

## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May 17, 2026

Unpuzzled

“God’s Design for Marriage”

Ephesians 5:31-33

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Imagine if you had the priest from the movie Princess Bride officiating at your wedding. You have to be a true lover of the movie to really appreciate that scene where he repeatedly pronounced marriage as “maawiage.” What did the priest actually say? “Marriage, marriage is what brings us together today. Marriage, that blessed arrangement, that dream within a dream. And love, true love will follow you forever. So treasure your love.” Today, in this message we are blessed to look together at what God’s design for marriage is. God created marriage and as such gives us clear direction for what He intends marriage to be. Sadly, for many in our world today and even some in the church this sermon about God’s design for marriage is a radical message. Yet, if we follow God’s design for marriage, not our design or that of the world, but God’s design for marriage we will experience what the priest called earlier, a blessed arrangement from God where a man and a woman join together in a covenant to become one and in so doing the world will see Jesus in their love for each other.

### Ephesians 5:31-33

*<sup>31</sup> As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”<sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. <sup>33</sup> So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

### GOD DESIGNED MARRIAGE TO BE FOR 1 MAN AND 1 WOMAN

The Apostle Paul first tells us that **God Designed Marriage to be for 1 Man and 1 Woman**. As we mentioned in this sermon series, Paul is writing this letter of encouragement to the Christians in the house churches of Ephesus. In chapter 5 of this letter Paul lays out God’s perfect plan for husbands and wives. Paul does so by taking us back to the beginning of time when God created Adam. Adam had everything he could ever want, a perfect relationship with God and a perfect world in which to make His home. Yet, with all this God stepped back and looked at it all and said something is missing for Adam. Adam needs another human being with whom to enjoy and thrive in this perfect life. God then created from Adam’s rib at his side, the first ever woman.

Then, in what we could call the first ever wedding ceremony, God the Father, gives away His daughter called Eve, to Adam to be Adam's wedded wife. What was Adam's response when he first saw Eve walking down the aisle in the woods to Him on God's arm, "Wow!" At many wedding rehearsals I've told grooms that when the day finally arrives and he is standing at the altar waiting for his bride to come to not lock his knees. Why? Because when he sees his bride for the first time in her wedding dress coming down that aisle to him, she will take his breath away. There is nothing more beautiful! I've seen more than one man overwhelmed with emotion when seeing her for the first time. Eve took Adam's breath away when she came into view.

At the beginning of time God created one man and one woman for each other. I can almost hear God say at the wedding ceremony of Adam and Eve, "who gives this woman to be married to this man?" God replies to His own question, "We do! Our family does!" meaning the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has given men the most blessed gift ever, a wife. Proverbs 18:22 says, "The man who finds a wife finds a treasure, and he receives favor from the Lord." God has also given women the greatest gift ever, a husband. Marriage between a man and a woman is not just a human, social construct but is rooted in the created order. Not only do we see God's design for marriage in creation and in the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians, but Jesus also made the same point when a religious leader asked Jesus' thoughts on divorce. Jesus said in Matthew 19:4-6, "4 'Haven't you read the Scriptures?' Jesus replied. 'They record that from the beginning "God made them male and female.'" 5 And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. 6 Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.'" Jesus took them back to creation to show that God's design for marriage of one man and one woman was a gift God gave to us at creation. This was God's design for marriage at the beginning of time, Jesus said it continued to be so when He walked in this world, Paul confirmed it here in Ephesians, and it is still God's design for marriage today. There are no exceptions. God has not changed his mind in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE IS THAT 2 BECOME 1 AND ARE BECOMING 1**

The Apostle Paul secondly tells us that **God's Design for Marriage is that 2 Become 1 and are Becoming 1**. Genesis, Jesus, and Paul, all tell us that when a couple gets married the two individuals now miraculously and by mysteriously become one. There are two ways that this happens. The first is through the marital covenant they make when they say "I do" to their vows. When a man and woman answer saying "I do" when the pastor asks them during the wedding, "**Bride**, will you have **Groom** to be your husband, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?" they are making a lifelong, lasting covenant commitment to each other. They are making that commitment before God, each other, and all the witnesses at the ceremony. At the end of the wedding vow, it says that this is a covenant

commitment we are making to which we will be faithful as long as we both shall live. One time before a wedding someone walked up to me and said “you must do a lot of weddings. You don’t look nervous at all.” I told them that the ceremony is all prepared and I just have to read my part. I don’t have anything to be nervous about because I am not the one making a commitment to one person for the next 60 years or so.

I came to better understand the marriage vows as a covenant commitment when I officiated in a wedding with a rabbi over twenty years ago. The ceremony was held at the beautiful Don Cesar Hotel located right on St. Pete Beach. I remember before the wedding ceremony, the rabbi and I went to the hotel rooms of both the bride and the groom and they signed this beautiful, ornate, covenant called a Ketubah. The Ketubah is a Jewish marriage contract or covenant that combines a decorative art piece with a legal, spiritual text that outlines the covenant commitment the couple has made to each other at their wedding. Both of us clergy also signed it along with several witnesses the couple had chosen. It was designed to later be framed and displayed on a wall somewhere in their home for the rest of their lives as a constant reminder to each other of the commitment they made to be faithful to their vows for the rest of their lives. It was a beautiful ritual commemorating and sealing the covenant commitment they made to each other on that day.

The second way that a couple becomes one is through their physical union. When a couple gets married, they then come together in the most intimate way possible that God has designed only for a man and woman to enjoy in the sanctity of the marriage covenant. When a man and woman join together sexually it is as if they are going back to the way God meant marriage to be in the Garden of Eden where they are completely vulnerable and intimate with each other. In this manner the Bible says that God miraculously and mysteriously fuses them together through the Holy Spirit and the two become one. God has given a married couple a beautiful, joyful, exhilarating, intimate, loving gift through sex. This gift from God is far too precious to be shared with anyone other than your spouse. We cheapen it when we share it with others outside the covenant commitment of marriage. Therefore, through the covenant commitment a couple makes in their marriage vows and their physical union the two mysteriously become one through the Holy Spirit.

While it is true that God has mysteriously made us one when we become husband and wife, yet, at the same time we now have before us a lifelong journey of two very, very, very different individuals learning how to become one. Have any of you noticed that men and women are very, very, very different in just about every single way possible? Dave Barry wrote, “What Women Want: To be loved, to be listened to, to be desired, to be respected, to be needed, to be trusted, and sometimes, just to be held. What Men Want: Tickets for the World Series.” Is that what you were thinking about what men want? I am so blessed to be Missy’s husband. We have many important things in common and yet at the same time we have many other things in which we are very different. I love baseball, Missy loves ballet. I sing but don’t dance, Missy doesn’t sing

but oh my can she dance. When we cook together, I love to follow every single detail of the recipe, Missy sees a recipe as a suggestion. In God's design of marriage, God uses our difference to do what Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend." Jay Kesler hit the nail on the head when he said, "God made us all individuals. Then he made half of us male and the other half female. Then he created marriage. Unless you think this was a cosmic practical joke, he must have had a reason. One explanation is that God wanted to challenge us to change and grow to our fullest potential as human beings. And there's no better laboratory than marriage to help each other do that." God uses our differences to shape and mold our lives to become the woman and the man that God has called us to be. I heard someone once say, "If both of you are identical, one of you is not necessary." Paul even goes so far as to say in God's design for marriage it is the role of the husband to love his wife with the same sacrificial, self-giving, selfless, servanthood love that Jesus showed. The role of the wife in God's design of marriage is in turn to respect and honor her husband. Susan Matthis wrote in an article, "Marriage is a lot like royalty. A wife wants to be first in the heart of her prince. A husband wants to be the hero that his princess admires and respects." Obviously, in the bigger picture of marriage, both husband and wife are to mutually love each other with Jesus' love. Both are to mutually respect and honor one another. This can build a lasting marriage than can withstand the storms of life that come to every marriage, that will enable us to "love one another, comfort one another, honor and keep one another, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to each other as long as we both shall live."

### **GOD DESIGNED MARRIAGE TO ILLUSTRATE CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH**

The last point that the Apostle Paul makes about Christian marriage is that **God Designed Marriage to Illustrate Christ's Relationship with the Church**. In the weddings I officiate I always share that the relationship of a husband and wife is one which is so important that it is used in Scripture as an example of the relationship of Christ and the Church. Paul explains that human marriage is a living illustration of the sacred bond between Jesus Christ and his church. James Long said, "The Lord honored marriage by selecting it as a favored metaphor for his relationship with us, the church. We are his bride, loved and nurtured." Just as Jesus is the foundation of the church, so also Jesus is to be the foundation of the relationship of a husband and wife. Scripture says that if we build our lives on any other foundation than Jesus, we are building upon sinking sand, which cannot support us when the storms of adversity come. If we build our marriages upon Christ, then we have built our lives upon the firmest foundation and therefore it will stand strong forever no matter how overwhelming the storms of life may strike.

A great example of what marriage is a Marriage Pyramid. At the top of the pyramid is God. At one bottom corner is the husband and the other bottom is the wife. As long as both the husband and the wife are growing closer to God through prayer, Bible study,

attendance in worship, fellowship with other believers, serving God, tithing, and so much more, they will not only grow closer to God they will grow closer to each other. As they grow closer to each other, they are also growing closer to God. They are not in competition with each other but are mutual partners who are living for Jesus together. Their marriage is a kind of trinity of God and the 2 of them in connection with each other. The higher they climb toward God, the shorter the distance between them becomes. God then deepens, strengthens and makes them unbreakable. If you are not married and looking for a spouse only look for someone who loves Jesus and can join you on the journey in your relationship with God. That doesn't make a perfect marriage, but it does put us on the best path possible to not only be a permanent marriage but a marriage that thrives through the tests of time.

As we have marriages that are built according to God's design, our marriages will glorify God. The world will see Jesus through our marriage. They will not see a perfect couple, but they will see God's grace as we learn to love each other through showing grace and forgiveness to one another. Norm Wakefield put it this way, "Grace is the powerful ingredient that will bind a man and woman together when their imperfection pulls them apart." A Christian marriage is not guaranteed to be without problems, yet there are godly solutions when two people are committed to one another and following Jesus together. A great marriage does not consist of two people who are in every way perfectly compatible but two people who have experienced God's grace and are giving each other God's grace. As they navigate the many challenges of life together and with God, in time their love will deepen to the point that their home will have an abundance of the Fruit of Spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Please understand that just loving Jesus doesn't automatically make this happen. It takes individuals learning to love Jesus together and learning to love each other together over many years to experience God's true design for marriage. It takes a lot of intentional, hard work on both party's parts to come to this glorious place in our marriages, but please know it is possible if 2 people follow God's design for their marriage. There is no other way!

J.D. Walt in his workbook entitled, Unpuzzled, pulls this all together beautifully as he says, "Marriage figures prominently in the plan of God. The world began with a wedding, where our eyes were opened to the image of God. Jesus's first miracle happened at a wedding, where our eyes were opened to the Son of God. The world will end with a wedding, where our eyes will be opened to the ultimate glory of God." Let us all commit ourselves to living into God's perfect design for marriage and in so doing experience the blessings that God has for us in this holy union together.

**SUGGESTED RESOURCES:** (Books marked with \* are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *Unpuzzled*, J. D. Walt \*
- *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer
- *The Gospel According to Jesus*, John MacArthur
- *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande
- *Respectable Sins*, Jerry Bridges
- *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney
- *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Jerry Bridges
- *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, Peter Scazzero
- *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer
- *Forgotten God*, Francis Chan
- *The Meaning of Marriage*, Timothy & Kathy Keller
- *Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas

### Icebreaker Questions

1. What is one piece of marriage advice or relationship wisdom you heard growing up that has stayed with you over the years?
2. The sermon humorously contrasted men and women's interests. What is one funny or memorable difference you have noticed between husbands and wives in marriage or family life?

### Sermon Discussion Questions

1. The sermon emphasized that marriage is rooted in God's created order and not merely a social construct. Why is it important for Christians to begin their understanding of marriage with Genesis and the teachings of Jesus and Paul?
2. The message described marriage as both "two becoming one" and "learning to become one." In what practical ways does marriage require continual growth, sacrifice, grace, and adjustment over time?
3. The "Marriage Pyramid" illustration showed that as spouses grow closer to God, they also grow closer to each other. What spiritual practices can strengthen a marriage and help couples remain Christ-centered?
4. The sermon highlighted grace and forgiveness as essential ingredients in a lasting marriage. Why are grace and forgiveness so vital in marriage, and how can couples practice them daily?
5. Paul teaches that marriage reflects Christ's relationship with the Church. How can Christian marriages serve as a witness to the world today, especially in a culture with conflicting views about marriage and relationships?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?