

Creation, Marriage and the Image of God Genesis 1:26-28

Introduction

- There was a time when everyone more or less knew what marriage meant.
- That time is gone.
- Marriage is being reexamined, redefined and reimagined.
- Many of us now don't know what to think or believe.
- We may not even be sure how to describe our confusion.

- We are now unsure how to even approach the whole question of marriage.
- Is the issue first and foremost political, religious, moral, personal – or what?

- The Bible has much to say about marriage.
- We will only scratch the surface, but the definition and boundaries of marriage are what will concern us today.
- We want to leave here today understanding marriage better as a concept – as that is primarily where the confusion lies.

Creation, Marriage and the Image of God

Starting Points

- Genesis 1:26-28
- Genesis 2:18-24
- Genesis 5:1-2

Creation, Marriage and the Image of God

Understanding the Bible

From those early passages in Genesis we may conclude:

- Each individual is created in the image of God.
- Gender differences are basic to our creation in God's image.
- The joining of one man and one woman establishes the original pattern for marriage.

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Answering Real Life Questions

- Cohabitation
- Divorce
- Polygamy
- Same-Sex Marriage
- Singleness

Cohabitation

- Couples living together without being married is totally normal today, even to the point of raising families.
- But is that biblical?
- No, because God sees the legally sanctioned, publicly affirmed state of marriage as a precondition to a sexual relationship.
- Jesus makes this distinction with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:16-18.

Divorce

- Matthew 19:3-9
 - Jesus affirms marriage over divorce
 - He uses Adam and Eve in Eden as the standard he expects people to live by. One man, one woman, one lifetime.
- Malachi 2:13-16
 - God reprimands the Israelites for breaking the covenant they made with their wives by divorcing them.
- 1 Corinthians 7:12-16
 - If an unbeliever wants to leave a believer, then, in the interest of peace, the believer should let the unbeliever go.
- Asking whether a particular divorce is biblical can be asking the wrong question.
- God's goal is for people to have strong marriages, not biblically allowable divorces.

Polygamy

- While allowed in the Bible, the examples are problematic.
- We see rivalry between wives and among their children.
- The kings in Israel were commanded not to "acquire many wives," though that was common in the ancient Near East, especially among kings. (Deuteronomy 17:17)
- A man in church leadership needs to be "a man of one woman" (1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).
- In the Bible, polygamy fits into a category almost like that of divorce.
- It probably played a positive role in a society without public welfare programs.
- Still, it was an unfortunate reality rather than an ideal to which people were encouraged to conform.
- Like divorce, it distorts God's original pattern for marriage.
- Polygamists are disqualified from church leadership.

Same-Sex Marriage

- Same-sex attractions are very real for many people, but biblically, they constitute a temptation to be avoided rather than an identity to be embraced.
- People need to always be treated with respect and never marginalized for merely being tempted in a certain way.
- In addition, among Christians, biblical standards toward sexuality must always be upheld.
- Needless to say, this is a volatile issue in our day.
- Even in the church it has become a divisive point.
- Much like divorce and polygamy, same-sex marriage distorts God's original pattern for marriage.
- This distortion is further complicated by the fact that sexual expression with same-sex partners is, in the Bible, flatly and repeatedly prohibited.
- What about the "biblical" arguments for same-sex marriage put out by churches that affirm such relationships?
- The arguments are both numerous and popular.
- They are also woefully inconsistent or flagrantly superficial in their attitude toward biblical interpretation.

- The arguments may be popular but they will never suffice for anyone who hopes to faithfully take God at his word.
- Resources for those who are interested:
 - Joe Dallas, *The Gay Gospel? How Pro-Gay Advocates Misread the Bible*, Harvest House, 2007
 - _____, *Desires in Conflict: Hope for Men Who Struggle with Sexual Identity*, Harvest House, 2003 (revised edition)
 - Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*, Abingdon Press, 2001
 - Anne Paulk, *Restoring Sexual Identity*, Harvest House, 2003
- Also check out the website of the Restored Hope Network, of which our church is a member.
- (We are the only one in Indiana at this time.)
- Restored Hope is an inter-denominational, membership-governed network dedicated to restoring hope to those broken by sexual and relational sin, especially those impacted by homosexuality.
 - <http://www.restoredhopenetwork.com/>

Singleness

- Singleness and Christianity have had an odd history.
- For some, it has been viewed as the epitome of spirituality.
- Among American evangelicals, it has more commonly been seen as an inferior condition to marriage.
- This is perhaps unintentional, but yet implied by:
 - the insistence on marriage for pastors, not a bad thing in itself.
 - expressions like “family values”.
- It’s helpful to see marriage as the norm for most people.
- The apostles and brothers of the Lord were all married.
- Paul and Barnabas were not. See 1 Corinthians 9:5-6.
- Conspicuously, Jesus wasn’t married either.
- Still, the pattern was originally set by God with Adam and Eve, and continues to this day.
- Both Jesus and Paul describe singleness in a positive way.
 - Jesus in Matthew 19:10-12.
 - Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:25-40.

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Marriage in Heaven?

- Marriage on earth is temporary. There will be no marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:23-33).
- In our resurrection state, the entire church will be married to Christ. We are his bride.
- Paul’s reference in Ephesians 5:22-33.
- Also Revelation, chapters 19, 21 and 22.
- The “bride” is represented as singular.
- We are not all individual “brides”, but the church, as a whole, is one bride.

- This upholds the one husband, one wife model.
- The pattern begun in Genesis is fulfilled in Revelation.
- And will last for all eternity.
- The saints are part of a love story in which they really do get to live “happily ever after.”

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Final Observations

- A lifetime of heterosexual monogamy has, with good reason, always been the standard for marriage for the church.
- There is good reason to stick with this solidly biblical pattern.
- There is also such a thing as biblical singleness.
- And this should be affirmed rather than marginalized.
- Single Christians should not be made to feel like they are any the less Christians for their being single.

- The church has too often not practiced what it preaches in the area of marriage.
- This adds to the trouble that marriage is in by making the witness of the church is to weak to counter the drift.
- Pointing out such hypocrisy discredits the character of some Christians, but doesn't in the least discredit the standard that they hypocritically claim to uphold.
- If I claim to be honest, but am not, this doesn't mean absolute honesty is wrong, only my dishonesty.

- If we aim at sexual purity, but fail to achieve it, this doesn't mean sexual purity is wrong, only our failure to live up to it.
- Let's say there is a doctor who is an obese smoker who never exercises and eats 10 Twinkies a day, but then tells his patients they need to get in shape, is he wrong?
- If we continuously drift away from biblical standards, should we compensate by easing the standards or reversing the drift?

- Christian counselor Joe Dallas comments:
 - “We should practice what we preach, but if our preaching goes unpracticed, the problem lies with our behavior, not our preaching.”

- He goes on:
 - “If marriages are broken, then let them be fixed. There are few things we could do that would be as worthwhile. But if the definition of marriage works, then it needs no repair, whether by redefinition or amendment.
 - “The Creator Himself presided over the first marriage, calling it good. And we, the creation and eventual offspring of that first union, dare not call it anything else.”