

## Week 1\_\_Intro - Why are we here?

### **What is God's design for marriage?**

*The what, the why, the how*

*(in depth look at Gen 1-3; Matt 19; Ephesians 5)*

### **Genesis**

1:26-27 On the 6<sup>th</sup> day God created man in His image. He created “him” but then clarifies that him is defined to be male and female.

1:28-30 God blessed them and commanded (1) be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish, birds and every living thing. This is the original mission statement for mankind.

1:31 God pronounced **it** – meaning all He had created to this point – to be **very good**.

2:1-24 Circles back on day 6 and gives a detailed look at God's creation of man and woman.

The first Man's role was to cultivate and keep the garden of Eden . It would be fruitful as long as man obeyed. God then created woman – same day, the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation. It was **not good** that man should be alone, says God. But wait a minute, Gen 1 says that by the time God finishes with the creation of both man and woman it was very good. So, is this saying it is not good when it has already been noted that it is good? Remember that we have now drilled down into the 6<sup>th</sup> day and we are not finished with it yet. The creation of man is in-process. God's creation, His masterpiece, was incomplete until woman was created.

Note that it was not from God's perspective that the woman was needed (God was not lonely) but from the man's. “It is not good for the man to be alone.” What was not going to be good was that man would be alone. He needs a “helper”, suitable for him. The animals had already been considered for a possible role as man's helper but none were suitable for this role.

We tend to see “helper” as a little word, a pre-school word, and use it in ways like “mommy's little helper”. But this word is used 22 times in the OT and 17 of them refer to GOD as the helper.*(look at a couple? Exodus 18:4, Deut 33:7,26, 29)* And in the NT, who gets the title, “helper”? John 14:16 and 16:7 say that Jesus is going away for a time but He is going to send us a Helper. In fact, Jesus says that it is going to be **another** helper.

So who is the first helper? Jesus is physically with His disciples and yet He says that it is to their advantage that He go away and send the Holy Spirit to them instead. And that is advantageous because the Holy Spirit is not only able to be with us continuously but also empowers us to do that which we cannot do on our own. If the word helper is not too menial a word to be used of God then it is not too menial to be used of us and especially the God ordained role of the woman to be a helper. We will look at this in greater depth when we look at the man's role and woman's role in marriage in the coming weeks.

For now, the next few verses go on to summarize what that helping role will look like...**the female working alongside the man in everything.**

GEN 2:24 is the verse quoted in every Christian wedding..."for this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and **they shall become one flesh.**" This means that they are not only joined together for life but also have a single purpose, to fellowship with God and do what He has for them. And what's good for one should be seen as good by the other. If my wife succeeds, I have succeeded. If I succeed, she has succeeded. There is no jealousy, only joy and satisfaction. This is what it would look like in the pre-fallen state AND IS NOW POSSIBLE IN A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE !

This was the original design of God – that man and woman would be **one**. Now, remember that we are created in the image of God. In how many persons does God exist? That's right – 3. And God has determined that His trinitarian existence and single purpose should exist in man and woman more than any other creature ever created. Not in man or woman separately. I believe that the essence of God contains the best **attributes** of what we might consider male characteristics or female characteristics. He has them at all times in perfect measure and even in our fallen state the nature of God shines through in our best moments.(Compassion or nurturing or empathy might be seen as female characteristics while strength and bravery might be seen as male traits. But God has them all in perfect complement.) We may be a broken down wreck of what we were created to be but together, we still bear the unmistakable image of our perfect and holy God.

At this point it is important to note 3 facts, or truth statements, that the Bible makes about man and woman:

1. **Personal relationships** – interpersonal unity in marriage can, and should be, closer than in any other human relationship. Our fullest expression of unity, this side of heaven, can be found in marriage.
2. **Equality in personhood and importance** – just as members of the Trinity are equal in importance and their distinctness as individual persons, men and women have been created by God to be equal in their importance and personhood. We have equal worth before Him for all eternity.
3. **Differences in roles** – just as there are differences in roles within the Trinity, there are different roles for men and women. Look at the Trinity for guidance...

- a. **God the Father** has a leadership role that the Son and Holy Spirit do not have . In creation He speaks and initiates and the Son and Spirit carry out His will. In redemption it is the same. The Father sends the Son into the world to accomplish His will by being obedient to the Father and dying to atone for the sins of mankind (Luke 22:42 and Phil 2:6-8). The son does the work and then sends His Spirit to finish the next work, not the work of atonement but of sealing and indwelling the individual and equipping and empowering the church.
- b. Is it surprising then, that when God created man and woman that He gave them different roles? There is a parallelism at work here.
- c. Paul summarizes the principle in 1 Corinthians 11:3..."*But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.*"

But then what happened?

### **Genesis 3 – The FALL**

What are the problems encountered in marriage and what is their source?

A huge list but many fall into : Self (in all its forms), Sin , Satan & spiritual forces of darkness.

Are there other problems which do not fit in these categories? Problems which befall us but not because we have done something wrong (health, money, job pressure, child rearing, etc.) What is God's purpose in allowing these problems not of our "making"? (ie. our **sanctification**; How does my spouse aid God's purposes in these areas? How do I aid God's purposes in my spouses life?

**Matthew 19:3-12** Jesus deals with some of the practical effects of sin. He turns the question He was asked : "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" to "What was God's intent for marriage before sin entered the world?" In His answer to when divorce was acceptable, Jesus clarified that...

Marriage is permanent in this life...but **not ultimate**. *It is not our ultimate destiny, it is a means of teaching us to love like God loves while sanctifying us in the process.*

We (all of us sinful people in our flesh) tend to go to this passage to answer the question of what qualifies as an acceptable reason for divorce in order to find an escape hatch to make things better and start over in our pursuit of happiness. That is because we (all of us as

sinful people) think of the highest and best goal of marriage as a means to self-fulfillment. “*I want someone to love **me** unconditionally, provide for **my** emotional and physical needs, support **me** in everything I do while telling me I am great, fulfill **my** sexual desires, and ultimately give **me** the best possible assistance toward the God given right to **my** own happiness. The right marriage partner will help me achieve my best self and best life”... or so we believe.*

Can Anyone do this for us?! Is this really a reasonable expectation for us to ask of our spouse? No, and that is why we all end up disappointed. We are asking our mates to fulfill a role they were never meant to meet.

It is not about us from the RECEIVING end of marriage. It is about us BECOMING the Christ centered man and woman God wants us to be. So that is where we are going to spend a couple of weeks...changing our perspective so that we have God's view and not our own.

No matter our current situation, The Bible gives us light for the path forward.