

## INTRODUCTION & GOD'S DESIGN

### Genesis 1

#### WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

- Introduce myself & Drew
- Introduce flow of class (i.e. each week we'll... Doctrinal teaching, Q&A)
- Introduce class calendar & overview of topics covered

**Audience** – a variety of people at various stages – for the sake of not giving extended caveats for each point made, we'll be addressing “married couples” but in the hopes that those not currently married will be able to translate this information into helpful personal applications. Likewise, much of the Scripture we are addressing does have natural application to each person, as a person, regardless of their marital status, but we'll be considering it in light of marriage as one might expect in a “marriage class”.

**Questions** – We strongly encourage class participation and questions and helpful comments are welcomed. However, with the class size and limited time we may not get to every question nor be able to take every comment offered. If your question is more doctrinal/informational in nature, we'd love to handle that during the teaching portion of the class, but if it is a matter of application (or wondering, how does this look in my or so-and-so's situation), then please hold that question for the later portion of the class which is specifically designed for those situations. Please write down your questions in your own notes so that you don't forget them.

**Caveat** – This class is not designed to be a deterrent to marriage. However, if you are single in this class, you may feel deterred from getting married due to the focus on navigating much of the difficulty that comes through marriage. I am definitely PRO marriage, but our culture's view of marriage is so weak and unhelpful that we should not be surprised by the rise in broken marriages as well as the overall cultural tone that can come across anti-marriage.

**Common Grace** (define) – Marriage is an institute created by God (not man) and as such there is a fair amount of common grace that even the unsaved may experience with regards to the blessings of marriage. But this class is not intended to be a cultural exploration of the societal blessings inherent in marriage.

## IMAGE BEARERS

The idea of building blueprints is a helpful illustration for considering the foundation of marriage. In the same way that an architect drafts up a design prior to construction starting, premarital counseling is like looking at God's blueprints for marriage prior to the marriage starting. (Or even reviewing those blueprints as you consider the need for a remodel later in life.)

**Read:** Matthew 7:24-27 – “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

There are two items we want to pull out of this passage.

- First, verse 24 tells us that the wise person is the one who not only hears what God says, but actually does it.
  - Across the board, people often know what the right thing to do is, but a much smaller percentage of that group actually does what is right.
  - While knowing is half the battle, our encouragement to you is that you act on the things we discuss.
- The second item we want to point out is the fact that both the wise man and the foolish man face storms. What we want to acknowledge is that all of us will experience our share of suffering and a select group of people will experience especially terrible suffering. This is true of both Christians and non-believers.
  - If you build your foundation upon Christ, you will endure the storms by His grace. If you disregard His word, you will eventually be overcome.
  - Your marriage is going to be built on something. The question is whether or not it will be built on God's word or on something else.
  - We don't want to base our marriages on what we see in the culture or even on what we saw or didn't see in our own homes growing up, but instead on God's plan and design – We want to get the right blueprints!

**Read:** Genesis 1:26-27 – “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over

every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

**ASK:** What does it mean to be an image bearer or made in the image and likeness of God? (possibly in small groups?)

- God shares some of His attributes with us (We reflect Him in some of the ways that we have been created to be.)
  - We are created with capacity to love others, which is a reflection of God’s nature,
  - We are created with desire to create and produce things, which is also a reflection of God,
  - Our desire for relationship is likewise a reflection of our God
- While we could spend a long time exploring what it means to be created in God’s image and all of the attributes we share with Him, the big idea behind this is simply that we are like God (Grudem 442).

We are made in the image of God and because of that, every husband and wife possesses inherent dignity. However, we are sinful and our sin causes that image to be distorted. But through Jesus, God works to conform us into the image of Jesus. Because of this, we need to view our spouse through the lens of the grace which God has already extended to us. Our spouse isn’t perfect and neither are we. A healthy relationship is one in which the husband and wife help each other to better follow and reflect the Lord.

**Read:** Romans 8:29 – “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Other significant Cross-references: 2 Cor. 3:18, Psalm 17:15, 1 John 3:2, 1 Corinthians 13:12)

Because we are created in the image and likeness of God, in a marriage, a couple must see one another first and foremost as image bearers of God. The fact that we are made in the image of God means that we each have inherent dignity, which should produce a baseline level of respect for each other in the marriage relationship.

Marriage helps us point one another to Christ, to be more like Him, and reflect Him to each other, and others.

We are tools in one another's lives: Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. We must learn to love the chisel.

Your spouse is a mirror and you may not always like what you see. Take what is exposed by this reflection to the Lord and ask what you can learn about your spouse, about yourself and about the Lord.

**Read:** Matthew 7:3-5 – "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

- Be ready to see the ugly and allow God to use you/your spouse to transform the ugly into Christ likeness.
- Be gracious and encouraging as you/your spouse are seeing and learning and changing, and pray for one another in this process.
- It's really easy to see plank in other person's eye But it's often what annoys you about them that also points to something about yourself that God wants to get your attention on.

Where to start:

- You must be in a right relationship with Jesus
  - We cannot overemphasize this enough.
  - It's been said before that God doesn't have any grandchildren; He only has sons and daughters.
  - We aren't saved because our parents were Christians or because we went to a good church.
  - Every single one of us needs to stop, recognize our own sin, and ask that Jesus helps to reapply His gospel truth in each situation.
  - Your investment, or lack thereof, in your relationship with Jesus effects every relationship in your life, especially your spouse.

## **AUTHORITY & FRUITFULNESS**

**Read:** Genesis 1:28 – "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Dominion speaks of authority or ruling over. Authority speaks of the right to make decisions. This authority was “given” to mankind, not “taken” by mankind. In other words, we didn’t get this authority by conquering but by appointment. God appointed us – We are thus “Stewards” of God and all that we do flows from this basic fact.

As a steward we don’t work or use our God given authority to our own personal advantage or for our own profit or gain. But rather we wield our authority for the blessing of others and to the glory of God. But our sin nature subverts this divine mission.

Authority is good and necessary when employed properly. God’s authority is absolute and His will is established in the Bible. Because of this, His word needs to be our guide and it must take precedence over the examples we’ve observed as well as our own personal preferences.

It can be helpful to consider how authority was modeled for you growing up as it will affect the way you instinctually wield authority in how you live your life, and it will especially be evident in your marriage.

All of us are affected by the way authority was modeled for us, especially by our parents. There may be many today that did not have a good example of authority modeled for them in the home.

- Remember that God can and does redeem the harmful things that we have done and that have been done to us.
- It is good to take the time to think back on our experiences, especially from when we were growing up, and ask whether or not it established a healthy or harmful pattern for us.
- Bad cycles don’t have to be repeated, but we may have to do more intentional work in order to break those cycles and move in a God-honoring direction.

God is the ultimate authority for marriage. Our marriage works the way God designed only when both persons are seeking to live in a submissive way to God.

In later weeks, we’ll talk about what the Bible says about authority and submission in marriage. But what we need to understand is the fact that we’ll miss the entire point if we don’t start by acknowledging that all of us are under God’s authority.

We must reflect His authority and exercise His authority not on our own terms, and in a way that will bear attractive fruit in our lives.

His Word must be the guide, which is why we place such a high priority on studying and applying it.

We must pull one another up not push each other down. (Eph 4:29 – “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” – It’s not enough to avoid tearing down words. We must take initiative to speak building up words, to speak life into our spouses life.)

You are now ONE and a team, not individuals on different paths – growth in each other is growth in your marriage

Each person must be humble and submit to God’s authority - Philippians 2:1-11

Authority properly used is going to bear fruit in our lives. The idea of Gen 1:26-28 is that our “dominion/rule/authority” would lead to abounding fruitfulness. Because of Sin, fruitfulness is no longer as easy or as effortless as it may have once been. Our fruitfulness can wane due to **distraction, neglect, misguided effort, mis prioritized effort, or simple ignorance**. In fact it seems much easier to fail than anything else!

**ASK:** What might fruit look like in this context?

- Galatians 5:22-23
- Reflecting Christ to one another and the world
- The ability to Trust one another (because of our ultimate trust in God)
- A progressing maturity in faith
- Godly responses to circumstance and others
- Looking out for the interest of others

We need to become Fruit Finders & not Sin Sniffers. Look for the fruit in your spouse’s life and point it out. Give God thanks for it. Even the simple things. Be careful of the natural tendency to sniff out the sin of your spouse. As you see it or become more aware of their lack or need for growth, let that inform your prayer time.

## Supporting Passages

### From: Image Bearers

**2 Cor. 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

**Psa. 17:15** As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness;  
I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

**1 John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

**1Cor. 13:12** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

### From: Authority & Fruitfulness

**Matt. 28:18** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

– Jesus exercised authority as He received it; He did not ‘take’ it.

**1 Cor 11:3** – “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.”

- Christ submitted to authority in the same way we do in marriage.

**John 5:19** Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

**John 5:30** I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

**John 8:28** Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught



Me, I speak these things. <sup>29</sup> And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”

**John 14:10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

**Phil. 2:1** Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Gal. 5:22-23a** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control.



## **Q & A with Guest Speakers**

### **From: IMAGE BEARERS**

- Name some ways that your relationship with your spouse has helped you grow more into the image of Christ.
- Have you seen a correlation in the health and prioritization of your relationship with Jesus and its effect (negatively or positively) on your marriage over the years?

### **From: AUTHORITY & FRUITFULNESS**

- How was authority modeled for each of you growing up? Has this influenced your marriage in any way? (Good or bad)
- Have you experienced a time when authority was misapplied in your marriage (i.e. one person taking authority and using it selfishly)? How did you realign yourselves to being under God's authority?
- How do you speak life into your spouse, to build them up and not tear them down? Is there anything you don't do in order to protect them from being torn down?
- What fruit do you see in your spouse that you can give God thanks for?

## ON YOUR OWN

### Discuss the following:

#### From: IMAGE BEARERS

- Read Genesis 1:26-28 and discuss observations about how we can be image bearers and reflect God's authority in our lives individually and as a couple.
- Name some ways that your relationship with your spouse has helped you grow more into the image of Christ.
- Have you seen a correlation in the health and prioritization of your relationship with Jesus and its effect (negatively or positively) on your marriage?

#### From: AUTHORITY & FRUITFULNESS

- How was authority modeled for each of you growing up? Has this influenced your marriage in any way? (Good or bad)
- Is there any area in your marriage that is not under God's authority? Discuss ways you can begin to surrender those areas to God. What needs to change? How will you make decisions differently? How will you go about resolving conflicts differently?
- Have you experienced a time when authority was misapplied in your marriage (i.e. one person taking authority and using it selfishly)? How did you realign yourselves to being under God's authority?
- What fruit do you see in your spouse that you can give God thanks for?
- How do you speak life into your spouse, to build them up and not tear them down? Is there anything you don't do in order to protect them from being torn down?

**Resources**

[The Meaning of Marriage](#) by Tim & Kathy Keller

[What Did you Expect?](#) By Paul David Tripp