

“Marriage By Design”

Gen. 2:18-25

2.17.08

Pastor Scott has been preaching a sermon on developing a Christian world-view. Developing a Christian world-view is like making a cake. There are many ingredients to that cake. Each ingredient is important to the whole. The past several weeks he has been camped out in Genesis 1. We have been reminded that there is strong evidence to believe in intelligent design. But more than that, we have been given strong evidence that the God of the Bible is the Creator of all out of nothing. Why is it important that God is the creator? If God is not the creator of all we see and don't see then our existence can be attributed to luck. So if our existence is all about chance then there really is no purpose for humanity. But it is not just about lacking purpose, we would also lack a moral authority over our lives. If God is not the creator then there is no one greater than man who can tell us what is right and wrong. So if man is the greatest creature then no one has the right to say what is true. Therefore, each person is their own judge on what is right or wrong. What might be wrong for you could be right for me.

But there is a God who created us with a purpose. And He is our moral authority. What He says is the law. In future weeks, Pastor Scott will be continuing to flesh out a Christian world-view- how we see and experience life. He will be delving into other topics found in Genesis 1 & 2 as well as other passages from Scripture. Next week he will be explaining what it means to be made in the image of God.

This morning I am going to be adding an ingredient to a correct Christian world-view. We are going to be exploring the first institution that God created. In order to have a correct or right Christian world-view we need to see this institution through God's eyes. The first institution that God put into place was marriage.

Marriage has received a bad name as a result of several issues. First, the divorce rate is high. Between 40-50% of marriages end in divorce. That means 1 out of 2 marriages are terminated. Those are not good odds. How many people would get on a plane that had a 50% chance of landing safely? How many people would get on a cruise ship that had a 50% chance of sinking? Second, many have been the victims of divorce. These children and adults have seen first hand what a bad divorce can do to one's health, dreams, and future. More than half of the twentysomethings interviewed in a Gallup survey agreed that "one sees so few good or happy marriages today that one questions it as a way of life." Among single young adults, the same percentage said that one of their biggest concerns about marriage is "the

possibility that it will end in divorce." This fear of marriage has created an epidemic among couples to choose to live together first as a "trial run" to see if they are compatible. Unfortunately, the divorce rate is even higher for those who live together prior to marriage. Studies have found that close to 75% of couples who live together before marriage end in divorce. And those facts don't even speak to how many couples who lived together broke up causing similar pain like a divorce. Some of these couples that broke up had children together.

The reason divorce is so prevalent in our day is because many people have forgotten what marriage is all about. Dr. Bill Maier has said, "I think there is a real selfishness in our culture; there is a real self-centeredness — 'it's all about me and my happiness and my fulfillment,'" he said. "Unfortunately, when it comes to relationships, if we don't put the other [person] first, if we don't focus on our spouse's well-being, our relationship is probably going to be destined to fail."

It is a true statement to say that no marriage has ever failed that was lived according to God's Word. Divorce is a result of people not living according to God's Word. This morning, we are going to be taking a look at what a marriage designed by God looks like. We are going to see that there are four components in a marriage designed by Him. Each component is essential to having the kind of marriage that God intended.

Please turn with me to Genesis chapter 2 verses 18-25. **[SLIDE]**

The first components is: **[SLIDE]**

A marriage designed by God requires a man and woman.

That statement is very controversial these days- that marriage requires a man and woman. But I say this not to cause controversy or to spend time railing against the same sex marriage issue. Rather, I am just expressing what the Genesis account says about the marriage that God designed. God made marriage for a man and woman to experience together. So let's take a closer look at the why a man and woman are required for a marriage designed by God.

First, Genesis 1:27 says that God made men and women in His image. That means that a man and a woman are needed to reflect the image of God. Pastor Scott will be preaching on this next week so I won't go into great detail. But let me just say that creation would not be complete if there were only males or only females on the earth. For us to reflect God's image there needs to be male and female. God is Spirit. He is neither male nor female. But some traits of God are reflected in the masculine side of man and the feminine side of woman. God's traits that reflect the masculine side of man are expressed in strength and power and those traits that reflect a feminine side are mercy and gentleness. We see many

passages on the masculine powerful side but oftentimes we forget the sensitive more feminine side. Listen to Jesus in Matt 23, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” So together male and female better reflect the image of God.

Second, men and women complement and correspond to one another. Adam had everything he could ever hope for. He had the most beautiful place to live. He had a lush garden that was watered by a river running through his property. That river (because it was Eden) must’ve had some beautiful trout or steelhead waiting to be caught. And Adam could eat like he was in an all you can eat buffet at any time. God gave him work to do- to tend to the garden which didn’t have any weeds- until after the Fall. And God was visibly and physically present to shoot the breeze with. Adam was healthy- sickness didn’t come into the equation until after the Fall. Though he seemingly had everything he could ever wish for, God said something profound in verse 18, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” A suitable helper means that Eve is of the same nature and Adam but also was unique. Together, they became the finishing touches on a creation that God called “good”.

Do you know how Adam came to call this creature woman? He had been naming all the different animals, “Aardvark, Bat, Three toed Sloth, Giraffe, Horn face- or Rhinoceros, Cheetah, uhhmmm Platypus.” After naming all the animals he realized there was no one like him. He tried to make small talk with a Grizzly but it was too much of a bear. Finally, God put him to sleep. As Adam was sleeping God took a rib and used it to create a different human creature. After waking up Adam noticed this beautiful, shapely thing coming his way and couldn’t help himself. He exclaimed- “WO Man.” And that is how she became known as a woman.

God is so wise in bringing men and women together. Men don’t complement and correspond to men. Women don’t complement and correspond to women. What a man lacks a woman has as a strength. What a woman lacks a man has as a strength.

I hope you realize that men and women are different. Those differences are gifts that God gives. The differences are wonderful and yet they can also be frustrating. Listen to Dan Allender share a funny description on how different he and his wife are: “Over time I have wondered many times whether I indeed married a woman or an alien. She is odd, extraordinarily odd. She wants to snuggle; I want sex. She wants to talk; I want to read. She wants to read; I want to shoot the breeze. She wants sex and I want sex, but somehow even with the same desire, the process seems destined for futility given a dog that is

barking two blocks down the road or her concern (which I hear about later) that I've forgotten to change the furnace filter.”

God doesn't want husbands to make their wives more masculine. Nor does He want wives to make their husbands more feminine. I could spend another sermon alone on the differences between men and women. The bottom line is that God wants husbands and wives to appreciate and be thankful for the differences. That is what makes marriage so interesting.

It is not good for man or woman to be alone. God created us for personal relationships. So if you are single either by choice or not by choice it is important to be around people. It is not good for any of us to be alone. Develop strong relationships with people that can be encouragers. They will help you to grow. Some of you may strongly desire to be married. Entrust yourself to God. God is the ultimate match maker. Give your desires and hopes to Him. While you wait, wait patiently. And as you wait patiently give yourself fully to serving God. Utilize the free time you have to serve Him with increased fervor. As you wait for the right person work to become the right person. If God could meet Adam's need for a wife when no woman even existed, don't you think that God could bring a mate into your life? Three of my best friends are in their mid to late 30's and still single and not by choice. I am waiting to see God bring wives into their lives. I think they'd agree that they would rather marry the right person even if it took a while rather than marry the wrong person earlier in life. It is difficult to be single when you want to be married. But it is worse to be married to someone who treats you very poorly.

A marriage designed by God requires a man and a woman. Second, **[SLIDE]**

A marriage designed by God requires leaving.

Verse 24 of chapter 2 is one of the most quoted verses in wedding ceremonies- “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” God's design is for couples to leave their father and mother. In OT times, son's rarely left the home after marriage. They remained intact within the family because that is where the land and the future inheritance resided. So couples in that generation did not depart geographically or financially. Leaving means a spouse will create privacy and make his marriage the main priority over all other relationships. There are to be no commitments or loyalties that surpass the marriage relationship- other than his or her relationship with God.

I can remember early on in my marriage when Andrea and I experienced the struggle with the leaving principle. It was a small problem but it explains the principle. We were meeting Andrea's parents in Los

Angeles. At this particular time I had not seen my wife for close to 10 days. She had been flying a lot and couldn't get home. That night we all arrived on separate planes and then went to a Mexican restaurant. Andrea's father said, "Annie, come sit with me." Andrea, without discussing it with me, went over and sat right next to her father and mother. There I sat several seats away from her. I don't normally get frustrated easily but that got me a little mad. Afterwards, I explained the situation to Andrea- who is such a good wife. Leaving means that we belong to each other and therefore, we are the priority. If Andrea had come up to me and said, "Honey, do you mind if I sit with my dad?" that would've been completely fine with me. Neither her parents nor my mother are the priority. Our marriage is the priority.

We are commanded to honor our parents but honoring is never to be assumed to be more important than leaving. In reality, we can honor our father and mother only if we have first created the proper boundary to serve and protect our spouse.

Your spouse is to be your priority. No other human relationship or work or ministry should have a higher place in your life. Parents, that means your children should not be a higher priority than your spouse or marriage. Kids do not make the family. Your marriage is the nucleus of the family and children are added to it. Loyalty to children is one of the biggest problems to marriages. Many families live by the motto "Whatever my children need or want" whether they realize it or not.

Andrea met a plastic surgeon on a plane about a year ago. He shared how his marriage was so wonderful until the kids came along. It was not like he was mad that he had children. He loved his children. However, each child eroded the marriage relationship. After three children the wife focused all her attention on them and left nothing for the most important relationship. He shared that after working very hard to provide a good life for the family, he would often come home to a sign in the kitchen that read, "Kitchen closed. Fend for yourself." That couple is now divorced. Children are important. But they should not be the main priority. The best thing you can do for your children is to model a growing and happy marriage. They find happiness when you are happy together.

Leaving does not mean cutting off completely from family, friends or care structures. It means that we set good boundaries so that the marriage remains #1. Leaving also means the power to make decisions comes from the marriage not from outside sources. Outside sources like parents can make suggestions but the decision should come from the couple.

Is there anything that is a higher priority than your marriage? If so, it is time to leave. It is time to put your marriage where God designed it to be. But God requires more than just leaving. The third component of a marriage designed by God is: **[SLIDE]**

A marriage designed by God requires cleaving

The word cleave is translated as “be united” in the NIV. The Hebrew word for “cleave” has the notion or idea of sticking together. It’s the kind of marital version of Super Glue. It means that marriage is to be one of the highest forms of closeness and intimacy. And it means that your marriage is to last for a lifetime.

How do couples’ cleave? They do it by talking and listening. Talking and listening isn’t really what men want to hear as the solution. Men and women are so different in this area. I am sure you have heard that the average man speaks about 15,000 words a day while most women speak around 25,000 words. If a man is in a sales job he may use up all his words before he arrives home in the evening. If a woman is a stay-at-home mom with a few children she may only use up 5,000 words- mostly saying the word, “no”. So what happens to this couple when the husband get’s home? The wife is so anxious to talk about life and he is ready to put his vocal cords on the dresser to be picked up the next morning before work.

Another difference in the area of communication between husband and wife are the topics that are discussed. Men report. We report something that happened at work or what the weather is going to be like or how our favorite team did in a recent game. Women on the other hand rapport. They like to converse about relationships and feelings. Though they may care about how your team did, they would be more interested in how you felt when your team won or lost. Hawkeye fans have a lot to cry about. Men, you might consider sharing with your wives the pain you are going through this basketball season. But talking about feelings for a guy is like losing control of your car near a huge cliff- very scary.

Another difference is the desired outcome with sharing. When women share they just want to be listened to. When men share they want solutions. So when husbands share their wives don’t try to fix the problems. They feel the conversation and try to put themselves in their husband’s shoes. When wives share, husbands, sincerely out of love and doing what comes naturally, try to fix the situation which is not what they want. Wives want to be heard and understood. They want us husbands to put ourselves in their shoes and feel how they might’ve felt.

Dan Allender shares the story about a close friend: his friend’s wife “told how she had become irritated with a store clerk. Amazed at how riled up she was, he spent a good portion of the first ten minutes

saying, 'Whoa, now. You are overreacting. It's not that big of a deal.' After repeated efforts to tell her story, she just slammed down her water glass, said, 'I'm finished,' and walked away. He was about to shrug it off as an odd aberration, but for some reason he followed her to the bedroom and apologized. He said, 'I was wrong to try and calm you down. She obviously hurt your feelings, and I don't yet understand why it got to you like it did, but I don't want to end the discussion where we left it.' His wife was stunned. In the eleven years of marriage, he had never before pursued a discussion that had ended poorly. As surprised as she was, he felt awkward but jumped into the deep end. He asked, 'What did she trigger in you? Have you felt that way ever before?' The discussion lasted an hour. His questions were sincere, and she answered them. The data that came to the surface involved years of feeling patronized by her father and being under constant pressure from her mother not to upset her father. Once when she was a little girl, she said, she had simply asked a clerk for help to try on a dress, and her mother made it a capital offense to have imposed on the clerk. The child had a meltdown and brought the whole section of the department store into a deadly quiet. Her father was mortified, her mother was enraged, and she learned to hate shopping. My friend was at a loss. He learned a great deal about her father and mother, her hatred of shopping, the fear of making a scene, and her reluctance to ever ask anyone to help. 'In about an hour,' he told me, 'I felt like I was introduced to a woman I knew but had never met.' Several weeks later I talked to my friend's wife about what had happened after that night. She said, 'He went shopping with me about a week after I told the story, and he said I had to ask for help. When I got frustrated with myself or the clerk, he soothed me and reminded me that I was on my own and my mom and dad were not there. It may sound crazy, but we've never felt closer in our marriage.'" Husbands, how much of your wife lays dormant because you rarely engage her heart in safe and meaningful conversation?

Talking and listening to more than facts will cause cleaving. Women tend to be good at listening and talking so the question is really focused on us men. How are we using the 15,000 words we have during the day? Are we using them up before we see our wives? Are we quiet and communicate with only grunts when we get home? God commands us to cleave which means we need to join our wives in conversations about feelings and relationships without solving them. I am a man too so it doesn't come naturally for me. I still have to work at talking and listening to my wife. Sometimes when I do not know how to respond to something my wife says I quickly ask God for wisdom. He is good about helping me to meet my wife's needs at that moment. Do the work of cleaving so your marriage will reflect the kind of marriage God requires. I tell you what, if you cleave with your wife through frequent communication and she feels you really understand and appreciate her, not even Brad Pitt could sweep her off her feet. You will have already done that.

And the fourth component is: **[SLIDE]**

A marriage designed by God requires intimacy.

Verse 24 refers to intimacy as “becoming one flesh”. One flesh is created through sexual union. Okay, I have all the married men’s attention now. For some of you in this room you are quite interested in what I am about to say. For others, you are now feeling a little uncomfortable. Shouldn’t this be a private conversation not spoken about in mixed company? Let me be clear. God wants us to understand that sex is an important part of marriage. If you do not believe me, spend some time reading Song of Songs. There is no clearer, descriptive book of the Bible regarding sex. In fact, I would probably blush if I had to read some of the passages out loud to you. It is God’s design for married couples to give themselves to one another. Is there anything more vulnerable than giving of yourself sexually? Gary Rosberg writes, “Sex has the potential to be the most profoundly satisfying and rich part of a marriage. Sex the way God intended it be expressed- within the context of a loving, serving relationship between a husband and a wife- is a mysterious and sacred act that knits a couple together in ways that are beyond description...words fail when we try to describe the oneness that a husband and wife feel after giving their bodies to each other.” This oneness that husbands and wives feel is a reflection of the oneness between Jesus Christ and His body, the church. Listen to Eph. 5:31-32, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

The result of this one flesh is deep intimacy- an intimacy that creates safety within the marriage so we can be like Adam and Eve who “were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

For some of you sex is a dirty word. Maybe you have been taught growing up that sex is bad without ever hearing that sex is a gift of God to be enjoyed in the context of marriage. Or maybe some of you may have experienced great pain or shame as a result of sexual abuse or past experimentation. God desires to heal your mind and heart. He wants you to be free to experience all that sex is to be in marriage. Dan Allender writes, “The most crucial theological truth about sexuality is that God loves sex and evil hates it. God made us sexual, and He glories in His plan for our union and joy. Evil hates what God loves, and it has found that more harm can be done through sex than perhaps through any other means.” Fight evil or Satan by being cleansed by your Heavenly Father. Allow God to change your view of sex so that you can experience the deep intimacy that He designed in marriage. If you are struggling in this area I would really encourage you to seek counseling from a pastor or a Christian counselor. Satan

wants to hold your past over your head to shame you. God wants to free you from your past to experience a wonderful future.

Men and women value sex differently. I think that is God's way of getting a good laugh. There are a couple of questions I can't wait to ask God one day when I see Him face to face. First, why did you create men and women with different thermostats? I can be extremely warm and Andrea will need a blanket. One of the greatest inventions known to man is the dual climate controls in a car. The second question I will ask is: why did you create men and women to have different desires regarding the frequency of sex? On a side note, as I was thinking about this sermon I had a unique thought. Did you know that before the Fall Eve never had a headache? Why did she have to eat that fruit?

Dr. Gary & Barbara Rosberg wrote *The Five Sex Needs of Men and Women*. In it they reveal that men and women have different desires when it comes to sex. The top three sex needs of men are mutual satisfaction, connection, and responsiveness of wife. The top three sex needs of women are: affirmation, connection and nonsexual touch. Out of the top five of each, only two are the same- connection as #2 for both men and women and affirmation which is #1 for women and #5 for men. The bottom line is it takes work for both the husband and wife to have a satisfying sex life. It doesn't just come naturally. But many married couples say it is worth the effort.

Before we get off the topic of sex let me share one comment to the wives here and one to the husbands. I often say to the young couples that I do premarital counseling with that sex is like going to Disneyworld. And then I say to the men present, if you had the keys to Disneyworld wouldn't you go every day? Unfortunately, you do not hold the keys. Your future wife does.

Wives, sex should not be used as a reward or as a weapon. Andrea has met several flight attendants who use sex as a way to punish their husbands. They choose to not have sex sometimes for months at a time. That is not love. Love does not manipulate. God's Word expresses the responsibility to share our bodies with our spouse. Listen to 1 Cor. 7:3-5, "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.⁴ The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.⁵ Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." Wives, one of the best ways to affair proof your marriage is to satisfy your husbands. A wife of one of my seminary professor's once gave advice to the wives whose husbands were studying to be pastors. She

said to them, “Your job is to seduce the pastor.” Wives, your job is to seduce your husband. Seek to meet his needs.

This next comment is for the husbands. Our wives’ sexual desires often develop gradually as a result of how we treat them. **We cannot treat them poorly and then expect them to be interested in making love.** They may still make love but they will begin to feel resentment and feel used rather than loved. Instead, express love and affirmation throughout the day and your wife will more likely be interested in sexual intimacy. Notice I said “more likely” because there is no equation that works regularly. There is no if I just do this and that then my wife will be interested. Much more plays into your wife’s interest level than your proper treatment. So there will be times when you have done all the right things and your wife will still say no. Don’t take it personally. In reality, your wife may be extremely fatigued or emotionally spent and cannot give back what she feels she should. A wife wants to be completely present because giving of herself is such a vulnerable thing to do. She doesn’t take making love lightly. Therefore, there are times when you will need to exercise patience and self-control- especially if your wife is a mother. Babies and young children drain life and energy out of their mothers. God says love is patient.

There are many books available today that go into depth regarding how to have a satisfying sexual relationship with your spouse. If you are struggling in this area consider picking one up and reading it to get a different perspective. It will be well worth it.

If husbands and wives would leave, cleave and experience sexual intimacy as God has designed for our marriages there would be much more happy marriages for the next generation to see. And ultimately God would get the glory for these marriages. Each couple in this room has a choice to make. What kind of marriage do you want? Do you want a failing marriage, receive a passing grade or do you want to get an A in your marriage? Just like in school, it takes more work in order to get a better grade. So what do you choose? If you have kids they want you to work for an A.

Let’s pray