

God's Design for Sex - Marriage

Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-24

Pastor Greg Cook

Introduction

We may have some people who were not here last Sunday to hear what the theme is for our annual Family Enrichment Conference. The theme is a Biblical View of Sexuality. We have chosen this theme with three aims in view:

- To call for Biblical purity and the holy practice of marriage oneness. We are shooting for understanding God's purposes, His precepts, and the practice of marriage oneness as He has outlined in His Word.
- To shape our thinking by a Biblical Theology of sexuality. We want to use the entire Bible looking through the lens of Christ and His Cross as we understand the truth and apply it in the context of being a community of New Covenant believers here at the Chapel.
- To counter the world's influence in the areas of sexuality and sensuality. We are going to both affirm what we believe to be the truth of God in these areas as well as deny what we believe to be the lies of this world in these areas.

I would also like to put before you the messages for this Conference.

		Title	Text
January 4	AM	God's Dedication of Sex – Purity	Heb 13:4; 1 Thess. 4:1-8
	PM	Biblical Context for Sex – Relationship	Various
January 11	AM	God's Design for Sex – Marriage	Genesis 1:27;2:18
	PM	Biblical Consecration of Sex – Waiting	Song of Solomon
January 18	AM	God's Direction for Sex – Joy	1 Cor 7; Prov 5:15-20
	PM	Biblical Commendation of Sex – Wonder	Song of Solomon
January 25	AM	God's Correction of Sex -- Immorality	Various
	PM	Open Forum	Greg and Russ

I don't know how your flock discussions went last Wednesday, but I think that I would like to propose a different approach for the Open Forum this time. There is normally a reticence to talk about this subject in public. It is bad enough to ask questions publicly on any topic, much less this one. So I would like to encourage you to send your questions by e-mail to Russ or me here at the Chapel. The addresses are on the back of your bulletin. Or you can write out your questions on cards if that is more convenient and place them in our mailboxes. Please don't hesitate to ask your questions. The only dumb question is the one that wasn't asked.

Those who have been in the Sunday morning Adult Bible Study hour at 9:15 have been studying what is called Biblical Theology. Last quarter, the book that was used was *According to Plan, The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* by Graeme Goldsworthy. The main teaching of that series was that God has had a plan for everything from the very beginning that finds its ultimate completion in Christ. God has been working out that plan and will continue to do so until it is ultimately completed. We also learned that there are themes that run throughout the Scriptures that are major parts of His plan. One of those themes is salvation by faith alone. Today we are going to look at another of those major themes – marriage.

After this morning, I hope that you will look at marriage differently than you ever have before. As I have prepared for this message, it has been both an awe-inspiring study as well as a delight to see the Great Creator bring about His purposes and what that ultimately means for his us, His bride.

Let's ask Him to give us discernment, insight, and understanding as we gaze into His marvelous plan. <Pray>.

Everything that has been made is designed for a purpose. Many of you ladies are Pampered Chef enthusiasts. My wife is one of you. However, I want you to know that the fancy ice cream scoop, (you know, the one that has the secret inside chamber that makes dipping rock hard ice cream child's play) can also double as a small hammer. Let me tell you how I know that to be true.

The kids had given us, as an anniversary gift, an 11X14 picture frame for each of them that contained one of their baby pictures, one of their first baby outfits, and a current picture. There were four of these framed memories. In addition, there was an 11X14 portrait of all four of them.

Bec had been asking me for several weeks to help her get them hung on the wall. Well, you know how it goes – it just wasn't a priority at the time. So on that fateful evening, I came home to all 5 pictures hung on the living room wall. It looked pretty good. I asked Bec how she had hung the pictures. She said with little nails. And I asked her where she found the hammer, knowing that it was in my toolbox. She pointed to the Pampered Chef ice cream scoop still lying on the coffee table. She said that it didn't work too badly as a hammer.

The point of this story is that everything is designed for a purpose. You can use an ice cream scoop as a hammer, but only if the nails are very small and the wall is very soft. And I am very sure that the engineers who designed that ice cream scoop did not have a substitute hammer as one of its purposes. If we, as mere humans, have as our goal to design things according to a purpose, what must it be like for the Creator

of the universe in His designing of every atom in the universe. Each atom has been designed and created for His purpose.

God has designed men and women not only to bring Him glory, but also for their union and communion together as husband and wife. We must be clear about God's design for marriage or we will misuse intimacy in our marriages.

So let's begin by going back to the very beginning – Genesis 1.

God's Design of Man

Genesis 1:26-28

As we learned last quarter in the Adult class and are continuing to learn in this quarter, Moses had a purpose in writing the book of Genesis. This first book of the Bible begins with revealing God's plan and place for man. The account here is a creation week summary that is unpacked in more detail in Genesis 2.

In His Purpose

(v.26)

As part of God's design, His purpose for creating mankind was for man to establish governance over all of God's creation. Man was created in God's image in order to rule and care for all that God had created.

In His Pattern

(v.27)

As part of God's design, His pattern was that both male and female were created as equal image bearers while their gender affected the whole person. In God's sight, both genders are equal. But each gender has its own unique role whereby that person fulfills God's purpose for them.

God's Creation of Man

Genesis 2:1-17

When we turn to the second chapter of Genesis, we now get more of the details of God's design. I don't want to take the time to read this entire chapter, but I want you to see the detail to which God went in His creation of mankind.

The Forming of Adam's Person

(v.1-14)

In verses 1 – 14, God designs and plants a garden. This garden gives Adam the pattern for his exercising dominion over the "wilds" of creation. God puts Adam into a situation that has been designed especially for him with amazing detail. This is the place where God will teach Adam what it means to have dominion over God's creation.

Then God makes Adam out of dust and breathes into him the breath of life. Adam became a living creature made in the image of God. Then God places him in the garden.

The Framework of Adam's Life

(v.15-17)

Can you imagine what Adam must have thought. You know what it's like to be in a new and unfamiliar place. You don't know what to do or which way to turn. Our loving and merciful God spoke to Adam and interpreted the world for him. God counseled Adam. And Adam learned that he must live by God's counsel as part of God's design for him.

Adam also learned what he must do in governing God's world. God gave him instructions on what tasks he must perform and how he was to relate to the world in which he found himself.

God also made it very clear that Adam must obey God's commands. God was very specific about a certain tree in the garden. And God was very specific about what was acceptable and what would be the consequences for disobedience. All of these things defined the framework of Adam's life.

What I want you to take away from these passages is that God had a very specific design and plan for mankind from the very beginning. All of this was not some after thought or a flexible plan that was adapted as things went along. This was God's very specific plan and detailed design from the beginning.

God's Design of Marriage

Genesis 2:18-24

As we continue in this passage, we note that Moses establishes God's plan and purpose for marriage. I want you to take notice again of how specific God is in His design of marriage. God did not arbitrarily decide to make mankind male and female. He had a grand design and purpose for marriage from the very beginning that is probably bigger and more glorious than you have ever imagined before

Companionship – Not be alone...

Moses records that it is not good that the man should be alone in verse 18. God helps Adam recognize his aloneness through a visual aid as recorded in verse 20. I believe that there were two ways that God helped Adam recognize his need for companionship. I think that God brought every living creature, with its mate, to Adam so that Adam realized that he didn't have a mate. And I think that Adam also recognized that none of the creatures that he named were suitable for companionship, either. Adam names all of the creatures as part of God's purpose for him in subduing the creation, but Adam also notices that there isn't a mate for him to satisfy his lack of companionship. I want you to see and remember that God specifically designed a female as his companion for a very specific purpose.

Complement – Suitable helper...

Moses also tells us that there wasn't another creature in all of creation that was a helper suitable for Adam. The ESV translates it as "fit for him". Adam was not complete without his complement. The person that God created was the perfect complement for Adam. Again, I want you to see and remember that God specially designed a female to complete Adam for a very specific purpose.

Covenant – Established by God...

Again, I don't want you to lose sight of the fact that God instituted marriage as part of a very specific design with a very specific purpose from the very beginning. Creating humankind as male and female was not some afterthought. And neither is the establishing of marriage. He tells us that marriage is a covenant. Please turn to Malachi 2:13-14. <read text> The prophet makes it very clear that marriage is established by God through a covenantal relationship. Now turn to Proverbs 2:17 <read text> Again we see that an adulteress has forsaken her cove-

nantal relationship with her husband. This institution that is established by God is done through a covenant. Again, I want you to see and remember that God specifically designed a male and female to be in a covenantal relationship that is only broken by death.

Cleave – Be one flesh...

Now, come back with me to Genesis 2:24. This verse used to be very puzzling to me. Moses is giving the account of the first man and woman. Then all of a sudden he brings in this verse. <read verse> What in the world is Moses talking about? Adam and Eve didn't have a father and mother. What is Moses doing putting this verse right here?

And then someone explained to me that Moses is making an editorial comment. He is stating how this marriage relationship has been designed by God. Moses, through God's superintending, is pointing to a future explanation of the purpose for God specifically designing marriage as He has. He is describing the marriage relationship to be a leaving, a weaving, and a cleaving of two lives into one flesh. There are those who teach that this one flesh is established by the physical union of a man and a woman. This one flesh relationship includes the physical union, but it is so much more as we will see later! And again, I want you to see and remember that God specifically designed a male and female to have a one flesh relationship.

It's time to examine what God's specific design and purpose for marriage has been from the beginning and why it is such an important theme throughout the Scriptures. As we look at this glorious truth, I am hoping that we will gain a profound and glorious appreciation for this gift that God has given to us called marriage. And as we understand, it will give us guidance for what our marriages should be like.

God's Development of Marriage

Because Genesis 2:24 is quoted so often through the rest of the Bible, we must establish a Biblical theology that reads this text through the rest of the Scriptures in a Christ-centered way. What is the Biblical theology of marriage? Why was God so specific in His design and purpose of marriage from the very beginning? Let's look at the New Testament passages first and then draw the conclusions that they teach.

Its Intended Permanency

Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7

We know that the Biblical authors have a purpose for their writing and a goal to be achieved in what they have written. Both Matthew and Mark record for us Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees in which he quotes a couple of verses from Genesis. <read Matthew 19:3-10> Jesus quotes this teaching of male and female and being one flesh. He then takes one item of this relationship and expounds on its importance. God's original design in marriage was for one man and one woman to be married for life. Marriage is intended to be a permanent relationship. Jesus takes this aspect of marriage, its permanency, and expounds on its importance.

Its Unifying Purity**1 Corinthians 6:16**

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 6. Let's read verses 12-20. <read text> In verse 16 he goes back to Genesis 2:24 and quotes the one flesh phrase. Paul takes another look at marriage that was different from Jesus'. Paul applies it in the context of sexual immorality. Paul condemns immorality and commends marriage intimacy as a very real union at both the physical and spiritual levels appealing to this concept of being one flesh found in Genesis 2:24. Paul takes this aspect of marriage, sexual purity, and expounds on its importance.

Its Christological Pattern**Ephesians 5:31**

Now, please turn to another familiar passage that I used in last Sunday evening's message – Ephesians chapter 5. I don't want to take a lot of time going over what I said last Sunday evening about this passage. The aspect of marriage that he expounds is the loving, sacrificial leadership of the husband, and the loving voluntary submission of a wife. But Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 in verse 31 here in Ephesians 5. I have always been confused by the references in most of the verses in this passage. Paul refers to Christ and His church in verses 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, and 30. And then there is verse 32. This reference to Christ and the church has been so out of focus for me in the past. It just didn't make any sense, just like Moses' editorial comment in Genesis 2:24 didn't make any sense to me.

But when someone suggested that I look at the Scriptures through the lens of Biblical theology, it all began to make sense. Greg, just read the text. Verse 32, "This mystery is profound". What mystery? Read on. "I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church". Is that the mystery? Of course it is! This is the key that I have been looking for. Marriage is about Christ and His church! Christ is the husband, and the church is His bride. All of a sudden the great design and purpose of our great Creator began to make glorious sense and the wisdom and purposes of God began to overwhelm my soul! It was like the flood lights had been turned on!

Here is the heavenly substance of which marriage is an earthly shadow. Paul is showing us why God was so specific in His design of marriage. Paul is giving us the purpose for marriage – marriage is an earthly shadow of what our heavenly relationship is going to be like. Hallelujah!!

Its Ultimate Pleasures**Revelation 21:1-4**

But there is more. Please turn to Revelation 21. <read verse 1-4> Here, at the end of time, we have the ultimate expression of what marriage pictures. The ultimate relationship that believers have to Christ is that we are His bride. He is our husband. We have the Bible beginning with marriage in Genesis 1 and ending in Revelation 21 with this marriage theme. The deliberate design of God that we find in Genesis is that marriage is to continually picture and be a reminder of the pleasures of eternity that we will experience with Him. Earthly marriage has been a continual testimony to each generation of the ultimate glory of our eternal marriage to our eternal husband.

Now, those of you who have been sleeping, wake up. And those of you whose minds have been wondering, it's time to return and focus. If you haven't heard anything

that I have said thus far, you must pay close attention now. This is the purpose of this message.

God deliberately and specifically created a male, Adam, as the husband, to be a picture of Christ. God deliberately and specifically created a female, Eve, as the wife, to be a picture of all believers throughout history. The marriage relationship is a picture and a shadow of the ultimate marriage between Christ and His bride. That is the Biblical theology of marriage as God designed it.

God created male and female as equal image bearers of His divine image. We are joint heirs with Christ and His righteousness has been credited to us so that as God looks at us He sees Christ. And just as Adam and Eve each had their own roles we each have our own roles. Christ is the head of the church and we are the submissive wife to the Head. He is the loving servant leader. We are the loving voluntarily submissive wife. There is never a time when roles will be reversed.

God did not create marriage and then later say, “Oh, how cool. This pictures what the relationship is going to be between Christ and the church”. NO! He deliberately designed marriage in order to picture and shadow this relationship between Christ and the church from the very beginning. That is why he designed marriage the way He did.

Paul said in verse 32 in Ephesians 5, that this mystery is profound. The word that he uses is *megas*, the word from which we get mega. What Paul is saying is that we can't even imagine all of the mega aspects that are involved in this teaching that we are the bride of Christ for all eternity. What we **can** do is look at the different aspects of marriage that God has left in the Scriptures and realize that they are a taste of what it is going to be like married to our husband for all eternity.

So when God tells us that marriage is companionship, that it is not good that we are alone, the joy and pleasure that we have in the companionship we have with our spouses is just a small taste of the companionship that we are beginning to enjoy now and will ultimately enjoy in eternity.

We see that marriage involves a helper that is our complement. We are completed by our spouses. Our marriages are to picture the completeness that we have in Christ. He gives us generously all that we need.

And He has made a covenant with us. He will be our God and we will be His people. He covenants with us that Christ is our husband and that we are his bride forever. This covenant will never be broken. He will never divorce us. We will never divorce Him. Our marriage relationship with Him is secure. There is never a doubt about His love. There is never a hint of divided affection. He is our covenant husband.

And the most mysterious aspect of the marriage relationship is our oneness – our being one flesh. We are in Christ. He is in us. We are one flesh with Christ. That is why the one flesh of Genesis 2:24 means so much more than just our physical union. The one flesh between husband and wife pictures the one flesh between Christ and His church. This truly is a mega mystery.

And as part of that one flesh relationship is our physical relationship. Teens, singles, husbands, wives, listen closely. This is the most compelling reason for us to keep ourselves morally pure. We are married to Christ. Our physical relationship should

be a reflection of our one flesh with Christ. The fidelity that spouses keep pictures the fidelity that we, the bride of Christ, keep to Him, our husband. The purity that unmarried people keep pictures the fidelity between Christ and His church. This is why the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, always make such a big deal out of adultery and immorality. It is profaning our marriage to Christ.

Marriage has been designed so that we, in the here and now, can have a foretaste of the joys and pleasures that await us in glory. And in keeping with our theme for this month, we must place our physical relationship in the context of God's design for marriage. God designed us as sexual beings. In our physical relationship as husband and wife, we experience the exhilaration, the satisfaction, and the joy of mutual oneness. God has given us this glorious gift as a foretaste of the exhilaration, satisfaction, and joy we will ultimately experience for all eternity with Him.

Conclusion

Let me summarize our time together.

First, God designed marriage as a picture and shadow of the ultimate marriage of Christ and His church.

Our marriages should be reflections of the marriage that we have with Christ. We have a one flesh relationship with Him and our relationship to Him should be our guide to how our marriages should be functioning here on earth.

The gift of marriage and the joys of sexual intimacy are given in order to give us a foretaste of the joys that we have in His presence, both now and forever.

Let us strive to make our marriages ever increasingly accurate pictures of our eternal marriage.