

TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN

"The Two Shall Become..." Genesis 2:18-25

July 7, 2024

INTRO.: Have you ever heard someone say, "Love shouldn't be this hard. It should just come naturally." We wouldn't say this about most other things. Take for instance, playing baseball. As a hitter you may be facing a pitcher who can throw his fastball over 90 miles per hour and then a curveball at 80 something miles per hour. How much work and practice does it take to consistently make contact with a baseball, let alone get a hit? On Thursday I checked and only 14 major league baseball players had a batting average at .300 or above. That means that even good hitters fail to get a hit over 2/3 of the time! All the great hitters still spend a great deal of time working on hitting this ball (hold up a baseball).

Timothy Keller in his book, *The Meaning of Marriage*" (which I have highly recommended in the past) responds: The understandable retort is, "But this is not baseball. This is love. Love should just come naturally if two people are compatible, if they are truly soul mates." The Christian answer to this is that no two people are compatible. Duke University ethics professor Stanley Hauerwas has famously made this point: Destructive to marriage is the self-fulfillment ethic that assumes marriage and the family are primarily institutions of personal fulfillment, necessary for us to become "whole" and happy. The assumption is that there is someone just right for us to marry and that if we look closely enough, we will find the right person. This moral assumption overlooks a crucial aspect to marriage. It fails to appreciate the fact that we always marry the wrong person.

Some of you just gasped but follow along this morning as I explain. Last week we looked at the following declaration made by God in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Before I go any further, I want to say that God does call some to singleness and it is not a second-class calling. The Apostle Paul makes the point that the single person has more time to devote to serving the Lord. What we began last week was what God has to say about marriage from the book of Genesis. We looked at this declaration made by God. It was the first time we hear that something was not good: so, sit up and take notice. We looked at God's design:

*"I will make:" literally: *build*

*"a helper:" does not mean someone less than. This word is used of God several times in the Old Testament.

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

*"suitable for him:" compatible to him

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "Literally it means, "a helper as in front of him," and so emphasizes that which is conspicuous, that which is in full view, in front of. Putting these two Hebrew words together (*helper* and *meet for him or suitable for him*) together gives the basic range of "a helper like him," "a helper fitted to him," "a helper worthy of him," "a helper corresponding to him," "a helper ascending to his opposite," or "a helper to his counterpart."

God then brought before Adam all the animals for him to name and when he was finished with that we read this statement: "But for Adam no suitable helper was found." God took from the side of Adam and made a woman and brought her to Adam. Adam's response:

Genesis 2:23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

Conclusion:

For this reason a man will leave (forsake) his father and mother and be united (stick like glue) to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

God's design in marriage is for a man (biological man) to be united, joined together with a woman (biological woman) in a covenantal relationship before God. In the creation of woman God is placing a high value on her, created in His image just as Adam was created in His image.

Our decision is whether or not we are going to accept God's design for marriage. This brings us to this morning where we want to further explore what this phrase "The two shall become one flesh" means. To do this we are going to look at three areas: Spiritual, Emotional/Intellectual, and Physical.

SPIRITUAL

I have listed this one first because I believe it is the most important. I am speaking to a follower of Christ, one who truly knows Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The first thing a believer should be looking for in a marriage partner is a

person who also knows Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. I would add to this: a believer who is growing in their walk with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:14–15 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

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As a follower of Christ, you should want your mate to be someone who loves Jesus with all their heart, soul, and mind. If they don't then you can't share the most important person in your life with them. Some might say things like:

- *Religion isn't that important
- *They believe in God.
- *They have a Bible
- *They come to church at least twice a year
- *God wants to use me to lead him/her to Jesus
- *They're so close to coming to know Jesus
- *I know somebody who married a non-Christian and their spouse came to faith

The best way to make sure you don't marry an unbeliever is to not date one. People get involved in a relationship with an unbeliever and it makes it much more difficult to put the brakes on that relationship. As a shepherd I cannot perform a marriage ceremony between a believer and an unbeliever. For those who came to faith after you were married, and your spouse has yet to come to Christ, God will give you the strength to be a witness and testimony for Jesus to them. Why is the spiritual oneness in a marriage so important?

*We are sinners and sinners struggle with sin. Sinners are naturally selfish, and selfishness will kill a marriage.

Romans 7:14–20 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. **15** I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. **16** And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. **17** As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. **18** I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **19** For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. **20** Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

It's challenging enough when you're a believer. I can't imagine how challenging it would be as an unbeliever.

*We are called to serve our spouse. Look at the first verse in the section about marriage in Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

“*submit:*” to subject, to subordinate. This is a present tense meaning I am to be continually doing this.

It is only this attitude that allows the marriage partners to do what the rest of the passage instructs: the wife to submit to the leadership of her husband and the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church.

Why do I do this? It is out of “reverence” or “fear” for Christ. Jesus is the reason, and He is the pattern.

Philippians 2:5–8 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: **6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, **7** but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. **8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

*God wants to use my marriage to make me more like Jesus

Gary Thomas, in his book, *Sacred Marriage*” (which I also highly recommend) has the following as the premise for the book, “What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?”

In the beginning of the book, he has this quote by Socrates: “By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.”

Gary Thomas, But what both of us crave more than anything else is to be intimately close to the God who made us. If that relationship is right, we won't make such severe demands on our marriage, asking each other, expecting each other, to compensate for spiritual emptiness.

The spiritual element of oneness is foundational. It leads to growth and success in the other two.

EMOTIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL

People talk about finding that "soul mate." In fact, some have used that as an excuse for leaving their spouse to marry another person. What I'm talking about involves understanding at least the following:

*We are different from our spouse

Men and women are different. Many of you know I grew up in a house with four sisters. How they handled things and how I handled things were far different. Our culture does not want to recognize that boys and girls are different. Brenda asked these two questions after our third son was born:

- 1) Does everything have to be physical? YES
- 2) Does everything have to be a competition? YES

We have had Dr. Emerson Eggerichs series, *Love and Respect* several times in this church. We did a shortened version of it called, *The Crazy Cycle*, in our home group. The premise of the series is that men and women look at things vastly different. Women generally are looking for love while men are generally looking for respect. That is not to say that women don't want respect or that men don't want love. A woman most often feels loved when the man demonstrates love in tangible ways, and the man feels loved when the woman shows respect. Look at the conclusion of Ephesians 5, the longest passage in the Bible dealing with marriage.

Ephesians 5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

When a woman is hurt by her husband she may respond, "You don't love me." When a man is hurt by his wife he may respond, "She doesn't respect me."

When women gather with other women they most often talk about relationships. You don't have to do much prodding for my wife to show you pictures of the grandchildren. When men gather, they often first talk about their jobs, ways they sense respect.

*Their interests and hobbies: it doesn't mean I learn how to do those hobbies, but I can ask questions and appreciate what she does. Brenda likes to quilt and sew. She made quilts for each of our sons when they graduated from high school. She made quilts for each of the grandchildren when they were small. She made pillowcases for our children and grandchildren, reflecting their interests and hobbies. Sometimes I have even ventured into Joanne's Fabric, Hobby Lobby, and quilt stores. It means giving her space to do those hobbies. It also involves finding things we like to do together: camping, campfires, walks, taking care of dogs.

*Their strengths help our weaknesses: How many times do you see opposites become attracted to someone? Brenda and I couldn't be more different! Food we like and how we like it cooked is one example. Early on in marriage and even now I would get upset if she pointed something out that I hadn't thought about. She is good at seeing possible challenges in my ideas. I have found that she is very perceptive, and I need to listen to what she has to say. She is good at sensing the emotional climate when dealing with issues with our sons as they were growing up. I might be inclined to say some things that wouldn't be helpful given the situation. As a married couple you need to be convinced that you are better together.

Being one includes the spiritual part of the relationship, the emotional and intellectual part of the relationship and the:

PHYSICAL

The Bible is not shy about addressing the topic of sex. God created it and it is meant to be a beautiful expression of a married couple's love for each other.

*When?

This is to be a gift that you give to your spouse when you are married. There are several passages in Scripture that we can turn to that make this clear.

In 1960 the percentage of American adults that were married was 72% and in 2008 it had dropped to 50%. Why is that? It is mostly because more people are just living together without getting married. It is estimated that half of all couples live together before they get married (National Marriage Project). The interesting thing is that it doesn't translate into more successful marriages when and if they get married.

“One of the biggest reasons why marriage is more successful than cohabitation is *commitment*. With marriage you make a pledge before God, your family and friends. Everyone knows you're married; it's a public declaration. In marriage, you're more likely to make sacrifices for your mate and strive to make the relationship work. Additionally, divorce is costly, both emotionally and financially. By its very nature, cohabitation encourages a lack of commitment and independence, and is an easy out for the partner that wants to pack a suitcase and leave.” Amy Tracy

What does the Bible have to say about sex before marriage? I'm going to mention some Scripture this morning, but I will put more in the notes.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; **4** that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, **5** not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; **6** and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. **7** For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. **8** Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 It *is* (present tense) God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should *avoid* (present tense: to abstain, to refrain from) sexual immorality

1 Thessalonians 4:4 that each of you should learn to *control* (present tense) his own body in a way that is holy and honorable

1 Thessalonians 4:5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God (to do so is to act like an unbeliever)

1 Thessalonians 4:6 and that in this matter no one should *wrong his brother or take advantage of him*. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. (to be involved sexually before marriage is a sin against yourself and the person you are involved with and is taking something that does not belong to you)

1 Thessalonians 4:7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to *live a holy life*. (God calls all His children to lead a pure and holy life)

1 Thessalonians 4:8 Therefore, he who *rejects* (present tense) this instruction does not *reject* (present tense) man but God, who *gives* (present tense) you his Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:3 But among you there must not be even a *hint* (present tense command: to name) of sexual immorality (porneia: where we get the word pornography) , or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Other Scripture:

1 Corinthians 6:13–20 “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. **14** By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! **16** 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.” **17** But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. **18** Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. **19** 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; **20** you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

The Bible also speaks of adultery: having sex with someone other than your spouse when you are married.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

"honored:" held in honor, respected

"will judge:" future tense

Other Scripture:

Exodus 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery. (part of the Ten Commandments)

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' **28** But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

God created sex to be a gift given to your spouse after you are married. Some may be asking, "What do I do if I haven't followed God's plan in this area?" You need to admit to that before God, repent (turn from it) and seek God's forgiveness. You can start anew. I would also say that you need to admit that to the person you have been involved with and seek their forgiveness, whether or not they recognize it as wrong.

*How does this work in marriage?

Married couples are called to serve one another in this area. It isn't all about me. Communication with one another is very important. This goes much better when your relationship with the Lord is right. Your relationship with one another has to be right.

SO WHAT???

Timothy Keller: "There has never been a culture or a century that we know of in which marriage was not central to human life."

What allows people to best experience the oneness in marriage that God intends?

*A personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ

Timothy Keller: "The reason that marriage is so painful and yet wonderful is because it is a reflection of the gospel, which is painful and wonderful at once. The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. This is the only kind of relationship that will really transform us. Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it. God's saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also radical, unconditional commitment to us. The merciful commitment strengthens us to see the truth about ourselves and repent. The conviction and repentance moves us to cling to and rest in God's mercy and grace."

*It flourishes best through a daily walk with God where I am given the strength to serve God and my spouse

John 15:1-5 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. **5** "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

*It is best accomplished with another growing follower of Christ.

*It involves time, effort, and prayer

Timothy Keller: "I'm tired of listening to sentimental talks on marriage. At weddings, in church, and in Sunday school, much of what I've heard on the subject has as much depth as a Hallmark card. While marriage is many things, it is anything but sentimental. Marriage is glorious but hard. It's a burning joy and strength, and yet it is also blood, sweat, and tears, humbling defeats and exhausting victories. No marriage I know more than a few weeks old could be described as a fairy tale come true."

*The growth in the spiritual and emotional/intellectual areas provide a much better opportunity for the physical part of the relationship to thrive

