



God Invented Marriage

Sermon for September 12, 2021

Genesis 1:20-25; 2:18-24

Last week, we started a new sermon series on marriage, and I introduced you to The Four Chapters of God's Big Story.

You can see this image on the screen.

This week we will look at the first marriage, which happened in Chapter 1: Creation.

Next week, we will look at the first marriage conflict, which happened in Chapter 2: The Fall.

Here is our outline for today's sermon.

Point 1: God's good creation (Genesis 1:20-25)

Point 2: God invents marriage (Genesis 2:18-22)

Point 3: Becoming one flesh (Genesis 2:23-24)

Before we begin looking at God's Word together, would you please pray with me?

Holy Spirit, please open our hearts and minds to Jesus the Living Word.

Father, we want to be obedient, joyful, and productive sons and daughters.

Please use your word, by the power of the Spirit, to make us more like Jesus.

We pray in his name.

Amen.

Point 1: God's good creation

Genesis 1:20-21

20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."

21 So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

I like to build things with wood.

This is a picture of the cabinets I built in my kitchen.

These are some bookshelves I built in my house.
My love of creating and building comes from God.
The same is true of you.
We reflect God's image when we make things.

Why did I build these bookshelves?

Yes, to store books.

It would be strange if I built all these cabinets and shelves and they were empty.
They were built to hold things, to be filled with the right kind of things.

When God made the earth and the sea and the sky, they were empty.
Then in verses 20 and 21, we read how he filled them with the right kind of animals.
Each plant and animal was designed by God for a specific environment.
Just like I built some tall shelves for big books, and some short shelves for small books.

Genesis 1:22-23

22 And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

God blessed the animals with the power to make more of themselves.
He blesses the animals and fish and birds so they can "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."
Later, he will tell Adam and Eve to do the same thing.

How do animals multiply?

God put a pattern in creation that requires a male and female to make babies.

God blessed everything in creation with the ability to multiply themselves for generation after generation.

To do that, a male and female have to come together in a very personal relationship.

For animals, it is just a physical relationship.

But because human beings have souls, and we are made in God's image, human relationships should be deep connections of heart, soul, and body.

Genesis 1:24-25

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds."

And it was so.

25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good.

When God made the fish and the birds and the animals, he made them "according to their kinds."

Do you see that phrase in verses 21 and 24 and 25?

Cows and horses are different kinds of animals.

Dogs are one kind of animal, and cats are another kind.

Two different dogs can make a mixture of themselves, like our dog Roscoe.

He is half Schnauzer and half Poodle.

Roscoe is a Schnoodle.

But a dog and a cat cannot create a Dat, right?

You see my friends, God is incredibly creative in the kind of creatures he made.

He made a wide variety of animals, but God also created order and structure, with rules for how things work.

That's why in verses 21 and 25, God said that the things he made were good.

God made a good world, with good environments full of good food and water and everything needed for life.

God provided good boundaries, with laws of physics and biology and morality to govern how all of creation functions.

Because everything God has made is very good, we are a little surprised when we read verse 18.

Point 2: God invents marriage

Genesis 2:18

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

Suddenly in verse 18 something is not good.

It is not good that Adam is alone.

The problem is not Adam's loneliness.

The problem is this: Adam is not complete.

He cannot do the task that God had for him.

God told Adam to take care of the earth, to name all the animals.

God also wanted to Adam to fill the earth with more people.

Adam definitely cannot make babies on his own!

It is not good for Adam to be alone because God has things for him to do that require a partner.

I know some of you are not married.

Maybe you feel alone.

I want you to know that I am not ignoring how you feel.

God cares about your loneliness.

God has things for single people to do, too.

All of his children are gifted in special ways to bless others and grow His kingdom.

Please don't think that getting married will bring you complete happiness.

Being single is difficult because everything is broken.

And being married is difficult because everything is broken.

Everything has been damaged by the Fall.

Nothing on earth today can bring us the full joy and satisfaction of life.

We live between the Garden and the City.

Married couples without children need to hear this same message.

We grieve with you if you cannot have children.

God sometimes blesses infertile couples with adopted children, which is beautiful and a great picture of how God Himself adopts us into his household.

And yet there is a pattern in Creation that we all understand in our hearts.

A pattern of couples coming together in love to create children as images of themselves and name them.

When a couple cannot participate in that Creation Blessing, it hurts.

Because of the Fall in Chapter 2 of God's Big Story, we don't live in the Garden anymore.

We live between the Garden and the City.

But because of Chapter 3, we have hope even in this broken world.

We will talk more about that next week.

For now, let's look more at God's original and very good design.

Genesis 2:19-20

19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

Adam is given a big job here.

God brings all the animals to Adam and watches to see what Adam will call them.

This is another way that human beings are like God.

God made day and night and named them.

He made heaven and earth and named them.

If you start a new company, you can name it.

If you write a book you give it a title.
And if you have children, you choose their names.
God is sharing with Adam the responsibility creating and naming.

It's interesting that God gave Adam this job before Eve existed.
I think God had a good reason.
Actually, God always has a good reason for what he does, right?
Of course he does.
When Adam was doing this job, he had to look at each animal and think about the best name for each one.
I think Adam probably noticed something about all these creatures.
Each kind of creature came in two types.
What do you notice about these pairs of animals?
You can tell they are the same species, right?
But are they identical?
No, the male and female are different.

God made many different kinds of animals.
Each male had a female partner fit for him.
"But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him" is what verse 20 says.
When you read the word "helper" in verse 20, please remember that God created Eve to be much more than an assistant to Adam.
She is a necessary partner.
That's how we should think of our spouse, as a necessary partner.

The Hebrew word "helper" is used to describe God sixteen times in the Old Testament.
God is never our assistant, friends.
God is the rescuer and the helper of His people when they are helpless.

In Psalm 33:20 we read:
"Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our helper and our shield."
That is the same Hebrew word for helper that we see in Genesis 2:20.
God is the one who supplies what we do not have.
God gave Adam to Eve because Adam did not have a partner to help him fulfill God's mission for human beings.

Genesis 2:21-22

21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Notice that God brought Eve to Adam.

God the Father delivers the bride to the groom, just as we do in weddings today.

Eve is a gift and blessing from God to Adam.

Sometimes in English we call our spouse "our better half."

And maybe that phrase comes from this passage of scripture.

But I want to say to my single friends, you are not half a person without a spouse.

You do not have to be married to be a complete and healthy person.

The Hebrew word for "ribs" in verse 21 refers to the entire side of Adam, one half of his ribcage.

A big part of Adam was sacrificed to create Eve.

God could have made Eve from the dust, like he made Adam.

But God decided to remove a part of Adam and use it to make Eve.

There is a lot of meaning behind this.

Listen to this quote from Matthew Henry:

The woman is "not made out of his head to top him, not 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 beloved."

That's beautiful.

That was God's design for marriage.

But because of sin, our human relationships are damaged.

Husbands and wives compete for power and control.

We feel like we are aliens battling someone who is very strange and difficult to live with.

It's helpful in those times to look back at God's design, which we can call "One-Flesh Marriage."

Point 3: One-Flesh Marriage

Genesis 2:23

23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

When Adam was naming the cows and the eagles and the alligators, he was probably thinking, "That animal has different bones than me.

That animal has different flesh than me."

Every animal was different than Adam.

But then Adam saw Eve.

He thought, "Finally, this one has bones like me!

She has flesh like me!

But she's different in some awesome ways, too!"

This is a picture of when I first saw Naomi in her wedding dress.

I look kind of silly, right?

But I was amazed at her beauty and her heart.

I was so thrilled that God brought this woman to me.

Adam maybe had a face like this when he saw Eve, don't you think?

Adam's first act of leadership in the marriage is to give Eve a name.

He does not name her like the animals, however.

Her name reveals the one-flesh connection between Adam and Eve.

The Hebrew word for Man in verse 23 is "Ish."

And the word for Woman is "Isha."

This is what makes one-flesh marriage so powerful and beautiful.

In this church we are working hard to build loving relationships among people from very different cultures.

This can be hard.

But marriage is a great place to learn how to do cross-cultural ministry.

Because, if you think about it, marriage was the first cross-cultural relationship in history!

God made men and women "of the same kind" but he gave us significant and wonderful differences.

As the French say, "Vive la différence!"

My friends, sometimes conflict in marriage is the result of wanting the other person to be like us.

To think like us, act like us, live like us.

To load the dishwasher like I do.

But you don't really want to be married to yourself.

Adam and Adam wouldn't be able to accomplish the missions that God gave to Adam.

"Ish" needed "Isha."

The differences between husband and wife also cause friction in our marriages.

But that friction is intended to reveal our sin and our selfishness so we can be cured of it.

Friction and conflict can be used by God to make more like Christ when we learn to repent and forgive.

God wants us to grow out of our sinful selfishness and learn to serve others sacrificially, as Christ served us.

Philippians 2:3-8 says:

3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,
6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

That is the gospel, my friends.

That God saves sinners through the perfect life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

If you believe this gospel truth is for you, that Jesus' sacrifice was for your personal sins, then you will be saved.

And receiving that sacrificial love from Jesus is the only way you can "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves" as verse 3 says.

My friends, did you know that we can make the gospel visible to the world?

We do that when we surrender our rights and preferences for the people we love.

When we imitate the sacrificial love that Christ poured out for us, we can help people understand the gospel.

Let's look now at our last verse for today.

Genesis 2:24

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

There is a magnetic attraction between men and women.

We have a desire to be reunited as one flesh, because God made woman from the flesh of man.

But being one flesh is not only about the physical relationship.

In English we sometimes call sex "making love."

But the act of sex cannot "make love."

Becoming one flesh as husband and wife must happen first in the soul and the heart.

Unity of soul means they share the same faith, the same trust in Christ.

That's why God warns Christians to only marry other Christians.

If you are not connected at the deepest spiritual level, then it is very hard to connect in heart and body.

Unity of heart means we sacrifice for one another, and listen to one another, and make decisions together.

When two hearts are deeply united, then physical unity will be the result.

In other words, if you want to have a healthy physical relationship in your marriage, it will be the fruit of real heart and soul unity.

A good marriage is a triangle of relationships.

We see the same pattern in the Trinity, with a loving bond between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Son submits to the Father, and the Holy Spirit submits to the Father and the Son.

They are all equal in power, and majesty, and divinity.

They choose to relate to each other in these ways, as a model for us.

In God's marriage design, Adam submits to God, and Adam leads his wife in love.

A husband who does not lead his wife sacrificially and gently is not submitting to God.

But when both the husband and wife are in a strong relationship with God above, they can repent and forgive and love each other the way God intended.

In a one-flesh marriage.

When that marriage produces children, the parents get the opportunity to help their children establish new triangles of God, husband, and wife.

To become one flesh, verse 24 provides an equation with three steps.

$A + B = C$.

A: A man shall leave his father and mother.

B: The man will be united to his wife.

C: They shall become one flesh.

If the man does not detach from his father and mother, he cannot attach to his wife.

I know that in some of your home countries, it is normal for a wife to leave her family and go to live with her husband's family.

I am not saying this cultural practice is wrong.

But I do wonder if it makes it harder for the husband to detach from his parents and to attach to his wife.

May I ask the men here a question?

If there is a disagreement between your wife and your mother, what do you do?

Do you support your wife or your mother?

Who has your loyalty?

There is an African theologian named Onesimus Ngundu from Zimbabwe.

He understands this cultural practice of living with the husband's family.

He recommends that the husband's parents help a new married couple to detach and attach by saying something like this at the wedding:

"We publicly declare in your presence our recognition of our son's new relationship with his bride. We joyfully release him to enter into a new husband-wife relationship. That unique and special relationship requires him "to leave his father and mother and join himself to his wife, and become one flesh."
Therefore, we now publicly release him.
It is our desire not to interfere with the new marriage relationship of these two as husband and wife."

Even if you don't live with the family of your husband or wife, I think there is something important here for every marriage.

Have we detached from anything that prevents complete attachment to our spouse?

Is there anything that interferes with becoming one flesh?

Ask the Lord to show you what it is, so you can remove that obstacle from your marriage.

Next week we will see how Satan tries to break up the triangle of loving relationships between God, Adam, and Eve.

He does that by making us doubt God's love, and to focus on ourselves instead of the people we love.

So we need to pray, my friends!

Can we do that together now?

Father, thank you for the good plan you made for human beings.

I know that many of my friends here feel a long way from the Garden and your good plan.

Some people here are single and want to be married.

Or they want to have children.

Or they are in a marriage that is really hard, and they don't see how it can get better.

Thank you, Lord, for being Father to the fatherless.

You set the lonely in families.

Help our church family to be a source of peace, and hope, and growth for each of us as we live together in this broken world.

Use us for your glory in all we do, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.