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**SERMON TITLE: The First Wedding**

*Marriage Series: The Honeymoon is Not Over*

**SCRIPTURE: Genesis 2:18-25**

**DATE: September 6, 2020**

*View online service at [www.fpcd.org/live-stream](http://www.fpcd.org/live-stream)*

The past two months I have learned more about love and marriage than I imagined one could do when they suddenly lose their spouse. One of the greatest things I learned was how much I loved my husband. You don't usually sit around on a day-to-day basis and say to yourself how much you love and appreciate someone. You just kind of live it out together but when they are gone—and you had no idea it was coming, it is like getting whacked upside the head with a large plank or knocked down by an angry bull called death. It truly is the enemy. It results in great shock and suffering.

But, I have discovered that I'm not alone. For I have felt your deep love, support, and patience. You reflect God's hands, feet, and hearts to the Love of Jesus. I am very grateful.

Your patience is a real, authentic patience, not the toe-tapping kind of patience. You know how it is when you are waiting for someone. But you've extended to me the real "love is patient and kind;" God's kind of patience. It has meant the world to me and is helping me heal.

Usually I plan our topics at FPCD well ahead of time. I'd planned for this fall to teach from a book by Dr. Timothy Keller called *The Meaning of Marriage*. Dr. Keller's book was written from sermons he preached to his congregation in New York City. The majority of his people at Redeemer Presbyterian Church are single.

So why study marriage if you are not married yet—or if you've been married long?

Dr. Keller points out that marriage, the birth of a child, and death are life's three biggest challenges. At the same time, they are three big opportunities to draw closer to God; to understand God better. Marriage is a gift from God, even though we hear things like this:

- "I love being married. It's so great to find one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life." ~ Rita Rudner
- "Marriage is a wonderful institution...but who wants to live in an institution?" ~ Groucho Marx
- "By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy; if you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher." ~ Socrates (the Philosopher)
- "The honeymoon is over!"

Can we expect the possibility that *the honeymoon is not over*? Our purpose in studying marriage is to overcome a low view of marriage as well as the decline of marriage in the United States.

For example, according to the CDC National Health Statistics Report, in 2013, 36% of women and 32% of men state, "Marriage has not worked out for most people I know."<sup>1</sup> This is reflected in the divorce rate. In 1958 it was 2.3% but now it's 56% for first marriages and 70% for second or more marriages.<sup>2</sup> Also, a study in 2018 by *Psychology Today* reports that, excluding the traditionally religious, 64.5 percent cohabited with a romantic partner. They estimate 70 percent of those who are married lived together first. That's an increase for women of 82 percent since 1998.<sup>3</sup>

Not only has living together without marriage become normal, there's a new term for the 44 percent who live with a succession of romantic partners—"serial cohabiters." But statistics show "serial cohabitation" creates strong economic disadvantage, lower odds of marriage, and increased odds of divorce.

The lack of marriage also bears heavily upon children. A 2018 survey by Pew Research revealed that, "one-in-four parents (25%) in the United States are unmarried. . . . a dramatic change from a half-century ago, when fewer than one-in-ten parents (<7%) living with their children were unmarried."<sup>4</sup>

Marriage has lost its good reputation. However, just because something becomes a cultural norm does not mean it is the right thing to do. Just because "everybody is doing it" does not mean it is right or that it is going to benefit you!

Marriage is God-designed and GOOD for you, for children, for the society at large.

<sup>1</sup> Jill Daugherty and Casey Copen, "Trends in Attitudes About Marriage, Childbearing, and Sexual Behavior: United States, 2002, 2006–2010, and 2011–2013," National Health Statistics Reports, No. 92, March 17, 2016, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr092.pdf>. Accessed September 3, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> 100 Years of Marriage and Divorce Statistics 1867-1967, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_21/sr21\\_024pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_21/sr21_024pdf), accessed October 10, 2018, but no longer available as of September 3, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Scott M. Stanley and Galena K. Rhoades, "Why Moving In Together Is So Risky: Cohabitation has changed a lot about relationships and family formation," *Psychology Today*, July 10, 2018, at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sliding-vs-deciding/201807/why-moving-in-together-is-so-risky>, accessed October 8, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Gretchen Livingston in "The Changing Profile of Unmarried Parents: A growing share are living with a partner," Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/04/25/the-changing-profile-of-unmarried-parents/>, accessed September 2, 2020.

This series is designed to help overcome the sentiment that marriage is impossible. Not only is marriage possible but it is valuable and stabilizes the nation.

If marriage is GOOD, if it brings stability, then we should embrace it whether we are young or have been married for many years to make it the best it can be.

I've discovered so much about marriage only by losing my husband of nearly 38 years suddenly, which I will share throughout this series. Every Christian (single, married, or widowed) needs to understand the meaning of marriage. It's God's institution and the *honeymoon does not have to be over*.

When God created Adam, humanity was summed up in one person. God set out with the one person, putting God's very breath, God's image, in the man—that's a blessing! And that makes us different from all other creatures.

We were given the job of "ruling the earth"—summed up in caring for the garden, naming the animals, subduing the earth, and creating culture. Creating culture is cultivating society. That's a big job and God quickly found it was very boring without women—without a girl to make Adam's life a honeymoon. 

The first wedding was performed by God when he brought the woman to Adam, and Adam said. WOW! God's motivation was to make him a helper as his partner. **עֵזֶר** (Gen 2:18). *Ezer*

This is a positive thing. You might think, "I don't want to be a helper. I want to be independent! I want to be my own person."

When we interpret it that way, we are kind of missing the point.

Think of Adam by himself as the whole of humanity. But he was lonely. He had no one to relate to. We cannot think of what it would be like to only have a world of men, or only have a planet with women. The image of the woman coming from the man's side helps us understand the words, "Bone of my bone at last!" He would cling to her and she to him because they fulfilled each other. Being complete in yourself is not fulfilling. It is not good enough. Partnership is better. **It takes the two to make the whole.**

*Ezer* is a gift of relationship. *Ezer* does not refer to subservience.

In our relationship with God due to God's spirit ("breath") within us, we are not independent creatures. We are not only "our own person." We are beholden to God because God created us for partnership with God, who calls himself our *Ezer*.

**Marriage reflects our intimate relationship with God. That's why marriage is good.**

Once, a year or two ago, I was so annoyed with Dean over something—I don't remember now what it was! But I prayed over this annoyance toward Dean that God would CHANGE HIM!

Show him the light, God! Bring him to his senses! Stop his foolish ways God! These were my prayers.

You know how God responded to my prayer? I kid you not. Jesus' voice in my head was as clear as a bell:

"Isn't it wonderful that he's not like you? If he was, how boring that would be. Aren't you glad he has his own ways of doing things? Could you really handle two you's? Think of the variety Dean brings to your life."

Do you know how I knew those were Jesus' words? You'd never think of it yourself! I wanted to dismiss those words, saying to Jesus, "You don't have to live with him." ☺ But I knew the words were the voice of God; words that, though hard to hear, gave me a gift. That perspective helped me see Dean's value. Valuing Dean's differences helped me be more patient with him in a deep patience, not just a toe-tapping patience.

Tim Keller says marriage is glorious, but hard. Marriage is a joy and strength, but also blood, sweat, and tears. Marriage is filled with humbling defeats and exhausting victories. It is not a fairy tale understanding of each other but more like the Apostle Paul says: a *profound mystery*.

What's your view of marriage? Are you alone in marriage? Is that spouse of yours so totally different that you are annoyed with him or her all the time? Are you thinking the honeymoon is over for good and your marriage is on the verge of becoming a statistic?

If you are not married, do you have a low view of marriage?

Take another look. Enter into God's perspective. Discover the goodness. Let God shape your ideas so you can say *marriage is not impossible for me*.

AMEN