

**Genesis  
In the Beginning, God Created Marriage**

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One of our beloved traditions here at The Creek is to celebrate 50th wedding anniversaries. Please join me in welcoming Joe and Gay Fordice (Chuck and Nancy Farrell at the 11:00 service). Honor them. Pray for them. It's so special that we get to celebrate 50 (55) years of marriage on the weekend when we unpack God's creation of marriage and the gift of marriage to humanity in the book of Genesis. Throughout Genesis 1, everything God created is said to be good. Seven times in the first chapter of the Bible, we read, "God saw what he had made, and it was good." The only change is that sometimes we have the enhanced description, "God saw what he had made, and it was very good."

But in chapter 2, after joyfully affirming everything he had made and observing its goodness, God had an unexpected change in tone. God looked at Adam, the first human he made, and said, "It is not good" (Genesis 2:18). How is that possible? How is it possible that something God made, something that had not been corrupted or contaminated by sin or rebellion, something that was still in its pristine condition, could be "not good"? Adam had never made a mistake. Adam had never suffered. Adam had an intimate, personal relationship with God, and walked with him in perfect unity. But get this: Adam needed more than a perfect environment, he needed more than personal holiness, he needed more than an intimate relationship with the all-powerful God. Even with all that, something was still "not good." God looked at Adam by himself in the garden and said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18.)

Adam was perfect and had no flaw, but God made him in such a way that he would only reach his true potential with a companion. And get this: God was not enough. Adam needed more than God. He needed another person. I can't tell you how many times, specifically since being a dad, I have sat down to assemble a toy or piece of furniture that requires instructions. Beds. Basketball goals. Toy cars. The list is endless. Usually, when you open the box, it has a list of all the parts that are in the box and necessary for assembly, and the manual usually says, "If any of these necessary parts are missing, call the manufacturer and we'll send them to you." It was like that in the garden. God looked at Adam, this human who he had made, and said, "There's a necessary part missing. He needs a companion. I'm going to do something about it." "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). God planned to bring Adam the ideal companion, and like he hand-formed Adam from the dust of the earth, he had a very specific, very personal way he planned to create the man's ideal companion.

The Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 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." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:21-25)

It wasn't good for the man to be alone, so God took a part of him and hand-crafted the perfect companion. He made the first woman, Eve. Eve became Adam's wife, and the Bible says they were naked, and felt no shame. Complete knowledge of one another, complete vulnerability, complete intimacy. Perfect unity.

On the first pages of the Bible, we see that God gave humanity the gift of marriage. From Genesis, as well as from the rest of Scripture, we see five main reasons why God gave us this incredible gift.

### ***God's gift of marriage is complementary***

Adam was a complete human being before Eve, but a wife complemented him in ways he desperately needed. God didn't only bring Adam a wife, but God said, "I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). This comes from the Hebrew phrase "ēzer kēnegdô." Ezer doesn't simply mean "helper," like a maid or a farm hand or someone who does menial tasks. It's someone who comes to your aid from a place of strength, like a military ally who helps you in battle. This is a word that describes the way God provides help for us—help from strength. It's a helper who has strength, but one who is suitable—a helpmate who corresponds to him in a complementary way, not an identical way. An ox could have helped Adam plow the ground; the ox would be a helper, but not suitable for him, not enough like him. Another man could have helped Adam in tons of ways, but not in other ways because he would have been too similar. Adam didn't need a copy or clone of himself; he needed a complement to himself—someone like him in many ways, but also different from him in many ways. So God gave him a wife, a helper suitable.

Sometimes married people focus on their differences and are frustrated by them. I wish my wife would like football like I do or approach finances the way I do. I wish my husband would discipline the kids the way I do or fold the towels like I do, or approach emotional conversation like I do. We wish our spouse was just like us. But that's not the magic in marriage. The magic isn't in finding a twin personality but having a partner. A great Navy doesn't need another warship; they need air support. A great offense doesn't need another wide receiver; it needs a great defense. A great architect doesn't need another draftsman; he needs a great interior designer. The differences in your spouse aren't a curse; they are a God-designed blessing for your good, for the good of your marriage, and for the good of your entire household. I can't tell you how many times in life I have been absolutely stuck on a problem. I've used all my available resources, and I can't get any traction. I bring it to Keren, and in no time, there's a quality plan in place. She is a perfect helpmate! Our values and priorities align, but we have different gifts, abilities, and approaches to people and problem-solving. That's what makes us a team. Same goal, different roles. That's God's design. The gift of marriage is complementary.

### ***God's gift of marriage is fruitful***

One of the foundational purposes for marriage is expressed by God in the first chapter of the Bible: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:28). Marriage, as God designed it, has life-giving, generative capacity. God designed marriage to create life, so that children could be brought into the world, nurtured, raised, and then released out into the world to form families of their own. I believe this is an area that Christians have not focused on sufficiently in recent generations, really since the sexual revolution and the rise of birth control options. I hear husbands and wives talking on a regular basis about children, when they plan to have them, how many they'd like to have. In almost every conversation I've been a part of, all of the rationale around the timing of children and the number of children is centered

around personal preference, convenience, and fear—We want to wait this long to have kids so that we can travel the world together first, so that we can get a larger house, so that we can get out of debt. We don't want to have a third child, because I was a middle child and got left out of things; we wouldn't want that to happen to a kid. A third child makes airfare and hotel rooms more expensive. We already have a boy and girl; our family dynamics might be thrown off with another kid. What if we try for another child and they have special needs? I've heard all these statements dozens and dozens of times, all from Bible-believing, God-loving, Jesus-following Christians. But do you know what I almost never hear? Children are such an incredible gift from God! We know that having children is one of the primary purposes for marriage and sexual intimacy. Bringing more children into the world helps us advance God's mission to not only fill the earth, but to fill heaven. We have the chance to raise a child who will not only make this world a better place but also advance the kingdom of heaven on earth and worship God for eternity. Even many of the most mature among us have not been trained to think about this part of life in a theologically deep, biblically rich way. We primarily think about preferences, conveniences, and practicality, but not about the kingdom of God.

I hope you hear my heart on this: I am not here to tell you how many kids to have! I am here to tell you one of the God-designed purposes for marriage and one of God's greatest gifts in marriage is kids! As you reflect on the size, values, and priorities of your family, integrate that into your discernment. Don't think about children and the size of your family the way non-believers do. Think about them from a Christ-centered perspective.

Also, don't think that fruitfulness is all about children. Many couples, because of medical conditions, infertility, or age, may not be able to have children. God sees you in that. We see you in that. Fruitfulness, as God intends it in marriage, *is not restricted to having biological offspring*. For some, adoption or fostering is an incredible call. But beyond children, your marriage can bring life into the world through joy, service, generosity, ministry, evangelism, and discipleship. Jesus was the most fruitful person in history, yet he never married or had children. The apostle Paul was fruitful beyond measure. We have no record of him marrying or having children. So bear fruit in your marriage, with children if possible, and in all the other ways that would bring glory to God!

### ***God's gift of marriage is sanctifying***

Marriage not only gives us a companion who complements us and a partner to be fruitful with, but it also refines us, matures us, deepens us, and gives us the daily opportunity to have our selfishness and immaturities exposed, to humble ourselves, to apologize, to lay down our lives, to serve one another, to prefer one another, and to become more like Jesus. Philippians 2:3-5 speaks about relationships in general, but it's also applicable to marriage in particular. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

When you are married to someone, you discover very quickly it's not only about passion and romance and intimacy and butterflies; it's also about how to decorate a house and clean a house and decide what temperature to keep the house; it's about how to spend your free time, how to spend money, how to interact with in-laws and friends and neighbors. There are hundreds of decisions to be made, hundreds of responsibilities to carry out, and every single one of them provides an opportunity to serve your spouse, renounce selfishness and self-centeredness, and lay

down your life for your spouse so that you can become more like Jesus, who laid down his life for you. Counterintuitively, sacrifice brings not only sanctification, but deep satisfaction. Tim Keller said, “To have a marriage that sings requires a Spirit-created ability to serve, to take yourself out of the center. The deep happiness that marriage can bring lies on the far side of putting the happiness of your spouse ahead of your own, in a sustained way, in response to what Jesus has done for you.”

Everyone loves the romantic images of marriage, right? Walking on the beach together, holding hands at sunset, a trip to Italy or Greece for your 30th wedding anniversary. Those are great images. There’s nothing wrong with those images, but that’s not where the sanctification happens. The sanctification happens when your spouse is sick, for months or years, and you care for them. The sanctification happens when your spouse, who knows you better than anyone else in the world, lovingly confronts you about an area of unhealth in your life, and you have the opportunity to humble yourself, apologize, repent, and choose the way of love. The sanctification happens as you decide together to forgive one another, support one another, pray for one another—there is simply no other relationship in all of life that has the latent sanctifying power of marriage.

### ***God’s gift of marriage is representative***

Not only does marriage have the potential to help us become more like Jesus, but also God created marriage to be a living picture of Jesus for others to see. Paul elaborates on this at length in Ephesians 5. He highlights certain roles and responsibilities in marriage for husbands and wives. He doesn’t say every marriage should figure out how it best works for them, following their preferences of popular models in their cultural window of time. He says God designed marriage to work in a specific way, and you need to follow his design. The design isn’t based on stereotypes or social conditioning or patriarchalism. God designed the roles in marriage to be a representation of a heavenly reality, a living picture of Christ and the church.

- “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (verse 23).
- “Wives should submit to their husbands in everything...as the church submits to Christ” (verse 24).
- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (verse 25).
- “Husbands should care for their wives, just as Christ does the church” (verses 26-31).

He gives all these instructions, but they aren’t random, they aren’t out of left field, they aren’t his opinions. They are all based on the foundational principle that our marriages here in the physical realm are to be a living embodiment, a faithful representation of a marriage in the spiritual realms. Paul says in Ephesians 5:32, “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

One of the primary ethical imperatives in the New Testament is to live in such a way that people can see Jesus in our lives. The same is true specifically in our marriages—we are to live in such a way in our marriages, by the way a husband leads his wife with love, sacrifice, and wisdom, by the way a wife submits to her husband with joy, respect, and honor, to allow people to see Jesus in us.

Here are two great questions to ask:

- If a non-married person saw your marriage, would they become more excited about being married?
- If a non-Christian saw your marriage, would they become more interested in following Jesus?

Your life should show the beauty of marriage the way God designed it. This is the point of it! If the answer to one or both questions is no, don't blame your spouse. Don't say, "If he would just..." or, "If she would just..." Ask God what you can do so that the answer to these questions becomes a resounding "yes!"

### ***God's gift of marriage is anticipatory***

Marriage is not only supposed to be a picture of the present heavenly reality with Christ and the church, but it's also a foretaste of the eternal reality of Jesus the groom living in perfect covenantal union with the bride, his people. When this present earthly order is over, and Jesus returns and "heaven" officially begins, the angels will say, "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." All of history will culminate in a wedding. God's wait will be over; he will finally get to be with his people.

There are so many wonderful parts of being a pastor. Preaching God's Word is an honor beyond words. Praying over kids as their parents come forward to commit to raising them for the Lord is so exciting. Baptizing someone who wants to proclaim Jesus as their Lord and Savior is a dream come true every time. But perhaps my very favorite part of being a pastor is officiating a wedding ceremony. Everyone dressed in their best. A beautiful venue. Standing there with the groom at the altar as the doors open and his bride appears and begins to walk toward him. The joy on the groom's face. The tears of happiness. He's been waiting his entire life for this. I love it not only because it's the best day of their lives. I love it not only because of my proximity to uncontainable joy. I love it because it's an anticipation of something grander. Every wedding is a living picture of the ultimate wedding, where the groom will see his bride and say, "Look how beautiful she is. My dream has come true. It's all been worth it."

Never forget amid the mundane—cleaning the house, caring for kids, balancing the checkbook—there's something deeper at work. This is really about that. The union, the love, the intimacy, the joy, the partnership you have with your spouse is supposed to be a preview of heaven, Like watching a trailer to a movie gives you a glimpse and makes you eager for the whole thing, Christian marriage is supposed to give you a picture of what heaven is going to be like, making us long for it more and more every day. If you are here today and you are married, I want to call you to this high and holy vision for your marriage. Marriage is not only about getting along; it's not about dividing chores and childcare and bills. It's about bringing heaven down to earth and giving the world a glimpse of what eternity is going to be like. And even if that's not what your marriage has been like up until today, with God's help, and willingness from both of you, that's possible starting today!

God's word says, "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). A wife is an incredible gift. Marriage is an incredible gift. Let's view our spouses and marriage as a gift from God, and let's lean into all the benefits that come with this gift.