

Genesis 2:15-25

The Purpose of Marriage

Introduction:

I read an article a few months back on how far we have gotten away from the traditional views of marriage but also in our treatment of the actual marriage ceremony. This article talked about Vegas weddings that are often themed - tailoring to people's personalities. It said, "People are connecting romance to nerd stories like 'Lord of the Rings' or 'Star Trek,' ... "It makes sense they'd want to carry that over into real life, which is why they're gravitating toward weddings where you become a participatory part of the story."

Each generation beginning with the baby boomers has moved away from traditional ceremonies, he added. "Even though the boomers chipped away at traditional weddings, and X'ers chipped away at it a little more," he said. "Millennials are chipping away at it the most."

The interesting thing I found in the article was that these people are moving away from tradition (The big white dress, the large party, traditional vows) But also they want to integrate a story, but a story of their own choosing. That is something to think about because the Bible says that marriage is already based on a story, it is the story of God's covenantal love for his people. It's fascinating to me (and often missed) how the Bible begins and ends with a marriage - like two book ends, telling us that each individual marriage (though potentially glorious, and powerful in itself) is simply a picture of something far, far, greater and far, far, more fulfilling. Marriage is to be a picture, a foretaste of God's "never stopping, never giving up, un-breaking, always and forever love."

We have gotten so far away, not from "tradition", but from truth and purpose of marriage.

"The Bible's teaching on Marriage does not merely reflect the perspective of any one culture or time (tradition). The teachings of Scripture challenge our contemporary Western culture's narrative of individual freedom as the only way to be happy. At the same time it critiques how traditional cultures perceive the unmarried adult to be less than a fully formed human being. The book of Genesis radically critiques the institution of polygamy, even though it was the accepted cultural practice of the time, by vividly depicting

the misery and havoc it plays in family relationships, and the pain it caused especially for women. The New testament writers, in a way that startled the pagan world, lifted up long term singleness as a legitimate way to live. In other words, the Biblical authors' teaching constantly challenged their own cultures' beliefs - they were not just a product of ancient mores and practices." - Tim Keller

The Presbyterian book of common worship says, God "established marriage for the welfare and happiness of humankind." Marriage did not evolve in the late Bronze Age as a way to determine property rights as secular culture would lead us to believe. At the climax of the Genesis account of creation we see God bringing a woman and a man together to unite them in marriage. The Bible begins with a wedding (of Adam and Eve) and ends in the book of Revelation with a wedding (of Christ and the Church). Marriage is God's idea. It is certainly also a human institution, and it reflects the character of the particular human culture in which it is embedded. But the concept and roots of human marriage are in God's own action, and therefore what the Bible says about God's design for marriage is crucial....If marriage is instituted by God like the book of Genesis says, then God also regulates marriage and those who enter into marriage, or desire to should make every effort to understand and submit to his purposes for it....

1. What is Marriage?

1. Marriage - is a sacred, life long, monogamous, covenant between a man and a woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God (whether or not this is acknowledged by the married couple), normally consummated by sexual intercourse.

2. What is the Purpose of Marriage?

1. **Companionship** -From the Genesis record we see that the first purpose of marriage is companionship.
 1. **"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for[e] him." -Genesis 2:18**
 2. God looked at the loneliness of man and provided for him a companion, a help mate, a friend, someone to do life with.
 3. This is usually the last thing that we consider in a potential spouse. Men usually look for a sexual partner -beauty. And

women are looking for financial stability - wealth. But what we should be looking for, first and foremost, is a companion.

4. In our generation the order of love is usually sexual first, if there is sexual compatibility then it moves to affection, affection gives way to commitment (sacrifice and service) and then finally an attempt to make a friendship out of the already intimate relationship. In Christianity the order is first to be friendship, then affection, then commitment, then once commitment (marriage) has been made then sexual love comes.

2. Procreation

1. **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” -Genesis 1:27-28**
2. God’s original intent is that the Creation would be filled with his image bearers who would rule over his good creation- as male and female. -Male and Female sexual relationship in marriage usually results in children. Family, communities, culture all of this has come from the mandate to procreate..

3. The Public Good - God created marriage for the good of society.

1. **Paul In 1 Corinthians 7 teaches that, because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. - Emphasizing chastity in our singleness and marriage relationships.**
1. Christopher Ash says, “This public good encompasses the benefits of ordered and regulated sexual relationships in human society (marriage). Undisciplined and disordered sexual behavior must be restrained, for it carries with it a high social and personal cost in family breakdown, destructive jealousies, resentments, bitterness, and hurt. Ordered behavior (chastity) is to be encouraged because this has benefits that extend beyond the couple to the children, neighbors and the wider networks of relational society.”

4. To Make us Holy

1. During the Enlightenment, there was a major shift in thinking..obviously. The meaning of life came to be seen as the freedom of the individual to choose the life that most fulfills him or her personally. Now, instead of finding meaning through self denial, through giving up one's freedoms, and binding oneself to the duties of marriage and family, marriage was redefined as finding emotional and sexual fulfillment and self actualization... Marriage has become about individual happiness, coining such phrases as the "Me-Marriage", it is now simply another means to serve self and find personal fulfillment.
 1. Therefore modern society tells us to remain unmarried until you find the "perfect person", who fits you, who won't challenge you, who won't change you, inhibit your freedom, or hinder your potential.
 2. Ernest Becker comments that whereas passed generations looked to God and the afterlife for meaning in life, hope for the future, moral compass, and self identity, we now look to romantic love. We look to sex and romance to give us what we used to get from God - He says, "The love partner becomes the divine ideal within which to fulfill one's life. All spiritual and moral needs now become focused in one individual... In one word, the love object is God...Man reached for a "thou" when the world-view of the great religious community overseen by God died...After all, what is it that we want when we elevate the love partner to the position of God? We want redemption - nothing less."
2. While our culture sees the purpose of marriage as personal satisfaction, the Bible says the purpose of marriage is personal sanctification: **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless"** (Eph. 5:25-27).
3. According to Scripture, marriage is one of the best possible ways to learn about our sins and grow in knowledge of the gospel. We also see that this process of sanctifying marriage requires sacrifice on the part of each spouse. The self sacrifice of both

husband and wife is required in the Biblical idea of marriage. Each under goes a kind of death of self for the good of the other and for the health of the marriage..

1. 3 simple step type books or talks about marriage will only help us momentarily and superficially because there is a deeper question that needs to be asked beyond, "how we can improve our marriages", and that is: What if God didn't design marriage to be "easier"? What if God had an end in mind that went beyond our happiness, our comfort, and our desire to be infatuated and happy as if the world were a perfect place? "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?...Your marriage is more than a sacred covenant with another person. It is a spiritual discipline designed to help you know God better, trust him more fully, and love him more dearly." -Gary Thomas
 4. It's no wonder marriages are in the state that they are in both in the church and the surrounding culture - we have made marriage an end in itself and when it doesn't deliver, we are disillusioned, thinking, well we aren't sexually compatible, or I guess we just have "irreconcilable differences", either we move on to the next marriage, or we throw it out all together. Could it be our modern view of marriage puts a crushing weight on marriage that it was never meant to carry??
 5. This goes back to what we were saying about friendship last week (Faithful are the wounds of a friend). Marriage like friendship isn't designed to affirm you in all your selfishness and pride (and by the way, you are selfish and prideful), to tell you, "you are fine just the way that you are." Marriage is meant to challenge you, and change you into your best self, the Self that God created you to be. Husbands and wives aren't committed to each other because we, in our natural state, are amazing human beings but we are committed to what we will be - to the work that God is making us into, forming us into the image of Christ. -This should really cause us to re-think the idea of compatibility.
- 3. To Be a Sign**
1. **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the**

church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.^[a] ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

2. Ephesians 5 tells us that marriage is not ultimately about sex or social stability or personal fulfillment; rather, marriage was created to be a human reflection of the ultimate love relationship with the Lord. This High view of marriage, also, shows us that marriage is only penultimate (second best). It points to the true marriage that our souls need and the true family our hearts want. No marriage can ultimately give us what we most desire and truly need. Christ is the only spouse who can truly fulfill us and God's family the only family that will truly embrace and satisfy us.
3. According to Ephesians 5, even Christians married to Christians will do a terrible job of conducting their marriage if they lack a love relationship with Christ. If we don't have that, married people will put too much pressure on their marriage to fulfill them, and that will always create pathology in their life. Similarly, if singles don't have the same fulfilling love relationship with Jesus, they will put that pressure on their dream of marriage, which will create pathology in their life as well.
4. Similarly, if singles don't have the same fulfilling love relationship with Jesus, they will put that pressure on their dream of marriage, which will create pathology in their life as well. But if singles rest in and rejoice in their marriage to Christ, they will be able to handle single life without devastating loneliness. Singles must realize that

the very same idolatry of marriage that is distorting their single life would (or will) distort their married life.

Conclusion: If marriage is ultimately a picture of Christ and the Church then we need to get our queue's from Jesus who did not seek his own self fulfillment, but emptied himself, died to his own self interest and became a servant, dying in our place so we could be forgiven, so that we could be brought in, so we could receive the love and goodness of the Father, so we could receive glory and immortality. The scripture exhorts us -Husbands love your wives in this same way. Wives submit to your husbands as the church submits to Christ..

When God designed marriage he already had Christ and the church in mind. This is one of God's great purposes in marriage: to picture the relationship between Christ and the redeemed people.

Tim Keller says, "Marriage only "works" to the degree that it approximates the pattern of God's self giving love in Christ."

Is the purpose of marriage to deny your interests for the good of the family, or is it rather to assert your interests for the fulfillment of yourself? The Christian teaching does not offer a choice between fulfillment and sacrifice but rather mutual fulfillment through mutual sacrifice.

If you feel like your marriage is in a dry season, or headed for the rocks, if you feel off, or just missing one another, if you feel unfulfilled... Paul says, Start here: Do for your spouse what God did for you in Jesus, and the rest will follow. Let the Gospel be the power and the pattern for your marriage.