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Series: Marriage God's Way
Message: God as Designer & Architect

Transcribed Message
June 12, 2022
Genesis 2:18-25

If we were to begin this morning with a word association and I were to put out the word “marriage”, you might be thinking of any number of words in response to that word. I might of the word “anniversary” because Bonnie and I spent part of last week celebrating our 46th anniversary together. I am going to say that that applause is for Bonnie because she's like this pastor in this cartoon. Oh, so you're the pastor. I was wondering how your wife earned all those crowns. She will have more crowns than me for sure for having endured at least 46 hopefully more years with me. Bonnie and I might say anniversary. I'm going to marry a couple in less than a month. They might pick the words “anticipation” or “excitement”. somebody else might think of marriage and think my best friend. Maybe somebody thinks of joy and just the happiness, partnership, companionship. All kinds of words that might come to mind as we think of that. For some, of course, marriage brings to mind a whole set of different words. It might bring to mind a word like “pain” or “heartache” or “disappointment” or maybe even “betrayal”.

Whatever your situation in life, whether you're young, whether you're old, whether you're single, whether you're married, marriage is important. Marriage is impactful. It's a significant part of our life. It may be at this stage of your life that when you hear that, it's your parents' marriage that has been impactful on you. maybe even in some cases your grandparents' marriage that has been impactful. Or maybe it's your own marriage that you think of in that way as being significant and important. That's what the Scriptures put forward – that marriage is important. Marriage is impactful. Marriage can be beautiful. Marriage can be hard. All of those things.

For the next 10 weeks, so basically for this summer, we're going to step out of the book of Romans and we're going to step into this summer series. People kind of come and go more in the summer than at other times. I don't want you to pick and

choose when you're gone based on the subject matter. From here on out, it's just going to say in the bulletin the sermon topic is marriage. I'm not going to tip my hand so that you can look at the sermon title and say this be a good week to miss, don't you think, honey? We do want to do in a number of things in these weeks together. We want to be encouraged. We want to be encouraged with God's plan. We want to be encouraged to press on, to continue on, to strive after what God has for us. I want to convince you of these things that the Bible says about marriage and of its value, of its importance, of the investment that it requires of us, and to especially remind all of us that God's way is the best no matter what it is that we might be facing. Then just to challenge all of us. To challenge all of us to realize that God does in fact have something for each one of us as we walk through these weeks together, opening our heart to God's Word and God's Spirit, to hear what He has for us.

This morning is going to be an introductory lesson on this whole series. We want to see God's plan for marriage can't be improved on. He is the designer. He is the architect. We need to trust Him for what only He can do. As we look at this big picture, and we're going to spend some time this morning in Genesis, and then we will come back to that again because this opening couple of chapters of Genesis is the foundation. All Scripture keeps coming back to these chapters and so we want to lay a solid foundation. I want to begin by just making a couple of introductory observations.

The first one is simply to say a marriage series is for everybody. It is for everyone. That's easy of course to see if you're married. If you're married you go well, yeah, I can understand the practical significance of a marriage series. That's the life I'm living. If you're right now in a good place in your marriage, you would say our marriage is in a good place, then be thankful. Be grateful. But don't be satisfied. Don't just settle in and say this is good enough. Don't accept the status quo. I say all of these things all through this series to myself before I say them to you because there are always areas in which God wants us to go deeper. There are always things that He wants us to learn. We don't arrive in the Christian life this side of glory. We don't come to a point where we say we've made it spiritually. That's the same thing in marriage. No matter how long you've been married, you don't get to a point where you simply get to put it on cruise

control and then everything is going to be okay. There's always more that God intends for us to experience.

If, on the other hand, you have to step back and say yeah, I'm married but our marriage isn't so good right now. Understand this. Understand if that's where you find yourself, everyone who has a good marriage has been where you are at some time. Everybody that has been married for any length of time has to honestly say there have been times when it's been difficult, when it hasn't been so good. Don't be discouraged in that sense. Be a humble listener to the Word and to the Spirit as He speaks His truth into our lives. God is the one who redeems. God is the one who restores. God is the one who rescues. There isn't any marriage represented in this room or those who are listening that is beyond the reach of God, that is beyond the touch of God, that is beyond the rescue of God. It may be very well in divine providence that we have stepped out of the book of Romans for the summer because God has something specific in mind for you in this area. So be encouraged.

If you're single. maybe single as a teenager, maybe single as a young adult, maybe single as a divorcee, maybe single as a widow or a widower. You might be thinking what am I going to be doing for 10 weeks? What am I going to do? I'm not married. Everything that you're going to be talking about is for married people. I don't want you to think that there aren't things for you within the context of this study because I believe that there are. In a world and in a culture that is increasingly hostile to a biblical understanding of marriage, whatever our situation in life is right now, God wants us to be fortified with His truth. He wants us to understand what our culture needs to hear. You have an integral part in that as well, whether you're married or whether you're single.

There's a definite balance that's needed. The balance is that we don't want for marriage to be something in our life that consumes us, that we think if we're not married we're not fulfilled. That's not a biblical picture. On the other hand, we don't want to swing to the other side of the pendulum and in any way diminish the gift that God has given in marriage. We want to strike a biblical balance. Whether we're married or whether we're single, I think we can benefit from this together.

The second observation is marriage is a mystery that is worth examining together. Marriage is a mystery that is worth our time and our effort and our study of the Word of God together. I say that first of all with this in mind. It's the cornerstone of any culture. Marriage is the cornerstone of any culture. A healthy marriage translates over into a healthy family. Healthy families make it possible for there to be healthy churches. Healthy marriages and families make it possible for there to be a healthy culture. When we look at what's going on in our culture today, and you can list 10 things in a minute that reflect the breakdown of our culture in the broadest sense, all you have to do is simply look at and see how marriage is doing in America today. How is the family doing in America today? You have your answer. As God's designed it, marriage is to be the cornerstone of any culture. You study any culture and as that culture begins to deteriorate, all you have to do is draw a graph that shows the deterioration in the downward spiral of events in that culture and what's happening in their view of marriage and the family is reflective of that. It is so vitally important.

Secondly, this is important for us to step into and examine because it's God's most effective tool of sanctification. marriage is God's most effective tool of sanctification. as I thought about that, the only thing that I could think of as a close second is man's church league basketball. I think I think man's church league basketball and marriage are very, very close to the greatest use of sanctification. Maybe women's church league basketball. I've never experienced that but that probably could also apply. But there's nothing like marriage for God to use to conform us and make us more into the image of Christ.

Two of the titles that are listed on the bottom of your outline and I'll try to give resources from week to week *When Sinners Say I Do* and *What Did You Expect*. Those two titles really just kind of highlight that point. What did you expect? Most of us really didn't know what to expect. In all honesty, none of us know fully what to expect. Honestly, what happens when sinners say I do is something that we're not fully prepared for because we're stepping into the most intimate relationship that God has designed for two people to have together. It becomes this means of conforming us to the image of Christ. You know this but I'll say it anyway. You're married to a very selfish person. I don't think the amens are going to necessarily be appropriate as we go

through this series. In Romans, I love to hear an occasional amen with great robustness shouted out. I would use them cautiously in this series. In fact, you might want to just portion out a certain number for the whole summer and when you've used those up, don't go beyond that.

Here's the other side of that. Your spouse is married to a very selfish person too. You both know that. We all know that and nothing will reveal that like marriage. I had no idea how selfish I was until I got married and I found out I'm a very selfish person. I want things my way. I want to do things my way. That's a part of what God wants to do in our lives. Nothing will reveal who you really are like stepping into marriage.

But here's the good news. Marriage is all about portraying the gospel. Marriage is a portrait of the gospel. This is where the good news really becomes powerful. In Ephesians 5 that's what Paul brings forward, this idea of marriage as a mystery as this picture of Christ and the church. How it is that Christ and the church are pictured in God's plan for marriage. Every day we are in need of the grace of God. Every day we need to extend the grace of God. Charles Swindoll has a chapter that has always just stuck out in my mind in terms of the title and it is something along the lines of "A Marriage Needs the Daily Oil of Grace." The daily oil of grace poured over and into our marriage. That is desperately what we need. If in fact marriage, as we just said in the point before, is the tool that means that God is using to sanctify us, then how vitally important is it that the oil of His grace is what steps into those times of friction and differences and disappointments? We need that. We need to extend that. Timothy Keller says in his book *The Meaning of Marriage*, which is also on the table, that every day we get to paint a picture in the way we live out our marriage. What kind of picture are we painting? He's encouraging us to paint a picture of the grace of God, of the mercies of God.

Then lastly, marriage is only for this side of heaven. That has always been kind of a fascinating thing. Marriage is only for this side of heaven. In heaven, Jesus said, we will not be given in marriage. Our focus in heaven is going to be on God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the large community of believers. We're not going to be in this same kind of relationship that we are here on earth. Now that's disappointing for many people. You're going to know each other. Maybe we'll still have a more special

relationship than we would with other people. I certainly hope so, but we know there's not going to be marriage in the same way that there is now. When we think about that, we enjoy the blessings and the joys and even the challenges of marriage this side of heaven because, as we said, God is using it to sanctify us. But maybe God also wants us to realize that we don't want to make an idol of marriage, that we don't want to, again as I said before, so over emphasize it that we think as a single person I can never be fulfilled if I'm not married. Well that's not true. Jesus was single after all. If God has given you the gift of being single for this season of your life then you can be abundantly fulfilled in fulfilling and living out His plan. I think there's certainly something here that says to us that we don't want to over emphasize the gift that God has given in a way that He never intended.

Here's what let's do in the remaining time. Let's look at three things that God wants us to know about marriage. Three things that God wants us to know about marriage. The first one that He certainly wants us to know is that it was His idea. Marriage is God's idea. It's His creative design that brought this to pass. This is so basic. This is fundamental to everything else we're going to say. I want to emphasize two things. Start here. If you don't start here, you will lose your way. The reality is what we're talking about in this understanding of marriage as God's idea and God as the architect and designer. We're talking about submitting to the authority of Scripture. Submitting to the authority of Scripture. Whatever resources you utilize in marriage – books that you read (some great books on that back table), podcasts that you listen to, people that you talk to, counsel and advice that you get – the most important question that you ask every time, you hear or receive, is how does this line up with the Word of God. Is this consistent with what God says in His Word? Does this reflect God's truth? Is this advice or this counsel aligned with what God has said? Can you show me in the Bible what that looks like? This is God's operating manual, not just for marriage obviously, but for life itself.

We go to this book and we read in Genesis 1:27 – “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him. Male and female He created them, 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.” You start off the book of Genesis in the garden of Eden with a wedding, don't you? and you end the Bible in Revelation and you've got the wedding supper of the Lamb. In between, you've got the outworking of the glory of the gospel as God shows us how this is all to be reflective of His great plan. Our relationship to God first and foremost. Our relationship with each other. You have to start here. You start here and say I am committed to the authority of the Word of God in my life, especially and specific to my marriage. I will hear no counsel, I will follow no counsel that is inconsistent with the Word of God. Guard my heart, God, from going and seeking after counsel that is in any way not consistent with Your work.

Secondly, just as important. You start here but listen, secondly, you stay here. If you don't stay on that path, you going to lose your way. Ultimately this is about the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is about the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If you don't stay on this path committed to these principles, this culture will turn you into a pretzel. This culture will distort everything that you think and believe about marriage and about relationships with each other. You have to allow the Word of God again to shape your view of marriage and you have to daily submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The most fundamental change that happens in marriage happens to Christians all the time. Why is it that we have the divorce rate in the church that we have out in the world? We're not starting and staying committed to this manual, being the only thing I'm going to follow. We're not committed to and staying with submitting to the Lordship of Christ in my life. When we don't do that, we begin to transition from marriage being about us to marriage being about me. When marriage becomes about me, then I've gone off the path because marriage isn't about me. Marriage is about us. Our culture and our world are absolutely reshaping our whole understanding of marriage. You know that. It's all about self-actualization and self-discovery and personal happiness.

Carl Truman. You're going to think I'm making commercials for our table in the back. There's a book by Carl Truman back there. It's not this one. Carl Truman is a great writer. But he wrote a book called *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* not that long ago. It's a great book. If you want to know why and how our culture is where it is, it did not happen in the last few years. It's been coming for 50 years and it's like a

train on a track that was destined for where we are today. He outlines it beautifully. In a blog that he wrote just this week, he wrote about how we get to the place where we celebrate for one month somebody's sexual identity. People, when you just step back and think about that for a little bit. We have committed as a nation to take an entire month and celebrate somebody's sexual identity, as if that is the most fundamentally important thing about any human person. Which it is not, but we give an entire month to it. We give one day to the Fourth of July. We give one day to honor and recognize presidents. We give one day for D-day. You just go down the list in your head that we give a day to and sometimes we don't even remember that, but we give an entire month to celebrate sexual identity. It is simply because we are trying to convince ourselves that something that our conscience tells us is unnatural we're now trying to convince ourselves with 100 parades that it is absolutely normal. At some point, we've already seen in Romans 1, that God is going to say I have given them over. I think we all know we're there. That's the only possible explanation for why we are where we are. So stay committed to the word no matter what.

Secondly, God wants us to know that marriage is God's answer to not good. In chapter 2 verse 18 when we read of God's statement: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.'" Now it all began with a perfect creation. It's good when you are reading Genesis 1 and 2. It is good to remember that in Genesis 1 what you have is an overview. You have a chronological sequence of days. That's what's going on in Genesis chapter 1. Day one all the way to day six. That's the entire creative week that is laid out in chapter 1. When you get to chapter 2, what you have is the Holy Spirit directs Moses to say we're going to step in to day six and chapter 2 steps into the creation of man. It's as if we have this overview in chapter 1 and then God says but I want to give a lot more insight into what happened when I created man and when I created woman. That's what you have with the creation of man. Day one through five. It's good, it's good, it's good. That repeated refrain that God looks at His creative work and He said it's good. Then, of course we know as we just read, you get to day six and we come to chapter 2 and verse 18 and God says it's not good.

It's important to see that secondly that this is a declaration that God makes. This is a declaration of need that God makes. When we see it in its proper context, it's kind of jarring. It's unexpected. We have the chapter break so it doesn't flow quite the way that it might if we were reading it's good, it's good, it's good. creation of man, it's not good. And there's poor Adam, standing as the only object of what could be described as not good. I have a question. Guys, does this mean that apart from our wives we're no good? That was good. There were no amens. We all appreciate that, don't we, men. No, it just means that God is underscoring the importance of companionship. That's what this declaration is. It is a declaration of the necessity of how God has created us at the core of our being. He has created us for companionship, for the need in our lives to have those kinds of relationships.

Notice this is not Adam's self-discovery. This is God's declaration of his need. Adam of course has it confirmed in the naming of all of the animals, but it's God who is the one that makes the declaration. We're to be sharers. We're to live life in community. God never intended for us to live in isolation. We're all wired differently. Some people are introverts and some people are extroverts. Some people want to be more alone than to be in a crowd. But at the end of the day, we have to resist that urge on some level whether we're married or single. We have to be in community. We have to share life together. That's the way God intends. That's the way He's made us. There is this great declaration of need that God is going to show how He is going to fulfill that in our future studies.

Let's look then at the last thing. Marriage is to be celebrated. At the end of that first chapter, that 31st verse: "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day." So it was very good. God created man. He created woman. And he made a declaration again – it is very good. That's the sequence that comes in that overview of chapter 1. The point of it is this. A good marriage is hard work, but it's worth every effort. A good marriage, if it's properly celebrated, we understand that it takes work. Anything of value in life takes work.

Think of some great athlete. As gifted as they may be in terms of how God has created them, every major professional athlete has dedicated tens of thousands of

hours to getting better. Nobody just sits back and goes why is this so hard? No, they give themselves to it. That's the way we should understand marriage. All marriages have struggles. There isn't any marriage that doesn't have conflict. There isn't any marriage that doesn't have disagreement. A perfect marriage doesn't exist. That's not what we're striving for. That will help us to keep from looking and thinking "if only". No, every marriage has its challenges. Yours may be different than somebody else's, but they have ones that are different than yours. God wants you to know that it's good. He wants you to know that it requires work. And when marriage is not good, it's because of sin. Ungodly behavior makes for bad marriages as we'll see more as we go along. Someone said, "The secret to lifelong love and companionship is an iron-willed determination to make it work." An iron-willed determination to make it work. Anybody that's been married for very long, and their goal is to stay married and to stay committed, will understand the iron-willed determination that they have committed to in order to make it work.

Then secondly, a good marriage glorifies God. A good marriage glorifies God. It's to be celebrated because it is an opportunity to glorify God. The goal of our lives is to glorify God. The goal of marriage is to glorify God. That's how we just ended Romans 11 with that great doxology of praise to the glory of God. Now we step into this and we just carry on that theme because it is all to be for the glory of God. Everything falls into place when you live life to the glory of God. There's a wonderful book on peacemaking. The author has the 5 G's of how it is that you make peace in your relationships, all kinds of relationships. You know what the first G is? Glorify God. Glorify God. Every time I talk to couples or anyone about that I just simply say if you think in terms of relational conflict, if you think in terms of a rub in a relationship with disagreement or disharmony, and if you put at the top of your list as I walk through this disagreement, as I walk through this hard place, my number one goal is to glorify God. That just takes all kinds of things out of the equation in terms of behavior, words, actions, and everything else. You start here. Marriage is to glorify God.

We celebrate marriage because it gives us an opportunity to glorify God. It's God's idea. It exists for Him. It doesn't exist for me. It doesn't exist for you. The goal is to glorify God, and we will achieve that only by the power of God's Spirit within us.

God's plan for marriage can't be improved on. It can't be improved on. He's the designer. He's the architect. We're going to trust Him to do what only He can.

What do we take away on this first lesson? If we will commit ourselves in these 10 weeks and then far beyond to God's principles for marriage, He will bless, I believe, your marriage in ways that you never thought possible. Our world is broken. Our world is broken and it's not functioning the way God intended. We know that. Our lives are broken. Our marriages are broken. They're a reflection of the brokenness that each of us possesses. But here is again the good news. God wants to step into our brokenness. He wants to step into our humanity, into our failings, into our struggles. He wants to step into the messes of life and He wants to bring this redeeming rescuing grace of God. He wants to bring the power of the gospel. I don't know what your life circumstance is this morning. I don't know what you would say about where your marriage is right now. I'm pretty sure in a group this size that there are those of you that are discouraged and you would say your marriage isn't in a good place at all. Others of you thankfully are saying this is a good season and we're grateful. I want to say to all of us: Let's together as the people of God and Covenant take these 10 weeks to submit ourselves to God's Word, to submit ourselves to conversations and opportunities in each other's lives, and to ask God to do what only He can – rescue and redeem and restore and glorify Himself in our marriages and in our families, in our homes.

To do that, of course, we have to have embraced that gospel. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No exceptions. Every one of us. But Jesus came and He lived a perfect life. He died that terrible death on a cross for my sin and for yours. God said if I will believe that what Jesus did is all that needs to be done, He will give me eternal life. It's that simple. It's so simple that people oftentimes say it can't be that easy, but actually it is. It's called the grace of God. If you have not believed that gospel to this point, I invite you to consider that this morning and put your trust and faith in Christ alone.

Let's pray. Father God, we're so grateful for Your Word, for this place, for these people and for the opportunity that we have to share this life journey together, to encourage each other along the way. I pray right now that You will use this summer study to grow us in this grace, to grow us in sanctification, setting us apart, making us

more like Christ. Encourage us, Father, by Your Word. Allow us to build into each other's lives. We pray that this glorious gospel, Father, would be believed and embraced and accepted even this morning, and a life would be changed for all of eternity. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.