

I can vividly recall the anticipation I felt looking forward to being married. I was 24 and being married would officially mean I was done living at home and would have freedom! Life after December 21st 2001 was gonna be perfect. That Friday evening we said "I do" in front of our family and friends, as we entered into a covenant with each other before God.

It was all a whirlwind...the wedding, the reception, loading Luvy Ann and her dress into my 2-door Civic and trying to find the stick-shift somewhere under that dress as it filled up the front of the car! The Taco Bell for dinner was great and well, so was the rest of the night!

The next day, Luvy Ann's birthday, we were off to spend our honeymoon in Nice - no not that one - Nice, California, a couple hours north of the Bay Area, near Wine Country. Three days later, on **Christmas Day**, I was very sick and Luvy Ann would find herself trying to get me to the **ER** in a place we'd never been before - before we had google maps - while trying to drive a stick-shift, something that was still very new for her. A couple days later I was feeling better and driving us back to the Bay Area when suddenly these lights started flashing in my mirror. I pulled over, completely stumped as to why. The **officer** asked what I was doing and I told him we were headed home from our honeymoon - he didn't even flinch and gave me a ticket. It turns out we had just entered the Napa city limits and so the speed limit had dropped 10 and I hadn't realized it.

We got back to my parents' house where we had to stay a few days because the condo we were going to be living in wasn't ready yet. That wasn't awkward at all for us newlyweds to sleep in my room at my parents' house! Then, either the day we got back from our honeymoon or the next day Luvy Ann wasn't feeling well either so she too had to go to the Doctor.

We'd only been married a week, but had already experienced a good bit in our marriage!

This morning we continue our series on **Foundational Truths** and address the topic of marriage. Why would marriage be included in a series on Foundational Truths? Because what has, for thousands of years, been a foundational understanding of marriage has drastically changed and, with **cohabitation** on the rise, fewer people these days are choosing to wed.

Godly marriage can be boiled down to **3 essential purposes** that we'll look at this morning. (<https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/staying-married/gods-plan-for-marriage/gods-purposes-for-marriage/>)

The first purpose in marriage is to **Mirror God's image**. Pastor Scott preached an entire sermon related to humanity being created in **God's image**, but it goes deeper than that. Our marriages also, are to mirror God's image back to the world around us. When people see a godly marriage they should be able to see God. Everything we do in our marriages should glorify and exalt Him. When those who don't know what God is like gaze upon a **godly marriage** they are able to see God's image reflected through that couple, thereby gaining a little bit of an understanding of who He is.

A second purpose for marriage is to **Complete each other and experience companionship**.

Genesis 2.18-20 ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens (NEW SLIDE) and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens (NEW SLIDE) and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

At the end of each creative act in Genesis 1 God looked upon His creation and declared it "good." Here in Genesis 2.18, though, we find that man was not living as God had fully desired - Adam didn't have a companion. The companionship of the animals would have been limited, and there was nothing in all of the created order that attained to his own level, being created in God's image, so Adam's loneliness was declared "not good."

God has the remedy for Adam's plight; He'll make a helper suitable for Adam.

Genesis 2.21-23 ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that (NEW SLIDE) the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; (NEW SLIDE) she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Eve was literally taken from his side. We usually think of it simply as a rib, but the concept is deeper than that. It's like Adam has been split into 2 and a new

part created from his side. Here we start to get the picture of the **complementary nature** that God intended for this relationship. Adam was deficient, but Eve would complete the union and provide what Adam was lacking.

It's valuable for us to take note of the fact **Eve is not shown to be inadequate or insufficient**. Rather, the woman was made, by God, to shore up the man's deficiencies. The noun form of the word used here is almost exclusively used in Scripture to show **God is the One who helps His people**. This certainly lays to rest any notion that the "helper" is "less than" the one being helped. Eve would act as his counterpart.

Now, have you ever stopped to consider the differences between **men and women**? Society around us would have us believe that women and men are the same, but that is not true and to believe otherwise devalues both sexes.

The differences between men and women are often highlighted in the parental relationship. Generally speaking women are much more merciful and compassionate; they are able to resonate with the emotions of their children, and are great at showing unconditional love and support. In the marriage bed, the conditions need to be right and they need to be warmed up a bit. Men, on the other hand, are usually viewed as the protectors and providers for the home. Providing for those in his household is something the man is driven to; he naturally works hard to ensure his family is provided for. As to the sexual arena, I think it's no secret that men are ready to go at the drop of a hat! We are different from each other and those differences add value to our individual marriages.

In **1 Corinthians 11.8-11** Paul tells us about the interdependence between man and woman "**8 For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 ... 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman;**" They **need each other** for companionship and to fill up what is lacking in the other.

I would be remiss if didn't inform you that Scripture doesn't allow us to marry just anyone of the opposite sex. 2 Corinthians 6.14 reads "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" This is the **principle of being Unequally yoked**. A yoke, of course, is the apparatus that was used to hold together a pair of oxen as they worked in the fields. When the animals are not of similar nature, size, and capability then there are many problems that arise, chiefly

that accomplishing the task at hand becomes quite difficult. When one is weaker than the other then it is nearly impossible for them to stay on course.

According to this principle a Christian should not be married to (or even dating) a non-Christian. When two people are married to each they need to be on the **same page**. The **frustration, disappointment, and heartache** that comes from a Christian trying to do what God has called them to and the spouse being contrary to that is quite significant. I will say, though, that if you find yourself in an unequally yoked marriage Scripture encourages you, if at all possible, to try to stay in that marriage.

Even among Christians there is the possibility of being unequally yoked. Thinking back to my college days I'm grateful I was able to recognize a problem with a girlfriend I had. At the end of 1997 God called me into the ministry, and as I looked at the situation with that girlfriend it occurred to me that she was not able to support me in ministry because of a lack of faith. You see, God had called me into the music ministry, but I didn't even play any instruments at the time and singing in front of people made me super nervous. **How was I going to become a Worship Pastor?** As I took inventory of our relationship I realized that she was not able to walk in faith with me. I was trusting God was going to provide for what He had called me to but she could not be my partner in that calling.

As I considered some of the ladies in our College Group this quiet girl really started to grab my attention. She was involved with music, sang in the choir, and was really sweet. As we pursued a friendship it became clear that she was the right one. She was in line with what God had placed in my heart and when we began dating we began ministering together at the church plant we were part of in the Bay Area.

I do think I chose well because people really like her - a lot more than they like me! We are equally yoked and this serves us quite well. She has been and still continues to be the perfect complement to my ministry, as well as to my personality and temperament, completing what is lacking in me.

Going back to **Genesis 2.24-25** ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

In July of 2013 the Queen of England signed into law "The Marriage Bill" which allowed same-sex couples the right to legally marry. On June 26, 2015

the United States Supreme Court issued its own ruling legalizing gay marriage. In the years since many nations have adopted legislation making it legal for partners of the same sex to wed. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/definition-of-marriage.html>) We have to ask though, is this the right of the state or has marriage already been determined by a higher authority than a nation's governing entities?

Here in Genesis we have a **man and woman** being united in marriage. Anytime Scripture speaks to the idea of marriage **it always involves a man and a woman - never** marriages of the same sex. It is also important for us to understand that Scripture never depicts homosexuality in a positive light. There are movements in our culture today that reinterpret Scripture as endorsing same-sex relationships. In order to somehow arrive at this conclusion those reading the text make a lot of inferences and read into the text their own presuppositions and ideas, rather than allowing Scripture itself to speak to them.

The heart of our church is that we **welcome all people to Cornerstone**. We love them, we walk alongside them, AND we will hold God's Truth up to them. Jesus lived a life full of grace and truth and we desire to live like Him, understanding that God gives grace and **that grace asks us to surrender our will and desires to Him**.

There are, today, many Christians who would say **"well, it's not hurting anybody to allow lesbians and gays to marry."** It is true enough that same-sex marriages don't necessarily directly hurt others, but I would suggest damage can be inflicted on the children born into or adopted by same-sex couples in their quest to normalize such marriages. Psychology and sociology, itself, bears out the truth that the best environment for raising well-adjusted children is a family consisting of both a mom and dad - not 2 moms and not 2 dads. Secondly, since Scripture is clearly opposed to homosexuality and the exchanging of **"natural relations for those that are contrary to nature"** (**Romans 1.26**) then we need to follow God's design. We know that God's ways are perfect so living according to His will is always the best practice.

Before I move on from this topic though I want to remind you that just because you may not agree with how someone lives their life does not mean you have any right to treat them as less than human. They are still image-bearers of God and, as such, they deserve to be treated with kindness and respect.

So, since I have stated what marriage is not, let's define it:

Marriage is the union of a naturally-born man and a naturally-born woman in a

binding Covenant before God.

When we look at Scripture we can clearly see God's desire and intention for marriage. God intended to create a helper for Adam, someone to be his complement. Here we can see that 1. God did not create multiple helpers and 2. he did not create another version exactly like Adam. God created someone with some similar traits, but whose qualities served as the perfect complement to Adam's.

Genesis 2.24 spoke of the man and woman becoming one flesh. Originally there was **one flesh**, Adam. Then out of Adam was made **two flesh**, Adam and Eve. But then in the sexual union of man and woman they became **one flesh**.

This one flesh union signals an **intimacy** that is closer than any other human relationship. The husband and wife come to know each other in incredibly deep ways, as partners in and for life, learning each other's personalities, habits, desires, passions, and bodies. As one flesh they are committed to fidelity in their marriage, making the marital bed the only place where they derive sexual fulfillment. All of this brings each other much joy and pleasure as husband and wife grow together, depend on and complement each other, and find joy in serving one another's many needs.

Let's look now at Ephesians 5. This passage takes us a bit deeper into God's desire for marriage and some of the qualities of a godly marriage. Please stay with me through this and listen to the full extent of what I'll be saying. Please don't tune out just because you hear a concept you don't like...

Ephesians 5.22-25 ²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. (NEW SLIDE) ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

There's that word, the one word that causes women all over the world to trip up and want to throw Scripture and true Christianity out the window - **submission**. When the word is spoken in this context those not immediately familiar with the passage and concept immediately recoil and put up their guard, imposing onto the word their own thoughts and feelings.

Hear this: the word **submission** does not have anything to do with the **value or quality of the wife**. The idea of submission is related to **roles and purposes**.

Remember, back in Genesis 2 we were told that God created a **counterpart** for Adam, a partner in life. The text does not tell us He created someone of lesser value and importance. **This helpmate, Eve, supplied what was lacking in Adam** because he was shown to have some deficiencies.

Let me illustrate submission: I have been employed as a **Worship Pastor** here at Cornerstone Baptist Church for **10 years** now. As a Pastor on staff here at Cornerstone I do have some authority, but I am most definitely not at the top of the ladder. I choose to submit, to place myself under Pastor Scott and the **Elder Board** of Cornerstone Baptist Church. My job is to follow them and do what they ask of me, even when I don't necessarily agree - which, I might add, is very seldom. Even Pastor Scott, himself, is not at the top. He also chooses to submit himself to the Elder Board and what they ask of him in following Christ, who is the true Head of Cornerstone Baptist Church.

In a marriage the husband is considered the head, the authority, in that relationship. It doesn't mean he knows more than she does, it doesn't mean he doesn't take the wife's thoughts, feelings, and input into consideration in his decisions. It means he is directly accountable to God for the marriage and family. The wife may not agree with him, but, biblically speaking she is to place herself **under his authority** and leading. That is what she is called to do and leading is what the husband is called to do.

Verse 25 told us what this looks like: **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**. The husband is to love his wife in the same manner that Christ loved the Church. You may recall from our Advent series: **Philippians 2** tells us Jesus did not use His own status as God for His own purposes. Rather, He chose to submit, first of all, to the Father's plan and then, secondly, to those around Him. He placed the needs of others - those who were of an **arguably lower status than He** - above His own needs and desires. Then He carried out His obedience to the Father by going all the way to the cross. Scripture is clear that Jesus would much rather have avoided the cross if there was a way to do so, but **He submitted to the Father's will** and died on the cross. **THAT** is how much He loved us. That's how much He loved the Church, by completely giving Himself for her.

A biblical husband leads his wife in tenderness, looking out for her needs, considering her thoughts and feelings, placing her needs and desires above his own. If the husband is leading with a sacrificial, steadfast, loyal love then it will be easy for the wife to place herself under his authority.

Now, some might look at Genesis 2 and ask, where's the wedding? Jesus makes it clear that this is the first wedding. **Matthew 19.4-6** “⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, (NEW SLIDE) and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.””

Here Jesus affirmed the marriage of Adam and Eve - which occurred **long before any human laws, governing bodies, or religious practices** even existed. The unfortunate reality, though, is that, because of sinful brokenness in our world, mankind often seeks to break up what God has joined together. We have been united with our spouse in ways that can not truly be undone, and God's desire is for permanency of the marriage.

The **third purpose** we see in marriage is to **Multiply a godly legacy**. Jumping back to God's creative act: **Genesis 1.27-28** “²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Now, take special note of this verse (NEW SLIDE) ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it,

God offered a blessing and gave orders to “Be fruitful and multiply” This is part of God's desire and purpose in creating man. Man wasn't simply created as another animal, ranking just a little bit higher than the others. No, he was created as something altogether different from the animals. As we've learned, he was created in the image of God. Man's task then was to fill the earth with more image-bearers.

We have a problem today, though. The idea that children are a blessing is being disregarded. Many people now see them as nuisances and interruptions into their daily lives, causing some to seek out abortions when they become pregnant.

The blessing of children is 2-fold.

1. They are a blessing in and of themselves. **Psalm 127.3-5** “³ Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!” Just having children is going to guarantee you adventures that you wouldn't have otherwise had - along with blessings innumerable!

2. When we raise godly children we are doing our part to bring God to future

generations. The Shema: **Deuteronomy 6.4-7** “⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (NEW SLIDE) ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. As Christian parents we impart a sense of purpose to our children and they will, then, reflect God to the world around them. If we heed the words of the Shema then we will be participating in discipleship and contributing to the Great Commission - the greatest blessing that anyone can experience.

Godly marriages provide insight for our children regarding how to see the world and the needs of others through Christ’s eyes. Godly marriages give us opportunities to teach our children what it means to love and be loved by God. Godly marriages provide a context for us to teach our children what it means to obey God.

Lastly, let’s look at **Christ’s relationship to the Church**. Marriage is the picture used all throughout Scripture to illustrate our relationship to God, whether in the Old Testament as Israel, or in the New Testament Church. The spiritual union we will have with Christ is considered the ultimate marriage and the consummation of our faith.

In **Ephesians 5.31-32** Paul writes ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

The Church is here pictured as the Bride of Christ, though sometimes we don’t exactly live that way, in a pure and chaste manner. Christ gave Himself up for the Church so that He could sanctify her and not marry a wife who has gone and played the harlot, as the Old Testament often pictures.

When Christ returns at His 2nd Coming we will live in the reality of this marriage. It will be a joyful moment to be celebrating our full union with Christ. No longer will we be downtrodden by sin, but we will, instead, be presented as Christ’s pure bride, completely spotless and reigning with Him for all eternity.

~Let’s all bow our heads and close our eyes~

closing challenges and prayer:

First of all, to those in this place who are not able to have children. God sees your pain. He knows the heartache that you experience each month as you hope and pray for conception. He is your Father. He is with you and wants to reign His peace and comfort down on you.

- as Christ's Bride how am I living? Am I continually playing the harlot, like Israel, and going after someone else?
- As a husband or wife am I living the way God would want me to? Husbands, are you leading in a godly manner, with steadfast loyal love? Wives are you submitting to your husbands, as you would submit to the Lord?
- for youth and young adults: hold your sexuality with much care and concern, not handing it out to whoever would take it, but preserving that special gift for the person God will have you one day unite with.
- To those who have failed in their marriages, whether through treatment of your spouse, infidelity, or divorce - God forgives. Seek Him and His forgiveness and get back on track. Don't wallow in that place, set about to daily living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Benediction:

Jude 24-25 "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

(<https://www.christianity.com/blogs/eric-mckiddie-pastoralized/28-ways-to-conclude-your-sermon-a-list-of-nt-doxologies-and-benedictions.html>)

Further thought/reading/application:

- 1 Corinthians 7.1-5. How does this passage differ from what the world around us would have us believe?
- Was there a part of the message that you disagreed with? How can you reconcile this with God's desire for marriage, as revealed in Scripture?
- Consider this book title "Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?" What areas in your marriage is the Holy Spirit convicting you of?