Marriage By Design — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 2:23–25 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, February 19, 2023 · *In The Beginning*

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And if you have your Bible, you can open it to Genesis chapter two. We're going to be in Genesis chapter two this morning. If you're new to our church, we preach through books of the Bible in our church. And so we just finished Revelation and now we're going through Genesis and I bring that up today because we're talking about a topic that is a sensitive issue and some of the things that get said around this topic can be offensive. Same thing was true last week when we talked about gender. I just want you to know I don't pick the topics, I just pick the books and we work through the books and the book picks the topics and so if you're mad or get upset, I'll say the same thing I said last week.

If you're upset with me because I misrepresented the passage, then I'm very open to discussing that and I hope that you'll come and speak with me about that. Some people aren't shy and I'm happy to talk about those things. But if it's the text itself that you're upset with then I would encourage you to really wrestle with why it's so upsetting. And it's an opportunity sometimes when God disagrees with us about a topic, an opportunity for us to learn something from the Lord and something about the Lord and His design and that's the conversation we're going to have with the Lord today through his word about the topic of marriage.

And so in Genesis chapter 2, verses 23 to 25, you have the first marriage instituted between Adam and Eve, God is the officiant of that marriage and he has a design for that marriage that I think is beautiful and life-giving. The problem is in our culture marriage has kind of gone—people don't like marriage like they used to like marriage. Marriage is not esteemed like it used to be esteemed. And back in the 1990s, about nine in every 1,000 people was married. That to me sounds a little bit low, but that was the statistics.

Now it's a third of that. It's six out of every 1,000 people are married in our culture.[1] Interestingly, the average age of people getting married is going up in our culture. Not too long ago the average age of someone getting married was in their low twenties. It was kind of seen as the cornerstone of young adulthood, cornerstone being one of the first things that you would do and you'd build your life around it. So I get a good husband and a good wife. We build a life together and then we get a good job.

Then we go get our education. Then we do X, Y, and Z thing and we build our life on the cornerstone. That's not the view today. More likely is the idea that marriage is a capstone. So I go to school, I get my good job, I build my life, I kind of get my house in order, and then I go and find a spouse and I'm not saying that's good, bad or indifferent, it's just different. I'm not saying that's good or bad, it's just different than what used to be. I'm sure there's good reasons why people wait to get married these days.

And I'm sure there were good reasons for people getting married earlier. It's just the culture, by and large, it just doesn't put a high value on marriage like it used to. Even people's general attitude towards marriage is different. We make jokes about marriage, we belittle marriage. I think a lot of young adults my age and maybe a little younger grew up in homes where marriage just didn't look good, it didn't look fun, it looked miserable. You know, we say things like, "Love is blind, but marriage is an eye-opener," or "It's the great ball and chain."

Frank Sinatra said, "It's not until a man gets married that he knows what true happiness is. But then it's too late." I always like that phrase. We talk about the three rings of marriage, the engagement ring, the wedding ring, and then suffering. Which is true. You know, there's a lot of them. I probably should stop. But we laugh at the jokes, but it's really pretty sad that marriage has lost its value in our culture. And the reason it's lost its value is because what's been presented as marriage or as the ideal has been different, I think, from what God's original design was.

And so it's devalued in culture, but it's actually an opportunity for us as God's people to embrace God's design and to present something better. Not just something different, but something better than what the culture sees. And we'll see in just a minute one of the reasons God created marriage was so that in embracing his design we could actually point people ultimately to our great hope in Christ, in the gospel. And so that's what we're going to do this morning. Let's pick it up, Genesis 2, verses 23 to 25. We'll make a few quick insights and then kind of drill down.

"Then the man said"—the man, of course, is Adam. This is right after God created Eve out of his side. He's presented Eve in front of Adam and he says, "Oh boy, this is great. 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,'" and so "'she shall be called'" *ishshah*, or "'Woman, because she was taken out of'" *ish*, or "'Man.'" Those are the Hebrew words,

ishshah and *ish*. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

And so "the man and his wife were both naked and" they "were not ashamed." A couple of interesting things about this passage. One of the things that I think is interesting is where it's placed in the narrative. The same thing in Genesis 1, when we saw in Genesis 1 the very last thing of the chapter was God's creation of man in his image, male and female, he created them. So this implicit idea that man in God's image is the crown of creation. Now in Genesis 2, you see marriage as the crown of creation.

It's the last thing mentioned. It's kind of the culmination. I call it the crown of creation because it's the last thing, but it's also somewhat of God's core for the creation because everything else after this society, civilization, technological advance, all of that really relies on the core building block of marriage, the institution of marriage and the children that stem from that institution. John Paul II, great Catholic Pope, I'm not a Catholic, but I liked John Paul II a lot. He said, "As goes the family, so goes the nation." And of course, as goes the nation, so goes the world.

And that's so true. And we can even see in our society today how the dissolving of marriage and the deviation from God's design is actually creating tears in the very fabric of our society because marriage is the building block. Families are the building block of healthy societies, healthy churches, healthy towns, whatever the case may be. So it's put there at the end, I think, as an emphasis that marriage is the crown, marriage is the core, and because it's the crown and core, it's also the chief vector of attack. So you think about if Satan who exists to supplant and resist God's purposes, if that's why he exists, then it would make sense that marriage would be his chief vector of attack.

To kind of like put in a Trojan horse or a poison pill to supplant and thwart God's design in marriage or for creation through marriage. And so I think that's true. I think Satan uses marriage as his attack vector. And if you don't know what an attack vector is, it's it comes from the world of cybersecurity. Have any of you ever gotten a virus on your computer, or maybe like spyware? All the PC users raise their hand. All right. I promise you, when you got that virus in your computer, it wasn't like a pop-up ad said, "Hey, I'm a virus and I'd like to infect your computer. Will you let me in?"

That's not what happened, right? It happened differently. It probably was an email attachment from a friend or it was a website that looked just like your bank website and that was the channel or the means that the hacker used to infiltrate your system. Well, that's an attack vector. Hackers use them all the time. It's making things look a certain way, feel a certain way, but not be a certain way. It's a kind of a guise, a way to infiltrate what was once a secure network: but I'm going to exploit the network by wiggling my way in.

I think Satan uses marriage and sex because everyone enjoys sex and marriage is a very popular or well practiced idea and so Satan says, "If I can poison that well, then I can poison all of culture and I can kind of ruin society if I do enough damage to this institution." And I think you can see that happening today. So what we want to do as God's people is number one, know what is God's design for marriage. Number two, what is marriage supposed to give? If we do this according to God's design, what should we expect from marriage?

This is, I think, in Genesis two. And then finally why marriage according to God's design matters, why we should fight for it and defend it and work to achieve it wherever we may be or whatever station we may be in life. So that's what today's message is. What marriage is, what marriage gives, and why marriage matters. So let's look at the core kind of ingredients. They're all there in verse 24. I like the way the King James Version translates it, because it rhymes. So he says, "A man shall leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

And so my three points for God's design, you can be more than this, obviously, but it cannot be less: leaving, cleaving, and I'm going to use the word weaving. And those three things are present in every marriage. These three things are not original to me. These have been around for a very long time. I think even Pastor David's sermon at my own wedding used these three words, maybe why they're seared into my memory. But because these are kind of cheesy, I'm going to put three principles as well. So when it comes to leaving, I'm going to call this the principle of priority.

So what you see in Genesis 2 is that a man leaves his father and mother. That's this idea of priority. In that culture, when you got married, and God's design for marriage even today, is you make a transition. The number one priority in your life switches when you get married. It switches from whoever it used to be, which in this culture would have been mom and dad, and it becomes that spouse. There's a transition, there's an exchange of priority, and it is directed at the man, which I think is interesting.

That's not to say that a woman shouldn't prioritize her husband. Obviously, it's a two-way street. But it's almost as if men have a more difficult time with this. And a lot of times it's because men had a prior commitment to their family to maybe lead and love and protect and provide and do things for that home. But now you're making a new home, you're doing it with a new person, and they become priority number one. And if they don't become priority number one, your marriage is going to have problems. And I can't tell you how many marriage problems I've seen because somebody didn't leave.

Because either the mom of the daughter or the mom of the son, the wife or the husband—there were strings on them and the strings were being pulled by someone who didn't let go or because someone didn't leave and because those strings were being pulled it was creating chaos in the marriage which is why in even modern ceremonies today we say, "Who gives

this woman to be married to this man?" And the person, whether it's the dad or the mom or whoever is the case, they say, "We do," or "I do."

And it's a symbolic letting go. It's an important symbolism. You actually need to release because if there's not a reprioritization that takes place when two people get married, there will be a whole host of problems that visit you down the road. You'll say, "Well, how do I know if I've left?" One of the ways you know that you left is, when people, especially your mom or your dad or your best friend or whoever number one used to be, what do you do when they start to talk trash about your spouse?

Clear cut, easy way to know whether you left. Do you defend them? Do you defend your spouse? Or do you exploit them? Do you say, "You think that's bad? You ought to see what he did the other day"? Or do you cover up their weaknesses or do you pile on their weaknesses? That's not to say they don't have sins. Obviously they have sins, that's not to say they don't have weaknesses, they obviously have weaknesses, but when you marry someone you're saying, "I'm covering you up, I'm defending you, I'm protecting you, even if I have to fight the people who used to defend me, even if I have to take on my mom and dad. Because you're number one. You're my priority."

It's a principle of God's design for marriage. Second principle is cleaving. This is the Hebrew word *dabaq*. It means to stick firmly or stick close together, be glued together, or to follow at a close distance. Think: your shadow never leaves your side, it's always with you, or when you were taking a road trip and your mom and dad said, "Stop it, cut it out," and so you were like, "Not touching you, not touching you, not touching you, not touching you." That's this idea that there's this close pursuit, and I'm calling it the principle of pursuit.

Because we all know just because you get married doesn't mean you're glued together. Can we say amen to that? The glue takes a little while to set. So until that glue sets and you weave your life together, you've got to pursue each other. And again, it's targeted specifically to men, because I think men as head of the home ought to take responsibility to lead the way in pursuing their spouse. And it's part of how I think God's designed women to be pursued. It makes them feel loved and cherished when they are pursued, interested in—that "I, you know, want you, I need you"— those kinds of things matter in the life of a marriage and that's what this idea of cleaving gets to.

And when you pursue long enough and hard enough, there is a glue and a bond that begins to take place. And when you sense in your marriage there's a drifting or a distancing, that is a sign, that is a symptom of a problem that you want to correct when there's not this pursuit and you're not looking forward to seeing each other or desiring to be with each other, that there's a drifting taking place from God's original design because you were supposed to or always meant to pursue each other and be glued together.

By the way, that's also why divorce is so dadgum painful. Because when, and for those of you who've been divorced, you would agree with this, when there's a gluing that takes place and you come together, that glue sets and it doesn't unset. It's not like you could just get a heating gun and heat the glue up and it just nicely, easily melts apart. That's not how it works. There is a ripping, a tearing, and part of you gets ripped away and part of them gets ripped away and you're never the same because that violence of separating what God has brought together undermines that cleaving that God blesses when two people get married and it's one of the reasons that divorce can be so painful.

Finally there's weaving and weaving is really the result of the first two. And I like the word weaving because I heard someone say the other day that marriage is not held together by chains. It's held together by threads. And I just love that imagery. We talk about marriage like it's the ball and chain. It's kind of like slavery. You're stuck, you know, you can't do anything. You're married. Ooh, how terrible. But it's really not chains, it's threads. And if you've ever threaded anything, which I must confess I have not done much of, but I've watched my grandma do a lot.

At first the threads maybe don't have that strong of a hold. You can just kind of rip it and it all falls apart. But if you thread long enough—day after day after day, memory after memory, partnership after partnership, week after week, month after month, year after year—eventually you've got something that cannot be torn apart. It's strong, it's robust, it's a new thing, it's a t-shirt, it's a piece of fabric, a totally new thing. That's God's ideal in marriage is that there would be a weaving day after day partnership at every level, not just physical and sexual, but spiritual and social and emotional in every other way.

That's God's design for marriage. You share your bodies. 1 Corinthians 7: Paul says your body's not your own anymore. When you get married, your body belongs to your spouse. You give each other your conjugal rights. You share your finances, you share your secrets, you share your password, you share your past. I even put down here you share your location data. Thank you. Thank you, Apple, for that. I used to hate doing that. We got to doing it now because I walk the dog at night and Audra doesn't want me to get kidnapped.

Thank you, Audra. So I share my location data with her. And I just resisted it. Something in me said, "It's none of your business where I am, what I'm doing." Which sounds terrible to say out loud, but that's the way I feel. I don't know what to tell you. But there's a quote by Wayne Mack in his book on marriage. I love it. He says, "There ought to be absolutely nothing about which one spouse can say to the other, 'That's none of your business.'" Because you made it their business when you said, "I do."

You said, "I'm leaving them. I'm committing to you. You're my number one. I'm your number one. We're becoming one flesh." And so we share everything together. You say that sounds old fashioned. That sounds traditional. That sounds like God's design. That's what

Genesis 2 puts forward. And that one-flesh union produces children. And not always, but one of the results of that is procreation. So we talk about one flesh a lot of times thinking about physical intimacy, but you literally biologically produce a new one flesh. You produce a baby that is a confluence of your genetics and their genetics.

They kind of blend together. And they make something new, they make something fresh that is the result of your one-flesh union. And that's one of the things. That's one of the reasons—I'm sorry—that God reserves sexual intercourse for the marriage bed. That one flesh physically needs to be in a context of oneness legally and financially and socially in every other way. Because that kind of context is the ideal context for the raising of the next generation. Now that's not to say if you grew up in a single home that you can't make it.

Obviously you can make it. All it is to say is that's creating a hurdle that was not part of God's original design. A lot of people jump the hurdles and they do just fine, but I promise you anyone who grew up in that kind of home who had to jump over those hurdles, they'll point to a friend or someone else who didn't have those hurdles and say, "You were blessed. You're blessed that your mom and dad stayed together. You're blessed that you had that kind of a context growing up, because that's not what I had and I had to overcome a couple hurdles."

That context was God's original design for raising the next generation because it provides stability and strength and a modeling of what true love is supposed to look like. So that's one thing marriage gives, but the most important thing marriage gives isn't children. It's a great gift, but not every marriage bears children. There's people in our church who try to have children in their marriage, but they can't bear children. And so I wouldn't say their marriages are less than or incomplete. It's a gift, but it's not the gift. The gift is in verse 25, and it is that the man and the woman were both naked and they were not ashamed.

This is the gift of marriage. In a word, I would say it's the gift of intimacy. It's the principle of communion. It's this idea that I can be—in marriage, there's a safety, so that I can be completely naked physically, emotionally, spiritually, in every way I can be fully known, fully known, and still truly loved. That's intimacy. Tim Keller has a great quote on this, and he says to be fully known but not loved, that's our greatest fear. Right? When people know all of our weaknesses, warts and all, and they say, "No. Can't stand you, won't accept you."

To most normal people, that's devastating. There are other people who maybe settle for a cheap intimacy. Cheap intimacy is to be fully, truly loved but not fully known. But we would all agree that's superficial. "Yeah, maybe it's nice, but they don't really understand me. They don't really know me. I can't really be myself around them." It's superficial. But what everyone really wants deep down is to be fully known and truly loved. And that's really what we have in our relationship with God. That's one of the reasons we'll see marriage as a mirror of that.

Marriage is supposed to point to that gospel, reconciliation, communion, but that thing that we get in our relationship with God is actually a gift that God gives us with another person in the context of marriage. It's the gift of intimacy. And it's the one thing everybody wants, but only a few people. It's also the reason why God forbids sexual intimacy outside of marriage and promotes it inside of marriage. This is the point of the sermon where all the young people get upset with me, but just listen, hear me out for just a few seconds.

As someone who's now an old man, 37, 38 years old, someone who's been where you are, feeling the temptations that you feel. There's a reason why God designed sex to be within the context of a marriage. And I know that there will probably even be people here right now who are engaging in sex outside of marriage, maybe been living together. I'm not trying to judge you, come down on you, anything like that. I just want you to consider for a second. If this was the original design, why might that be the case?

If you have something valuable, you protect it, right? You've got valuables in your house, so you lock up your house. You've got valuables in your truck, so you lock up your truck. You've got valuables in a gun safe, you lock up your gun safe. Things that are valuable, things that are precious to you, you protect them, right? You put guardrails around them. Well, from the Lord's perspective, sex is one of his greatest gifts. It is just awesome. And it didn't have to be awesome, right? The Lord could have made everything taste like oatmeal and he could have made like not the sugary kind of oatmeal, like nasty oatmeal.

And he could have made procreation through snapping your fingers, right? And no one would snap their fingers. But that's not what he did, right? He gave the gift of sex, this tremendously pleasurable uniting of two people. And it's one of his most precious gifts, which is why he put guardrails around it. He said, "It's such a good thing. I want to protect it." And when you take that good gift and you take it and put it outside of the guardrails, it's actually destructive. I heard someone say it's like fire. Sex is like fire in a fireplace.

When you put the sex in the right place, when you put fire in the fireplace, you want to stoke the fire as hot as you can get it so that it'll warm your entire house. In other words, sex is great. Do it in marriage as often as you can. But if you take that fire and take it outside the fireplace, then it will burn your entire house down. And that's exactly what happens. People who've engaged in extramarital sex or adultery, you know how destructive that can be. And those who've engaged in lots of premarital sex, partner after partner after partner, you know what that does to your soul and your ability to give yourself completely to another person.

And what I think's happened in our culture is Satan has used this thing as an attack vector. He has said, "I'm going to use sex and marriage as a way to infiltrate and destroy that secure network of God's design." And he takes the little half-truths and untruths and little Trojan horses and what we have in our culture by and large is a counterfeit intimacy that has been widespread and adopted and a counterfeit form of sexual expression. It's not quite God's

design. It's definitely a deviation from God's design, but it's similar enough that people just accept it as the status quo.

In a word, it's hookup culture. That's where our culture's attitude towards sex is hookup culture. It was that way when I was growing up. People talked about sex like you're going all the way and it made it feel like it was a contest. And for a circle of guys it was like who was going to win the contest first? Like who's going to round home base first? It's taken something sacred and made it trivial. It's taken the idea of sex, which is naked bodies and naked souls, and it said, "You don't have to have a naked soul, you can just be a naked body."

You can have carefree sex, you can have guilt-free sex, you can just engage in physical and not have the spiritual or emotional, popularized by the song: "You and me, baby, ain't nothing but mammals, so let's do it like they do on the Discovery Channel." Anyone ever heard that song? Am I a child of the '90s? Yes, I am. But that's this kind of devolution. Sex is just physical. You can see it in our artwork, you can see the way we talk about sex. Even people's reaction to what I'm saying is like, "Well, you've got to test-drive the car before you buy it. You've got to make sure we're compatible."

What you're really saying is, "I want to make sure they're good in bed before I give myself to them." But listen, what's behind that is sex is not giving myself, sex is performative. Sex is you got to measure up before I'm going to stay with you. That doesn't promote transparency, it doesn't promote vulnerability, it doesn't promote trust, it doesn't do any of the things God originally designed sex to accomplish, and in fact causes sex to do the very opposite. So that you're always insecure, you're always feeling like you have to measure up.

It's a counterfeit intimacy. And it produces a counterfeit sexual expression. I can be a naked body, not a naked soul. I can be physical without being vulnerable. Female empowerment, that's a big one in our day and age. This is what female liberation looks like. This is what female empowerment looks like. But if you talk to many women who engage in that kind of sexual activity, they will say it's not liberating, it's enslaving. And it's not empowering, it's oppressive. I read an article just this last week from Bridget Phetasy. Don't think she's a Christian.

But she wrote an article, why I regret being an S-L-U-T, and was open and honest that what she thought was this gift of expression and empowerment, it actually destroyed her soul and undermined her ability even today to be intimate with another person because if you take a sticky surface and you stick it and unstick it and stick it and unstick it and stick it and unstick it, eventually it loses its stickiness. And that's what's happening with young people today. And it's not just a female thing, it's a male thing too.

And one of the big problems with men is pornography. It's not just that they're sleeping around with lots of other women, it's that they are daily engaging in pornographic activity

and they're engaging sexually with a pixel on a screen instead of a person in marriage, and it's undermining their capacity to meaningfully connect with other women. And it's creating all kinds of sexual dysfunction in the marriage bed. They are not able to actually make love to their spouse because they've so rewired their brain that that's what sex is supposed to look like.

It's supposed to be with this screen, not with this individual. And I had some lady in the first service say, "I was married to a man that had a pornography problem, and he expected me to act like those women on the screen, and I ain't doing that." That's what she said. I was, "Well, I don't blame you." You know, that's not normal, that's not normal sex. So counterfeit sex, counterfeit intimacy, it doesn't just do damage, it actually leaves a permanent scar. Your greatest regrets will be your sexual regrets. There is no such thing as carefree, guilt-free, meaningless sex.

And it's not just preacher talk. I think it's so fascinating. Biology and science has been a good thing for Christians in this respect. They've discovered when they do studies on sexual intercourse that whether you're a man or a woman, both sexes release a hormone during sex called oxytocin. They call it the love hormone or the cuddle hormone. And with men there's extra hormones that get released and with women there's different hormones, but both men and women release oxytocin, and oxytocin is a hormone that is created, designed by God, to help you attach yourself to another person.

Interestingly, this is the same hormone that for women gets released during breastfeeding. So that attachment that if you've been a mom who's breastfed before, you know that skin to skin bond that takes place when you are nourishing your child, that attachment—"I would do anything for you, I will protect you, I will never leave you. I don't care how ugly you get, you'll always be pretty to me"—that thing is released when you have sex with a man. And men, that thing is released when you have sex with a woman. And that thing is what's released when you engage in pornographic sex with your telephone and that's why it's doing permanent damage.

It's not just spiritual, it's not just social, it's not just, you know, religious. It's physical. It's biological. It's by God's design. And so if you're a man here today, I would encourage you with everything in me to protect the purity of your relationships. And if you're having sex with your girlfriend coming up to today, it's not like you can just turn that off. I know it's very difficult to do, but I want to challenge you to wrestle with it. Because what you're setting up is you're communicating right now, "My desires matter more than my integrity."

And that's not the kind of man you want to be ten years down the road. If you're going to marry that girl, you want to show her today the kind of man you're going to be ten years down the road, a man who chooses integrity over desire, a man that respects my daughter. A man that respects God's daughter. And when you succumb to physical temptation because

"You're used to it," or "We've already done it," and "Oh, God's going to forgive us anyway," and "Hey, we're married in our hearts"— none of those things really pass as sufficient.

You're deviating from God's design and you're taking the gift and you're watering it down. And you're actually robbing yourself of future pleasure and future joy and future fulfillment when you deviate from God's original design. So before you go all the way with your body, go all the way with your heart. Before you give yourself to him, make sure he's given himself to you with his promise, publicly professed, lifelong, forever and ever. And if he's not willing to go all the way with you there, then he's not willing to go all the way with you there.

And I know I sound like an old-fashioned fuddy-duddy. But as someone who's been down this road and has lived with the regrets: you can't see what's coming. And what's coming isn't worth the temporary pleasure that it gives you today. And so be a man. Protect the purity of your relationship. Confess your pornography addiction. Bring it out into the open. Overcome it. Destroy it. Kill the sin in your life. Because marriage was meant to give you the greatest gift that everybody wants, but only a few people find. So that's what marriage is, that's what marriage gives.

Finally, why does marriage matter? It matters because God created marriage for our good. He created marriage to give us joy and this great gift of intimacy. The second reason is because he created marriage as a mirror of the gospel. This is actually laid out in a definition on the family by the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. It's a pretty good doctrinal statement. I think I've got it up on the notes. Marriage is for our good and it's a mirror of God's gospel. This is the BFM 2000. You're going to have to click through.

There you go. "We believe"—nothing. No. "God has ordained the family as the foundational institution"—this is language from Genesis—"of human society." It's composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. It's the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It's God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and his church. We'll see this in just a second. And it's the unique union that God has given to provide the man and woman in marriage a framework for intimacy. Framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means of procreation or raising up the next.

So marriage is a foundational institution between one man, one woman, one lifetime, one covenant. It mirrors the gospel, God's love for us in Christ, and it provides the context for intimacy, sex, and the raising of the next generation. The reason that I bring this up is because if this is what marriage is, which it's not just from a Baptist denomination, this is a synthesis of biblical truth. So if this is what the Bible says marriage is, that means as God's people, we want to fight for it. We want to defend it.

We want to promote it. We want to embrace it in our own life. And even if that requires being maligned and ostracized and made fun of, it's worth it because without this building block at the core root of civilization, then we are all going to suffer as a result. So we need, as God's people, to have courage to defend the truth of marriage. Even when people say, "You're dumb, and you're old school, and you're just sexually repressive, and you're a sexist, and you're a bigot." You know, take the slings, take the arrows, it's okay because God has a design and his design is for our good, and we should fight for that design even in the face of the counterfeits, which means pointing out same-sex marriage is not marriage.

Yeah, I mean it's legal marriage. It's just not biblical marriage. So we live in a culture where there's going to be a lot of homosexuality and a lot of same-sex marriage. I'm not saying Christians should be rude or make fun of or belittle or disrespect. I don't think that's helpful or kind or biblical. But as you love and respect and serve your same-sex married friends, that does not mean you deviate from what God's original design actually is. It doesn't mean you can just conflate the two. They're different and they're different by design.

Polygamous marriage, same thing. You say, "Well, there's polygamy in the Bible." Yes there is. There's also rape and incest and all kinds of other bad things in the Bible. It's almost always descriptive, not prescriptive. And it's not commendable. In fact, if you look at every man who has more than one wife in the Bible, you'll realize real fast, not a good idea. Not God's best. And this whole thing of starter marriages, which is very popular in my generation: "I'll marry a smoking hot lady early on who I don't really like, but I like her body, and we'll fight and hate each other, but we'll press through, maybe, maybe not have any kids together, and then I'll get a really good wife after that, because I'll learn from all of my mistakes, and then the next one will go better."

You laugh, but this literally takes place in the other place across the pond in England or London, whatever that place is over there. They actually like have temporary contracts for marriage now. Like it's good for five years and then you can get out. That's not God's design for marriage. Now I know there are people—I have friends—who have gone through the pain of divorce. I'm not saying every divorce is equal. I'm not saying all remarriage is sinful. There are biblical grounds for divorce. There are biblical grounds for remarriage. Some of you didn't want your divorce.

They checked out on you. You didn't check out on them. And what are you supposed to do? "I have these burning desires," and 1 Corinthians 7 says, "Better to marry than burn with passion." So I'm not coming down on people who have unique special cases and the nuance and the gray. I get all that. But that does not erase the design. It doesn't mean that there's not an ideal. And the ideal is one marriage, one man, one woman, one marriage, one lifetime covenant relationship that mirrors the beauty of the gospel and provides a context for sexual expression and intimacy in the raising of the next generation.

Which brings me to the next most important thing and that is to have courage in the face of counterfeits and to maintain the grounds of our hope in the midst of human brokenness. If you're here and you were divorced or, you know, abused or you were left and abandoned. There is a hopelessness that sets in on your life and you feel like, "I'll never have—they stole from me. They took from me, and I'll never get back what they took from me." And I'm not denying that and I'm not lessening that.

It's absolutely true, but that does not mean you have no hope. And it does not mean that you cannot have restored to you something good, something beautiful, something that's life-giving, and all of that hope is found in Jesus. Which is why God instituted marriage in the first place. Marriage is always meant to mirror the gospel. It was always meant to mirror the hope that in Jesus we can be perfectly seen, fully seen, and completely loved by our Heavenly Father, even though we're broken and warts and all. He sees not our brokenness, but he sees the perfect light of his beloved son.

And he treasures us and he rejoices over us and he cleanses us and he loves us and sustains us because of who we are in Jesus Christ. And so that hopelessness you feel does not have to be hopeless forever. You can find hope, living hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. The other thing is that if you are married, marriage is difficult. It's hard. Man, you know, you married a sinner. And it's just hard to get along with sinners. You know, you should know you are one. So you're a pretty hard person to get along with; they're a pretty hard person to get along with.

Where do you find hope in the midst of that hopelessness? You find hope in Jesus. And through communion with him and prayer and intimacy and pursuing his designs. Eventually, he can heal what's been broken, he can restore what's been lost, but it requires you coming to him and embracing him and receiving the grace that he desires to give. And ultimately, the best part about it is at the end of the day, marriage is not the most important thing. Marriage was always meant to point to the most important thing. At the end of the day, marriage is not in heaven.

That's what Jesus says, or someone in the Bible said. We will not—yes, Jesus. He says, well, there will not be any marriage in heaven. Because marriage is not ultimate. Jesus is ultimate. And why Jesus created marriage? According to Ephesians chapter 5, he says, men do this, women do this. He quotes Genesis 2, man leave his father and mother cling to his wife, they become one flesh, and then he says, this mystery, this thing that was hidden, it's now been revealed. This mystery isn't about marriage at all. This mystery is about the love between Jesus Christ and the church.

Can you throw that up there, Ephesians chapter 5? Look at this. It's so fascinating. So back in Genesis 2 when God instituted marriage, he was getting ready for this. He was creating marriage to anticipate the cross. He was creating marriage to anticipate the union,

communion that we can have with our Heavenly Father through faith in Jesus Christ. So God is for your marriage. Why? Because your marriage is for God's glory. God is for your marriage because your marriage is a mirror of the gospel. And that means you should fight for marriage, defend marriage, have the very best marriage you can possibly have, but it also means if your marriage is broken, gone, and irreparable, it means it's okay because it was just a sign, it was just a symbol, it's not ultimate.

Jesus is ultimate, and you can find hope and healing in him in ways that you'll never find hope and healing in a wife. Never find hope and healing in a husband. They were just signs pointing you to the ultimate hope that's in Jesus Christ our Lord. And so this morning, if you're married, I would encourage you to fight for your marriage. If you're a man, fight for your purity in your relationships. If you're a woman, wait on the Lord for him to bring you someone who is worthy of giving yourself to completely and if you are single or divorced or in the middle of a state of brokenness to not let this absence in your life create a longing that can't be satisfied, but to satisfy that longing with the person of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this time and your word and we do pray that we would as a church fight for marriage in our culture that is confused and promoting all sorts of counterfeits. We pray for courage to defend what needs to be defended, to do so with gentleness and respect and in a winsome, persuasive way, but ultimately just by embodying in our own relationships, in our own marriages, what true sacrificial love looks like, what harmony looks like to live with another person imperfect as they are with gentleness and respect not because they are lovely, but because Jesus is worth it.

And not because they deserve it, but because I didn't deserve grace and that's what the Lord showed me. Would you help us to be gospel-shaped in our approach to marriage? And to truly, and the way we display marriage is to offer our culture something better. And that they discover through that the greatest gift of your grace in the gospel. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "about nine in every one thousand people was married… Now it's a third of that. It's six out of every one thousand people are married"; these figures are the U.S. marriage rate, the number of marriages each year per 1,000 people (9.8 in 1990 and 6.1 in 2019), not the share of people who are married, and the rate fell by about a third rather than to a third. Source: CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System figures as reported in "Utah marriage rates follow general U.S. downward trend," University of Utah College of Social and Behavioral Science, Feb. 11, 2022. ↩