

## God's Design for Marriage

### Genesis 2:18-24

**Opening: How many of you love putting puzzles together? Me neither!** Imagine a giant 15,000-piece jigsaw puzzle in a cardboard box. Now imagine a married couple locked up in a room together where the only way out is to put this puzzle together WITHOUT the top of the box. They have no idea what the puzzle is supposed to look like, they just must figure it out. Sounds horrible! More than likely someone in that room is going to die. Puzzles are hard enough on their own even with the box top that tells you what they are supposed to look like; but without knowing the design of the puzzle, it is almost impossible. **This is what a lot of people feel like in their marriage.** The pieces of their puzzle are money, kids, sex, in-laws, time management, personality, wants, needs, church, friends, aging, health problems, conflict, career and fitness. Many of them struggle putting the pieces together not knowing what the ultimate design is. That is why many give up.

**Context:** Genesis is the book of beginnings. Everything has a beginning and that beginning is rooted in the Beginner, God. He is our creator and the divine designer of everything. He's design is perfect and if we follow it then we will be able to enjoy all the blessings He intended. Most of our dysfunction is ultimately rooted in our deviation from God's design (sin). The secret to being "happily ever after" isn't focusing on our marriage or on ourselves, but on God. Francis Chan said, "after 20 years of pastoral ministry, I have concluded that most marriage problems aren't really marriage problems; they are God problems. They can be traced back to people having a poor relationship with God."<sup>1</sup> **God designed marriage to be a lifelong, committed relationship between one man and one woman which points to His love for us.**

#### I. What it is: Marriage is a Covenant.

- **VS. 18-24: A man will leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife:** Marriage was the LORD God's idea from the beginning. It is not a cultural invention or a patriarchal institution to subjugate women. It was ultimately God's plan for human flourishing. **3 Steps for marriage:** A guy grows up, gets a job, worships God, and takes care of himself. He pursues a noble woman in a noble way. He marries a woman and they become one flesh. *1<sup>st</sup> comes love, then comes marriage, then comes a baby carriage.* **The world is the opposite:** *hook up, shack up, and then break up.*
- **Hold Fast or cleaving:** *to be glued to; to make a vow; unite in a covenant.* **A covenant is a public vow of faithfulness.** It is a set of promises between two people or groups of people that bind them together. A marriage covenant is a set of promises that a husband and wife make to each other in front of others and before God. It is a spiritual transaction. It is not a causal relationship that can be easily discarded. It is a relationship that is powerful over your life and future.
- **The marriage ceremony is less about your present state of feelings and more about your promise to love and be faithful in the future:** love and romantic feelings will get you into a marriage, but it will be your **promises** that you make to each other that will ultimately help keep you in your marriage. (Appointments you make in the future)
- **At your wedding, you make "vows" or promises to each other:** to love, honor, cherish, serve one another in good times or bad, riches or poverty and to be true and loyal to each other until death do you part. All future. *But you do not really need to make a vow to stick to someone in the good times. When things are good, you do not feel the need to run. It is in the bad times that you need a covenant. The covenant should be the glue that binds you together.*
- **A Covenant is not a consumer relationship<sup>2</sup>:** In a consumer relationship, the relationship last only if it is beneficial to you. Which means that we stay connected as long as the other person is meeting our own particular needs at an acceptable cost to us. You have no real obligation to stay in the relationship if you do not want to. In a consumer relationship the individual's needs take precedent and are more important than the relationship.
- **Eating at a Restaurant:** over the years, there are places that I used to eat at all the time, that I stopped eating at because either: the food got bad, the service was terrible, the price got high, or they switched to **Pepsi**. My loyalty ends when I do not get what I want at a cost that is acceptable to me. *I won't go back out of spite.*
- **In a covenant relationship, the good of the relationship take precedence over the immediate needs of the individual<sup>3</sup>:** IOW: I will sacrifice my wants and needs for what is best for our relationship. If taking a job could hurt us, then I will not do it; if moving away; if buying this or that, if doing that...**I don't want to hurt US!**
- **Parent-Child relationship:** A parent will do anything for what is best for their kid, even if it means sacrifice. That is also how God intended marriage to be. Our society sees that concept as strange, but that is what marriage is. (**Meatloaf: I would do anything for Love, but I won't do that...**) Often that is sacrifice self for the good of US.

<sup>1</sup> Francis Chan. *You and Me forever*. Pg. 32

<sup>2</sup> Tim and Kathy Keller. *The Meaning of Marriage*. Pg. 80-81

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Pg. 81.

- **Your marriage must be more important to you than anything else.** No other human being should get more of your love, energy, and commitment than your spouse. God asks that a man leave his father and mother, as powerful as that relationship may have been, to forge a new union that must be an even more important and powerful force in his life.

## II. What it is for: Marriage is built for Companionship.

- **THEREFORE, a man shall leave and cleave:** what is it, therefore? Points back to what God said, “*It is not good for man to be alone.*” (2:18) God created the female as a response to human loneliness. The ache of loneliness is the one ache that does not arise from sin. God created for Adam a companion; someone that was his equal but different.
- **VS. 19-23: Genesis is filled with poetry and singing;** so when Adam is naming the animals, God brings his mate to him, he starts singing: Camel, Cow, Donkey, Fish, Lion, **WOOOOOOMAN! (The First Love Song) This AT LAST:** cue Etta James: ***My love is coming on! My lonely days are over and life is like a song!*** It is as if some unfulfilled longing was being met. *There is now someone like me, but unlike me in ways I like.*
- **She shall be called Woman:** *ishshah*: wife; more literally: **MINE** (I call her): She is mine because she was taken out of me: **This is the same language found in: SoS 2:16** *My beloved is mine, and I am His.* Not a bad possessiveness or controlling; but someone that is mine that I cherish, that I desire, that I love. **My person:** of all the people in the world, you are my person. The woman was specifically made for Adam.
- **Helper Fit: EZER KENEGDO:** *helper-suitable*: someone like Adam, but unlike Adam in ways that Adam likes and needs. This is a complementarian relationship; the term “helper” does not mean “less than.” But someone who can provide help and strength in areas you are weak or need help in. (God is our Helper.)
- **Complements:** by itself, its good, but when put together is better: milk and cereal; peanut butter and chocolate; peas and carrots; beans and cornbread; Chicken nuggets and Chickfila sauce.
- **Two shall become ONE FLESH:** math of marriage is 1+1=1: the relationship between a husband and wife is unlike any other earthly relationship. Outside of your relationship with Jesus, it should be your *primary relationship*; even more than parent-child. The ONE FLESH relationship means that when you get married you are a SINGLE ENTITY.
- **In marriage, your lives are intertwined in such a way that everything about you becomes one:** your future families become one. Your future happiness and successes become one. Your bank accounts, your emotional lives, and your sexual lives where you literally become physically one. **Marriage is FRIENDSHIP with REAL BENEFITS.**
- **Jonathan Haidt<sup>4</sup>: Happiness Hypothesis: Passionate Love and Companionate Love:** **passionate love** is wildly emotional with elation and pain, anxiety and relief, altruism and jealousy co-exist. It is like a drug; it increases the serotonin in the brain and gives you a high. But it wears off in time. **Companionate love** is love that grows over time. It is mutual affection felt by two people whose lives are deeply intertwined. It grows stronger over time as the partners apply caregiving, trust, and attachment. It endures and lasts a lifetime.
- **The difference between a Flame that burns out and a Vine that grows together over time:** The first few months it starts out like a fever, hotter than a pepper sprout. But then it quickly goes out as it came in. Starts hot, ends not. But a collection of vines slowly grows together to produce an unbreakable wall. Its slow but steady and strong.
- **The OT word for marriage partner is hallup which means best friend or special confidant: Your Spouse should be your BEST FRIEND:** if someone of another gender becomes a better friend to you than your spouse, you are in trouble. They must be the one you confide in and trust the most. Someone who walks in when everyone else walks out. God created marriage to provide an intimate relationship where you can ***be fully known, fully loved without rejection.***<sup>5</sup>
- **When marriage is about friendship, you are not just looking for someone who is physically attractive or financially well-off but someone who is your equal who can be your friend.** (A friend not a fling) The first connection must be a SPIRITUAL connection. (**Marriage Pyramid**: almost every issue in your marriage starts spiritual.)
- **You should NEVER date or marry someone who is NOT a Christian.** For a marriage to truly work, you have to be open up and share the deepest parts of yourself. If you are committed to Jesus and your partner is not, when you open all of this up to them, they are not going to understand, and you may feel violated.
- **Rowing a boat:** pulling two different directions and not going to the same destination. If you marry someone who does not share your faith in Jesus, then they will constantly misunderstand you and you will have difficulties. You will be rowing in opposite directions and going nowhere. DR: *Never buy a house with someone you are not married to.*

## III. What it shows: Marriage pictures Christ and the Church.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Haidt. *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom.* Pg. 110-115

<sup>5</sup> I got this concept from Dr. William Cutrer. One of my favorite Seminary Professors of all time who is now with Jesus!

- **Genesis 2:24 is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19 and Paul in Ephesians 5:** Paul takes what Jesus and Genesis says and uses it to teach that the first marriage and all marriages give a picture of God's love for His people. God designed marriage and everything that goes with it to give us a taste of His love for us.
- **Ephesians 5:31-32** *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.*
- **Mystery:** *mega-mystery:* an extraordinarily great, wonderful, profound truth that can only be understood by the help of God's Spirit: The divine mystery of marriage and the purpose of God in uniting one man and one woman for one lifetime is to picture the relationship of Christ and the church (His people).
- **God says, "You want to know how much my Son loves his people, look at marriage." Think about this:** When God invented marriage, He already had the saving work of Jesus in mind. **Our marriages (although not perfect) picture the gospel to the world, our children and ourselves.** (God loves to paint pictures: Baptism, Marriage)
- **Husbands:** if you desert your wives, you show the world that Christ deserts his people. If you ignore her, you show that Christ wants nothing to do with his people. If you go look at porn or cheat on her, you are showing that Christ is not loyal to his people. If you do not care for your wife above your own needs and wants, then you are showing the world that Christ does not care for us. If you are hateful and hurtful, you are saying that Jesus is hateful and hurtful.
- **Wives:** if you sleep around on your husband, you are showing the world that Christ is not satisfying enough for his people. If you talk bad about him and disrespect him, you show the world that Christ is not worth our respect. If you do not follow your husband, then you are showing the world that Christ is not worth following.
- **Any deviation, distortion, or perversion of and from God's design for marriage is a big deal to God and should be a big deal to us:** this is why divorce, or sex outside of marriage or same-sex marriage is wrong because it is not what God originally designed. Any change from what God has designed is not God's best for our lives and is a SMEAR, SMACK and STAIN on God's honor and the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- **What our marriage pictures is what we need to make our marriages work.** *The Gospel teaches us that Jesus gave himself up and died to himself to save us and make us His forever.* Now we give ourselves up, we die to ourselves, first when we repent and believe the gospel and later as we submit to His will day by day. **The gospel is what gives us the pattern and the power to make our marriage work, day by day.**
- **Keller:** *The reason that marriage is so painful and yet so wonderful is because it reflects 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<sup>6</sup>.*
- **The gospel gives me the power to forgive when I've been wrong. The humility to say that I am sorry when I have wronged my spouse. The patience I need to love my spouse. The grace to overcome difficulties in life. The common mission that keeps us moving forward together. The vision for the future in the midst of the uncertainty of life.**

**Application:** A few years ago, when my kids were little, we put together a big piece puzzle of Mickey Mouse and we got to the end and one piece was missing. It was the middle piece that was Mickey's face. The one piece that makes the whole puzzle make sense was missing. We (I) looked everywhere for it. Could not find it for anything, in frustration, we (I) just took the puzzle apart and put it back in the box and threw it away.

**Could it be that the one thing missing in your marriage is the greatest need for your marriage?**

Your greatest need in marriage is NOT to read more books, have more money or a better sex life. Your greatest need in marriage is Jesus Christ at the center of it. You need the gospel every day. Reminding you what is truly important. **What may be missing in your marriage is the only One who can give you the strength you need in your marriage. (Music Starts)**

**During my typical Wedding sermon, I say:** *God's design for marriage is not to make us happy but to make us holy. Our marriages point us to the fact we desperately need a Savior. We do not have the resources or the ability to love our spouses the way that Christ loves us. But if you want to stay together and love one another, then Christ must be at the center of your life. He must be the glue that holds you together. As you both grow more like Him, you will both grow closer together.*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Pg. 88.

**April and I have been married almost 14 years.** There have been good days and bad days, rich days and poor days, sick days and healthy days, but the strength of our marriage is not in how we feel in the moment, how much money is in the bank or even our happiness that day but it is in the promises we made and Person we trust in the most: Jesus.

**Who are you trusting in the most for your life? Who is the One you are depending on?**

If there ever was a time, we needed Jesus it is now. **(Call Husbands and Wives to Pray together)**