

Marriage and Family: God's Good Plan for Life and Blessing

Genesis 1:27–28; 2:18–25

The last two weeks we've dealt with the goodness of God in creation, including the creation of male and female. His goodness involves both what he created — his **work** — and how he **regulates and defines** creation — his **word**, and his **reason and purpose** for his creation — his **ways**. Each of these overlap and interconnect with each other so that I learn something of each from the others. How God made me reveals his purposes for me. I am not created with wings; I cannot flap my arms and fly. But I can use my arms to work as God commands.

God is glorified in creation itself; it displays his majesty and wisdom. And he is glorified as we submit to his word and walk in his ways. His authority and goodness are displayed in our lives as we obey him. A watching world sees God's wisdom and authority as we joyfully obey him. His commands are life; they are not burdensome. They produce happiness and satisfy his obedient child. We get an eye-opening hint of the happiness that comes from embracing God's design when Adam, having recovered from the first thoracic surgery, has Eve brought to him. That's a good starting place for us. Let's read the account of the first marriage and the institution of the family in Genesis 1 and 2.

1:27 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."

2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." **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. **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. **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."

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²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

PRAY —

Let's first consider man's response in **v 23** when God selects his wife and brings her to him, thus instituting marriage for all human history.

Have you ever found the perfect Christmas gift for someone and then watched with great delight and anticipation as they opened it? They open it, have that first look and take a big gasp with their mouth wide open. Part of the joy you get in giving it is their response. What a letdown it would be if that person opened your gift, pulled out their phone and began going through a checklist of things they wanted and finally said, "Well yes, it's useful, it's the right color, it has a good warranty, it'll do what I need to do. When God, the giver of good and perfect gifts, brings Eve to Adam we know that the reason is that Adam was lonely; he needed someone fit for him. Adam's happiness in God's work, word, and ways overwhelms the language's ability to capture it. I know our English translations look like a checklist: this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. Hebrew scholars tell us the language is incredibly poetic, and difficult to grasp with ink on a page. Rather than a checklist, when he sees her his response is akin to, "Wow! Look at that!" Men have not changed.

So with joy and goodness spilling out all over the place, God institutes marriage and the family for his glory, and for our good, our blessing, and human flourishing.

Observe: God instituted and established marriage; it is not a human creation. He established it for his purposes. One purpose was **communion**. Adam was lonely. He needed a helper out of flesh and bone that he could commune with. But that wasn't the only reason. God's command, his word, is that they were to **be fruitful and multiply**. He established marriage as the means through which fruitfulness and multiplication would occur. In God's beautiful design in creating us as sexual beings — male and female — both communion and multiplication are achieved in the sexual union. Fruitfulness is absolutely accomplished. Babies are formed and are treasure and heritage from the Lord. But dispatching loneliness is also fulfilled there. More there in a moment.

What God intends for marriage is revealed by what he has done: He creates man, then a woman out of man as helper and companion — then formally gives her to Adam. It is marriage for their lifetimes.

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Marriage is of God from beginning to end. We do not have the authority to tamper with it. When it is tampered with, it is no longer marriage from God's perspective. Departure from God's plan is not only a departure from what he intends, but departure from life, blessing, and human flourishing. Wrath, death, and cursing always result from rejecting God's work, word, and ways. We can't change that.

Teasing out the restrictive boundaries that God places around the institution of marriage, let's observe that marriage is to endure for all of human history as God designed it in the beginning. The paradigm of Genesis 2 does not morph — it does not change forms to suit human notions.

First, the permanence of marriage between one man and one woman was **codified in the 10 Commandments**, well after the fall into sin of Genesis 3. **You shall not commit adultery** (Exodus 20:14) restricts sexual expression to a man and his wife — not whatever number wife he is on at the present, but his singular wife. Jesus makes that clear, as we are about to see.

Second, Jesus pointed to the ***"in the beginning"*** standard of Genesis 2 when questioned in Matthew 19 and Mark 10. We preached on the Mark 10 passage earlier this summer. I encourage you to review it and bask in the beauty of a marriage that is shaped as a pointer to the relationship Christ has with his bride, the Church. Let's review what Jesus says about marriage as we read the account of those who want to bend it around their lust and pride.

Matthew 19:3–6 — ³And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

These men wanted to reshape and misuse for their sinful desires what God created and instituted for his purposes. The assault on marriage has been going on for a long time. It is not recorded here, but I can imagine the arguments: **"Well, Jesus, marriage like that was created before the fall into sin. You quoted Genesis 2. But Genesis 3 changed everything and it's a lot harder now. God gave Adam a sinless wife, but you ought to see my wife. She is a massive sinner. I can't be expected to deal with that for the rest of my life."** And ladies, lest you think I'm letting men off the hook, let me say, it takes one to know one. Every marriage has brokenness built-in, because every marriage is composed of two people who are both massive sinners in desperate need of grace. Don't be surprised and don't be overwhelmed by difficulty in marriage. God will use the gift of marriage to sandpaper you sanctification you and teach you things difficult to learn in any of their way.

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But getting back to what Jesus says, he does not allow them to alter or bend marriage to suit their whims. He goes back to the beginning; he goes to Genesis 2. The structure of marriage in Genesis 2 remains the source of good, life, and blessing after Genesis 3. Is it harder now? Sure seems like it. But God's commands for our good in marriage allow us to experience life, blessing, and flourishing as husband and wife submit to what God instituted. He is serious about the permanence of the human marriage relationship — 'til death do you part — not only for our good, but for his glory. It pictures the glory of the Savior Jesus and his relationship to his bride, the Church. Jesus is faithful to his bride, never forsaking her. Therefore a husband is to be faithful to his bride, never forsaking her.

So marriage is God's institution, created and designed by him for his purposes. It is restricted to one man and one woman until death dissolves the marriage bond. We have no authority to alter it, and God makes no adjustments to it. As it was in the beginning, it shall be to the close of human history.

Next, let's observe that marriage is a sexual union that is blessed by God.

Gen 1:28a — And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..."

Gen. 2:24–25 — ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Be fruitful and multiply. Life, blessing, and human flourishing is fleshed out in marital union. Marriage is certainly more than God's exclusive plan for sexual expression, but it is not less.

The Conjugal Union Reveals God's Goodness

The blessing of the conjugal union reveals God's goodness in his work, word, and ways.

- In his **work** — the complimentary design of male and female,
- his **word** — be fruitful and multiply, and
- his **ways** — it is not good that man should be alone.

Marital intimacy is part of the cure for what is "not good" — loneliness. Marital intimacy creates a union between two souls that irradicates loneliness on a level that defies explanation: they become one flesh. The mingling of souls in the marriage bed is blessed by God and undoes the first malady described in the Bible. Do not neglect God's goodness in this regard at any stage of life. The Apostle Paul takes up this subject in **1 Corinthians 7:5** — **Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by**

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agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Some sweet encouragement here: The marriage bed is the only place in a Genesis 3 world where innocence and the pre-fall absence of shame in nakedness exists. Hebrews 13 says the marriage bed is a place of honor and is to be maintained without defilement.

While we rejoice in the beauty of the sexual relationship in marriage, we must be clear that sexual expression is limited to the marriage domain. It is exclusive. And the exclusiveness is distasteful to a world in rebellion against God. Rebellion against God's work, word, and ways in regard to sexual expression has been around a long time. Part of the reason for that is that the sexual union is the place where children are produced – or multiplication occurs. One of the foundational sins of the sexual revolution is that sex has been separated from procreation. 20th century birth control, and even the outright slaughter of babies through abortion provides the river in which sexual revolutionaries swim.

The sexual revolution of our generation continues to produce greater and greater destruction and brokenness and death as it embraces greater rebellion. No doubt I'm speaking to some, or perhaps many, who have misused what God created for his purposes. What is the way of repentance? As any other sin, repentance in these areas begins with having our minds transformed and renewed by God's word. We must bring ourselves under his truth and believe that his work in Creation, his word, and his ways will produce life, blessing, flourishing. If we don't believe this, we will never have the affectional motivation to turn from sin.

Having believed truth, we must act on it. If you are in an illicit relationship of any kind, confess it and stop it immediately. Let there be no more contact. No goodbye. No nothing. What you are doing is sinning against God and producing death. Stop doing what is killing you and your family. If the sin is of a virtual nature — on a screen — confess it, stop it, and take steps to keep it stopped.

It is clear that Satan has death hooks in men and women in this generation through the use of porn. It has rewired brains. It has caused a collapse in healthy and appropriate sexual expression. Look realistically at the death it produces in a life. Many who are engaged in porn genuinely hate it after the fact, but still return. Each use leaves one more defeated than the last. Freedom is possible. It will

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require a mighty battle with high accountability. It is worth it. Do not ignore this. It has already destroyed far more than you've imagined or intended.

There are people in this room who have lived through the battle and have conquered. That is not to say they don't have to be on guard — but it is possible to walk in freedom in God's good ways and experience his blessing. Reach out to the elders or any man in this room and move out of the cesspool of death into the river blessing and life. You will not be condemned; you will be called to life and blessing and will find those who will do battle with you.

Now word to Young men and young women. Pornography is not a source of education. It is sin, and therefore a source of death and cursing. It is death, and you must run from it. I know every parent in this room. I know there are topics that are difficult to discuss with parents. But because I **do** know your parents, I can assure you that anything you need to know they are willing and able to discuss with you. They know you and love you; they will not humiliate you or be ashamed of you. Talk to them. Be aware that there are things that cannot be known and should not be known outside of the marital union. There are things you will not know until you get married. This is God's plan that you only discover and know those things with your spouse. This will actually strengthen your marriage in that day. Do not go around God's good plan for your life and blessing. As you get older, discuss temptations and challenges that arise with your parents. They are not as ignorant of these things as you may suppose they are.

Because God pours out unique privilege and blessing on marital intimacy, because such grace is realized there, is it any wonder that the enemy of our souls strikes so frequently, so relentlessly, so temptingly at our sexuality. Devastating brokenness result from sexual sin. And while it has been my intent to focus on the goodness that God gives through this relationship, it is important to pause and be reminded that the sexual sin that can bring such grief and brokenness it is no more beyond grace than any other sin. It is because of the damage sexual sin produces that the warnings seem stronger. All sin is sin against God and produces death as a consequence. But no sin has more power to kill and destroy than the atoning blood of Jesus has power to give life, cleanse, and restore. He paid the price for this and all sin. God the Father has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all — including sexual sin.

Once Satan and his minions have tempted us to sin by minimizing the consequence on the front end, afterward he shouts the condemnation that it brings as though trying to drown out the cry of Christ: It

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is finished. He is the accuser. And he is a liar. Flee sexual immorality. And flee to Christ and his cleansing blood to be made whiter than snow from the stain of all sin. All who come to him in faith he will never cast out. Christ came to save sinners and restore what God instituted in the beginning.

Believe this.

Come to this fountain so rich and sweet.

Cast thy poor soul at the Savior's feet.

Plunge in today and be made complete.

Glory to his name.

PRAY