible: that Adam was alone. Man is made in the image of God, and God is a relational being. The New Testament says “God is love.”

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Love is the expression of relation and care for another. Therefore we image God best when we love, when we are in relationship, as hosts of God's commands in Scripture remind us. It's in our nature to be a relational being, which also explains why solitary confinement is clearly a form of torture. God has built into human kind a need for each other, for love and relationship that produces a stable being. But though we need and long for relationship, our distortions of God's design keep us from our real goal.

◆ Some years ago in a popular newspaper column entitled "Dear Abby", the following appeared:

◆ "Dear Abby, I just married my fourth husband. It is my husbands fourth marriage too. He married number one at age 22. Five years into it he fell for number 2 and divorced number one. That ended 7 years later when he fell in love with number 3. That lasted until he met me. He cheated on number 3 with me until he divorced her. Now that we are married I am very nervous! I can't trust him. When he's out of town I wonder if he's with another woman. We used to pull this on number 3 so we could be together. When he calls me, he tells me he loves me, but I remember him doing that to his third wife while holding me in his arms. I want this marriage to last! How can I be sure he's not cheating on me? Signed "Insecure."

◆ Dear Insecure, You can't. This is the price you are paying for the moments you stole from number 3. Penalty for being a cheater is being unable to trust anyone. You have my sympathy."

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◆ Do you feel that woman's misery? Despite four marriages she, and probably he, is very much alone, the very thing that marriage was designed to overcome. The design is not the problem. The design of marriage was meant to satisfy our deepest needs of love and community. But it only works when we follow the design. This is why cheating, casual sex, easy divorce, redefinition of marriage, –all the things our media and TV suggest are normal options – fail us and leave us “not good” and alone.

◆ B. While we're talking about intimacy, what about the design for sexual intimacy?

◆ In case you are not aware, or have forgotten, or have gotten used to believing the seductions throw in your path pretty much daily, God is quite clear on the place of sexual intimacy: only in the context of committed, biblical marriage between a man and a woman. That means that sexual intimacy before you are married is not approved by God or in your best interest. That sexual intimacy with someone beside your marriage partner is not approved by God or therefor in your best interest. That homosexual intimacy is not approved by God or in your best interest. That abuse of sons or daughters is an affront to God's holiness and the well-being of people.

◆ Parents in lamentation and understandable pain for their children fall into deluded reasoning based on desires. For example, “I want my gay son to experience the pleasure of marriage, so I'm OK with him marrying a man.” But if we all use that reasoning, we may also say, “I want my poor son to experience the ownership of a BMW, therefore I'm OK with him stealing one.” Neither marriage, nor any other moral

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direction is determined by the desire of man. We cannot reason on the basis of what we feel drawn toward. Everyone of us feels drawn toward things that God has said is off limits. We are foolish to rationalize based on our urges regardless of whether we were “born that way”, to quote the infamous Lady Gaga. Morality is a God-given reality.

◆ I’ve been asked if we marry same-sex couple here at Sunrise. I answer “not anymore than I would condone you cheating on your taxes, or beating your children. I would however, welcome the greedy, the violent, and the person struggling with same-sex attraction to come to church and seek God’s forgiveness and power to change along with the rest of us sinners as each of us resist our temptations to sin in favor of obeying God’s directives.

◆ God designed marriage to teach humankind the importance of love.

◆ **2. God designed marriage as a union of a equally valuable man to an equally valuable woman.**

◆ For the past thousands of years when you heard a speech or a sermon on marriage, this point didn’t really have to be made. All through human history it has been taken as an obvious given, until our time. In Genesis two, the woman is contrasted with the animals who were also brought before Adam, and in his naming of them he observes the clear creational pattern of male and female. Adam observes varying species that reproduce after their kind, and he assigns names to them. There is no carrying on of species without both genders. Turtles don’t fall in the same category as jack rabbits. Falcons don’t mate and produce falcons with puppies. To

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produce offspring and thus also to fulfill God's creative design to "fill the earth", as we read in Chapter one, there are two necessary parts. All of science points to this, and it serves to help Adam realize that he doesn't have a corresponding mate.

◆ *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.""* Genesis 1:27, 28, NIV.

◆ The naming of the animals reflects mankind's superior place and role in creation as reflected in the mandate in the verse above. There is something even beyond the male-female design in the animal kingdom. Whereas all the animals are said to be formed from the dust of the ground, and whereas even Adam is formed from the dust of the ground, Eve is fashioned from Adam! She is explicitly his counterpart. So much of the text makes this clear.

◆ *v18 "I will make a helper suitable"*. This is literally a "helper facing him." A corresponding person. The term "helper" highlights the incompleteness of Adam alone.

◆ *v23 "She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man."* The English helps us see the correspondence even in the words *man* and *woman*. (Some have hypothesized that when God brought Eve to Adam and he saw her standing there in her birthday suit, he exclaimed, "Whoo, Man!" And the term stuck. We know that's not true.

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The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. However even Hebrew carries the same corresponding nature of the two genders (יֵשׁ, יֵשׁוּהָ). Man is “ish.” Woman is “ishsha”. So some have speculated therefore that when God made man he said “Yish, I can do better.” And so he made woman and said “Aahh! That’s what I’m talking about. And so we have Ish and Ish-ah. That’s probably not factual either!) :-)

◆ v24 *“they will become one flesh”*. This phrase is indicative of both the marriage union relationally, as well as physically as any reader of the Bible will discover. For example, Paul quotes this text in his letter to the Corinthian church.

◆ *“Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:16-20, NIV.*

◆ Paul clearly labels the sex act as a “one flesh” union of bodies, though for Paul and the rest of scripture, sex is always more than a physical act. In a human we cannot divide the

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spiritual from the physical, hence the great and complicated emotional struggles for those living sexually loose lives.

◆ The point is clear in this most ancient account of marriage: that marriage is a union in which a man is completed and joined both spiritually and physically by a woman. What God made to complete the man was a woman, not another man. There's more.

◆ B. The Bible elevates the value of women beyond most cultures. The Bible sees the woman as a fully necessary part of bearing the image of God along with the man. Adam was not the whole image without the woman. This should greatly affect your view of your wife, gentlemen. Already in the fifth Century, St. Augustine pointed out that if women were intended to rule man, she would have been fashioned from his head. If she were intended to be his slave, she would have been fashioned from his foot. But God fashioned her from his side to show that she was his equal partner. If God has blessed you with and called you to share life with a spouse you have been given one of the deepest, most mysterious gifts possible. Do not take it lightly. Husbands and wives would be wise to spend less time trying to make their partners view the world as they do, and more time learning from and live with each other's god-given differences.

◆ A man has five items in his bathroom: a toothbrush, shaving cream, razor, a bar of soap, and a towel from the Marriott. --The average number of items in the typical woman's bathroom is 337. A man would not be able to identify most of these items.

◆ A woman knows all about her children. She knows about dentist appointments and romances, best friends, favorite foods, secret fears



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and hopes and dreams. --A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.

◆ So there is a certain beauty in the difference between men and women. **(show jpeg of knobs here).**

◆ So what does this mean? At least this: that God designed marriage between the two genders to cause each of us to become more than we can be alone. The “it was good” of Genesis 1 requires both.

◆ **3. God designed marriage to be the permanent foundation of human society.**

◆ Marriages are how God makes the next generation. Marriages are the building block, the first formation of society. Marriage is step number one of cultural trust, where one person says to another, “I am committed to you no matter what, for better or worse. I will die before I stop being “for” you.” This permanence is reflected in the “leaving” and “uniting” of verse 24. Now you probably know that ancient males did not leave their families. The girls did! Still, the concept was clear. There was a new home. A new entity.

◆ One counselor said that a majority of marriage problems stem from those who have not left their homes to make a new one. They still confide in parents first. They still seek solutions in their families who will side with them, instead of seeking mutual adaptation between each other.

◆ The old translations use the terms “leave” and “cleave” which makes it easy to remember. But what exactly is “cleaving”, or as the NIV puts it, to “be united”. The term is literally an adhering, a glueing. It’s the image of an adhesive bond that is stronger than the original

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surface such that if you tried to separate the parts neither surface would ever really be the same. That's how permanent, lasting, and foundational the sacred institution of marriage is meant to be.

◆ Let's think about that bonding. People sometimes marvel at the power of attraction between genders. Even married couples report, particularly men, how when an enticingly clad, beautiful woman speaks to them they have may no conscious idea later what she said. Not a clue. And you may wonder, even demand of God why if he wants us to be sexually pure in thought and practice, he would go and plant such boiling dynamic urges within our bodies. It seems a contradiction, or at the very least, a spiritual taunting. I'm going to tell you why. Are you ready for this? Do you want to know why God allows this insanely powerful thing we call sexual attraction that you might find spontaneously aimed at any given attractive person? Hear him whisper, "Because that's how strong I want real marriage commitments to be!" That is how powerfully bonded he wants a husband to cleave to his wife, and how committed he wants a wife to be to her husband. Where marriage breaks down, all of culture breaks down. Where people are NOT casual about commitment there is trust, security, and constant hope.

◆ **Conclusion:** Learn to recognize truth and lies, friends. While a 2013 Gallup Poll shows that 95% say they want to be married, rather than marrying, cohabitation has increased from half a million to 7.5 million since 1960 according to American census data. Huge numbers of people today are choosing to live together first, in hopes of surety and lasting

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relationships when in fact, not only God's word, but also the social sciences all prove the opposite is true: those couples cohabiting before marriage are twice as likely to break up! And why? Because it is training yourselves to be uncommitted! Training ourselves not to make a choice. God has a better way, friends, not only for your individual happiness, but also the hope of a country. Marriage is God's sacred gift to the very basis of human culture.

◆ Now does that make singleness secondary? Hardly! Jesus was single. The apostle Paul advocated it. It does however restrict your sexual activity. And though we endure the pain of broken marriage bonds, Christ in his mercy will make good out of our struggles as we give them over to him. But what we've been looking at today means most is that we as individuals are wise to fiercely keep our vows, for better, and for worse, to accept the labor of love along with the thrills and joys, for it blesses not only us, but the whole of society as well.