

GOD-DESIGNED MARRIAGE

Genesis 2:24

Today I'm excited to start a new sermon series studying God's design for marriage. With everyone getting married lately (4 couples in some connection with our church), it seems even more appropriate than the reasons we'll discuss today! I feel bad for the two couples that have just went through most of my pre-marital counseling material – one couple married 2 weeks ago and one couple just last night – but if anything, this is really going to help it sink in! This is just extra preventative maintenance for their marriages I guess. Besides that, it might help newlyweds more if we renamed “the honeymoon period” to “the adjustment period”.ⁱ It sounds more like a trip to the chiropractor but at times that's what it is like. It can be tougher than we expected learning to adjust to a new way of doing life together so even for them, this will be good for them too.

I would also like to point out that recently my wife and I were blessed by anonymous monetary gift through the Berean Fellowship and we decided to bless you all in return with free books called *Marriage That Works* by Chip Ingram. If you are married or thinking about it someday, please take one of those books on the table free of charge. There are also other resources available back there (*Heaven Help the Home!*, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, *Total Money Makeover*, *Strike the Original Match*). If I could've, I would've bought everyone *Strike the Original Match* by Chuck Swindoll but it's hard to get these days.

Anyway, God designed marriage. He is the one who created it and designed it. Marriage is not a cultural construct or something man made up. We don't have to wonder what marriage is or how it should be done because God's perfect design for marriage is clearly revealed to us in His Word. Genesis is the book of firsts, or beginnings, and starting as early as Genesis chapters 1 & 2 we see the first of marriage between the first man and first woman. God creates Adam, then Eve from Adam, once Adam realizes his need for Eve, and then He joins them together in marriage. **Genesis 2:24** says, “*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*” Lord willing, we'll study that first marriage more next Sunday as we start to look at several building blocks that make for a beautiful, holy, and happy marriage and home as God designed it and intended it to be.

Every single one of us has tasted the good, the bad, and the ugly of marriage and relationships – of not doing things God's way. We know the pain of marital problems personally in our own marriage or in immediate or extended family, or among friends or neighbors. This series is not about judging anyone or an attempt to call out the past. It is a series intended to help prevent the bad and the ugly and to bring healing to present hurts. I want to revisit God's design so we can enjoy the peaceable fruits of doing marriage His way. If you are going through a hard time in your marriage, I want to encourage you not give up on your marriage covenant. I read last week that there's 2 processes that shouldn't be started prematurely: embalming and divorce.ⁱⁱ But seriously, don't give up. Listen to what God's Word has to say. Seek His face. Seek His counsel.

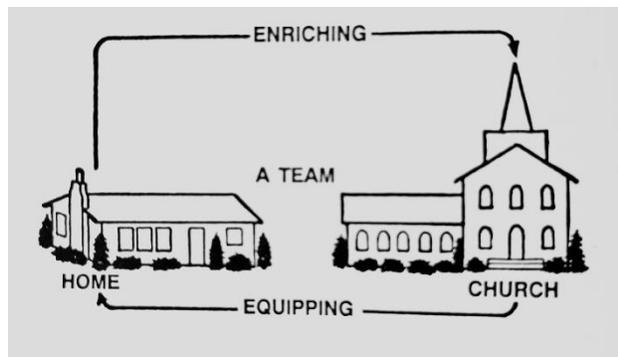
Today we're just going to do a little dirt work, laying a foundation for this series, by looking at several reasons why we should study God's design for marriage.

🔗 **Reason #1 - Marriage is the foundation of a healthy society.**

We all know what a foundation is, right? It's the cement – the rock – the concrete – that a house or similar structure is built on. When you go to build a house, you lay the foundation first. It is the most important part of the structure that you want to lay carefully and accurately. You can build a dream house with the finest materials, floor to ceiling windows, the latest appliances, et cetera... but if you don't have a proper foundation – either it's not laid right or it's built on the wrong earthen material, the house is bound to fall.

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:24-27** we need to build on God's Word: *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house, and it fell – and great was its fall.”* A good question we need to ask is: *Is my marriages and my home built on the rock of God's Word or on the sand of my own idea of what I think it should be?* It's an important question because marriage if marriage is the foundation for family and society – and it is – we want to build properly by building on the rock of God's Word that gives us the necessary wisdom and understanding and knowledge we need to build a strong, lasting home. Psalm 127 says *unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.* So if **God is the master architect and we are the builders** called to build according to His instruction. If we don't want our marriages swept away by our culture and trials and difficulties of marriage. I spent a lot time on the beach last week and even last night at the wedding they had a sand box there that the kids were playing in. I watched as my son and daughter built sandcastles that collapsed immediately or my son turned into Godzilla and crushed his sister's castles. Trust me, we don't want our homes to be built with sand.

Of the 3 institutions established by God – government, the Church, and the family – the family was and is first. The first institution He created was the family and every family is designed to start with marriage. **The family depends on the marriage.** If the marriage crumbles, so goes the family and so goes the nation. This is why many men believe that if you want a real revival that lasts, you focus on the home.ⁱⁱⁱ **Every marriage leaves a legacy.** Our marriages don't just affect us, it affects the following generations. If you wonder why churches seem to be lacking in so many areas and society is so messed up and so frail and so confused, I think we can say look at the marriages –



marriages are dropping like flies. I don't know what the exact divorce rate is, but it's high and rising (some say over 50%). You don't have to look at a statistic, you just have to look around. What many don't realize is that **there is a direct link between these virtually unmanageable social ills** (injustice, conflicts, poverty, mental health; entitled dependence on government) **and the broken home**. There is a link between the home and the well-being of individuals and society. The home has a ripple effect on everyone and everything.

Let's just look at some fatherless home statistics: There are 7+ million fathers totally absent from their children's lives. 18 million children – 1 in 4 – live without a biological, step, or adoptive father in the home. That's enough children to fill New York City twice or Los Angeles four times over. Here's some of the **negative** ways the **father's absence** affects children:

- 4x greater risk of poverty
- More likely to have behavioral problems
- 2x greater risk of infant mortality
- More likely to go to prison (85% of youth in prison were noted grew up fatherless)
- More likely to commit crimes (due to lack of respect for discipline/authority in their life?)
- 7x more likely to become pregnant as a teen
- More likely to face abuse and neglect
- More likely to abuse drugs and alcohol (279%)
- More likely to divorce or dissolve a relationship through cohabitation
- More likely to have children out of wedlock
- 2x more likely to drop out of school
- More likely to have children without a present father.
- More likely to be suicidal

Conversely, a **father's presence** makes a **positive** difference in the lives of the mother and children. They are at lower risk for all of those things we just said. **Mothers** also reap a host of benefits when fathers are involved in pregnancy and raising children:

- More likely to receive prenatal care
- Less likely to use harmful substances during pregnancy
- Less likely to lose the pregnancy
- Healthier births
- Lower risk of post-partum stress and depression
- Lower parenting stress
- Lower risk of poverty
- More leisure time
- Greater satisfaction in life^{iv}

Isn't that incredible? Imagine how much better off a child is when they are reared with a godly, Christian father – a father who loves his wife as Christ loved the Church and lovingly leads his children with balanced love and discipline. If you get that free book on the table in the back called *Marriage That Works* by Chip Ingram, he talks about the absence of mothers in the home especially during those formative years of children and the effect that has had on society. He claims 80% of

what a child will be like is formed in the first 6-8 years. That's scary considering my oldest daughter right now is 6. Have I been present in her life, working to instill in her a love for God and His Word? Have I modeled the gospel to her with forgiveness and grace? Howard Hendricks said in his book, *Heaven Help the Home!* that *"if we want God's blessing on our homes and society, we have to operate in marriage by God's design. There is no alternative... The chief job of the home, as conceived by God, is to train the family members to live fruitfully in home, church, and society."*^v Hendricks was a pioneer on the Christian home. And he said something that stuck with me on that too: a Christian home is not only where Christians live but Christ is welcome to live too. Christ is in that home as the family worships and lives for Him – not just on Sunday morning.

🔗 Reason #2 – Marriage is under attack like never before.

When I say, "never before" I'm talking about recent history in our nation and on a global level like never before. Jesus, when questioned about divorce, referenced Genesis in **Mark 10:6-9**, *"But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh. Whatever God has joined together, let no man separate."* God's design is **monogamous**, meaning it is between 2 people and those two are **heterosexual**, meaning it's between a man and a woman. Anything else is not marriage according to God's definition. You don't have to be a biologist to know that. It doesn't matter if the state or any other man recognizes anything else as marriage, I don't think God does.

This monogamous, heterosexual design is being increasingly departed from in our day. Traditional marriage is seen as something unnecessary – maybe just a big, expensive party. Or it is seen as an archaic cage to be rebelled against. Culture is rejecting biblical marriage. Because marriage is purely biblical and so crucial to society, it's no wonder why it is under attack. In just preparing this sermon when I'd look up anything on *marriage* and *weddings*, you type in either one of those words and watch what comes up! They're constantly pushing the **LGBTQXYZ+** down your throat. They're constantly grooming the next generation to normalize marriage perversions. Google's definition of marriage is, *"the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions specifically a union between a man and a woman)."* I don't exactly how they're using that word **historically**, but I do think *historically* is a key word there... *historically between a man and woman...* meaning, things have changed. Homosexuality has been successfully been normalized.

That's a scary thing when you consider what the Bible says about cultures that normalize perversions of marriage. Just take Sodom and Gomorrah where God said their sin was exceedingly great and He rained down fire and brimstone on them. Or Israel for example, where God cursed their land and crops and made their enemies victorious because they were easily forsaking their marriage covenants and it was harming the next generation (Mal. 2:13-16). God keeps tabs on nations (Gen. 14:14; 18:20; Jonah 1:2; Zech. 1:15; 6:7). I think Romans 1 gives us a glimpse into our own society. Romans 1, revealing the universal need for justification, tells us how God has made Himself known through the **natural laws of creation** (18-23). Everyone knows God and has an innate awareness of God and is without excuse for their sin. and has decided to do whatever he

wants. We know not only from God's special, biblical law that marriage is between man and woman, but also know from natural law. Children can only come through a male and female relationship. But Romans says once you reject that basic knowledge of natural law and the Creator, God, in a wrath of abandonment, gives us over to the consequences of our own sin. God basically says, *"Alright, Frank Sinatra, do it your way."* And his abandonment progressively leads to a bodily impurity (1:24-25), degraded homosexual behavior (1:26-27) and then a depraved mind where they take pride or "heartily approval" in rejecting any law of God whatsoever (1:28-32). I think we see this progressive abandonment in the sexual revolution (50's-60's), a homosexual revolution (starting in the 80's), and then completely depraved mind (today) where we have things like gender fluidity and where we have Supreme Court justices who would answer the question, *"What is a woman?"* with, *"I don't know, I'm not a biologist."*

But not only is marriage under attack by man trying to come with his own designs, it is under attack by **socialism** and **communist Marxism**. I like to think socialists are like teenage communists who think they're ideas are great but haven't tasted the consequences of their own ideas yet – it's communist light. In communism, big daddy government replaces both God and parents. Instead of parents submitting to God and children to parents and God, all are individualized as members of the State and committed solely to it and equality in it. That means no more teaching your children and no more passing on inheritances to your children. Who can forget the communist activist organization Black Lives Matter from 2020? When they first appeared in the headlines, their website used to be very clear on what they believed and what they sought to accomplish. It has changed since then (they've deleted most of it), but it used to read, *"We dismantle the patriarchal practice... We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and "villages" that collectively care for one another."* The **nuclear family** they are talking about is the husband and wife and their children as a family (think nucleus). Instead of elevating personal responsibility they start to emphasize the overall good of the community by way of submission to government. Isn't it interesting that the organization so intent on fixing societal ills is the one destroying the family? So the family becomes a sort of survival strategy in communist Marxism. It's a safe haven against cancel culture because it's the place where we learn unconditional love and grace and belonging. BLM stands against all 3 of God's institutions as per His design for them.

One of the problems with their understanding is that the nuclear family is seen as a western prescription or some American ideal that surfaced in the 50's. It's not. It's God's design. And if you tamper with it, you might as well be tempting God and you are working to create chaos in society. It's what we've been witnessing for decades since the sexual revolution. In preparation for this series I read several books, including one of the cutting edge, New York Times bestselling "Christian" books on marriage. Without any exegesis of Scripture, this young man and "Christian" author with a huge following, in a roundabout, Christianese way, taught Christianity needed to return to a more village-based approach to family, all the while making the United States look bad and slamming the nuclear family as the problem, making it look individualistic. I'll admit, he does a good job and sounds very convincing. He had some good things to say about looking at the family as a team. But I'm sitting there thinking, if I had no foundation in God's Word, I'd be

sucked into this anti-nuclear idea. The exact opposite is true. We have moved away from the design and become lovers of pleasure who do what we want rather than unconditionally and sacrificially loving our families. Should we be more village minded? Caring for our extended family members? Desiring cross-generational family connections? Taking in those who don't have families? Caring for the marginalized? The poor and the widows and the orphans? Yes. And what better way to do that than through the nuclear family unit that God designed to work together to bless others.

Socialism doesn't understand that we are going to be *individually* judged before God according to how we operated according to His design. For example, God has made me, as a male, as a husband, as a father, to be the head of my home. That's weaved into God's design from day 6 of creation as we'll see from Genesis and clearly taught in the New Testament. So, if I don't lovingly lead my family, providing and protecting physically and spiritually, I'll be judged for that. If I don't love my wife and care for her as I would my own body (Eph. 5:22-33), living with her in an understanding way, I'll taste judgment now in that my own prayers will be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Reason # 3 – Marriage is a blessing to the world and a fortress against it.

With the world being plunged into the utter depravity of **relativism** (where anything goes and there is no truth) and with socialism on the rise, **the family is the last thing you want to trivialize**. The family, especially in times like this, becomes both a **blessing** to the world and a **fortress** against its destructive patterns. As Hendricks said, *“A Christian home stands out in bold relief in pagan society.”*

Reason #4 – Most people will get married.

If you aren't married, chances are you will get married sometime and you don't want to wait until you are head over heels for someone before you start learning God's design. Ideally, you want to go into it as prepared as possible, not fly by the seat of your pants! Isn't that why you change the oil in your car? You're trying to prevent breakdowns and keep it running smoothly. You bought the car to get you where you want to go. Going into marriage without clear directions is like an explorer going on an adventure without a map; like a pilot without navigational aids. Tony Dungee, former coach of the Indianapolis Colts, said something like, *“We would never go into a football game unprepared – we practice daily, we watch film, we watch our diets – but so many of us live life that way!”* We practice and study for a football game or soccer game but not for marriage? Not for parenting? Not for handling finances? We know Algebra and calculus but we're illiterate in the home?! What a tragic mistake we make! Even if you aren't married and maybe never plan to be, you should still seek to understand God's design for marriage because as His people we want to be salt and light and that means getting to know the whole counsel of God. You may mentor others or disciples others who look to you for advice.

Reason #5 – Marriages are dynamically changing.

As each marriage and family ages and goes through various stages, it has need of fresh instruction and insight and reminders. Just like a house that you own, your marriage needs constant upkeep.

Some of our marriages are fresh construction builds and we're still in the honeymoon/adjustment period. Some of us a few years down the road and need some touch ups. Some of us are old and need a remodel for a new stage of life we're entering. Some of us may need serious foundational repairs. If you've ever done a remodel or work on a home (like the bathroom I remodeled recently), I was reminded that it often costs more than expected, it's not as easy as I expected (you're tempted to cut corners), and at times you just want to hire the work to be done by someone else. But the key was to stick with it and put in the elbow grease because in the end it is worth it. There is satisfaction in a completed, project.

I only have around 8 years under my belt as a husband and father (with a few gray hairs now, a few less hairs, and few more nose hairs), and already I've found that I need a **fresh reminders** and **fresh instruction** each year from God's Word and godly teachers of His Word to teach me how to be a better husband and father. I need fresh insights. Something that might not have stood out to me last year, will this year. I want to be a good hunter and fisherman and even a good pastor, but more than anything I want to be a good husband and father because that's what matters most. My position as a pastor rests on how I am doing as a father and as a husband. The Bible says that elders must manage their own household well. If you can't manage your household, you have no place in the ministry. God would say to go learn to take care of your primary ministry first. If we're looking for someone for ministry, we look first to how he ministers in his home. Maybe that's one of the reasons we have a shortage of ministers – we have a shortage of men leading their homes. **It is the home that marks a life.** If we want future church leaders, we dare not trivialize the home.

Anyway, every book I read gets me fired up again to manage my household well and to work on my marriage. My prayer is that this study will help to rekindle the flame in your marriage and to be more intentional with your marriage. I would challenge you couples to go on a date this week or as soon as possible. Buy your spouse a gift and let them know 3 things you appreciate about them. Dance with them. Last night at Peyton and Pamela's wedding I thought, "*How many couples make their 'first dance' their 'last dance' as well.*" Don't let your first dance be your last.

You know, when something is precious and valuable to you, you tend to treat it differently. You sacrifice for it. You take care of it. You put it somewhere special, maybe somewhere up high to admire it and protect it. You show it off. In one parable, Jesus talked about a pearl of great price worth sacrificing everything else for. Well, if you're here today and you feel like your marriage is a mess or impossible. If you feel like marriage is so hard, why bother?... I'm glad you're here. I get to remind us of how precious and beautiful marriage is. Hebrew 13:4 says, "*marriage is to be held high in honor among all, and the marriage bed kept pure.*" Like Hebrews 13, we're going to hold this precious gem of a God-designed marriage and honor it and remind ourselves to care for our marriages as they deserve.

ⁱ Charles Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 85.

ⁱⁱ Swindoll, 38.

ⁱⁱⁱ Howard Hendricks, Richard Baxter story on page 149 of *Heaven Help the Home!*

^{iv} <https://www.fatherhood.org/father-absence-statistic>

^v Howard Hendricks, *Heaven Help the Home!* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1973, 1990), 33, 20.