**Why Did God Establish Marriage?, Part 2**

**Genesis 2:18-25 (ESV)**

October 27, 2019

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We’re beginning a new series. It’s a short series. We have this Sunday and then two more Sundays in this series on the family. We do believe the family is such a key matter to the worship of God in the church. And it’s important for every one of us, whether we’re single or married, whether we’re a son, daughter or mom or dad, grandma, grandpa, to lock in to God’s design, God’s goodness in the family. And so, today we’re going to talk about marriage once again. We’re going to go back to the passage we looked at last week to learn more about God’s original design. Marriage has been with us from the very first week of this world. Think about that!

***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 formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens 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 and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.* ***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 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; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”* ***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.*

What a beautiful, beautiful story that God gives to us! Let’s pray and ask that God would help us in our church to strengthen marriages, to have strong marriages and all of us being involved in strengthening marriages.

What makes for a good marriage?We usually answer that question with qualities that bring personal satisfaction in the relationship. We often say things like, “Well, a good marriage is filled with good communication, joyful physical intimacy, unconditional commitment, forgiveness, financial wisdom, mutual support, teamwork. This isn’t a bad list. All those qualities are supported by God’s Word. They are exalted. But this list is incomplete. This list fails to consider what causes God to view a marriage as “good.” God designs marriage not only to bring us satisfaction. That’s part of His design. It’s built into it, but it’s not ultimate. What is ultimate in marriage is that God designs for marriage to bring glory to His own Name. And because we’re so self-focused, we assume that if we are happy with the marriage then God must be happy, too. And that’s not always the case.Last week we began our consideration of marriage by reading from Genesis 1:1 and thinking about

**God’s Supreme Glory in Creation**

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

I argued last week that any discussion of marriage must begin with a contemplation of God Himself. God is the One who created marriage and He created it for the purpose of reflecting Himself in community, in this relationship within the family. And this God who created us, we learned right away in Genesis 1:1, is a God who is eternal, sovereign, good, all-powerful. And He created us as beings in His own image for the express purpose of us being in relationship with Him and of us communicating Him to all creation. And so God calls us to know Him and to make Him known. That’s why we were created. That’s why everything is created, and that includes marriage.

In fact, the Apostle Paul argues in Ephesians 5 that marriage is God’s magnificent means for us to paint a clear picture of God’s redemptive love. Isn’t it remarkable that the purpose of God establishing marriage, at least its central purpose is that we would be part of painting a picture for all creation to see, of God’s relationship with sinful people inside this thing that He calls the church? Here’s what the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5.

**Ephesians 5:31-32** “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Paul quotes from the passage we just read, Genesis chapter 2. And then Paul comments, “This mystery is profound. I realize I’m going into the deep end of the pool of our ability to understand what God is doing. In fact, it’s so profound that what I’m really talking about when I’m talking about marriage is it’s really all a reference to Christ and the church.” That’s a remarkable thing to comment! The whole design of marriage is Godward, upward, worship. In other words, marriage is much bigger than any one of us.

Last week we observed that God didn’t create marriage mainly for the joy of sex, or for procreation, or for companionship, or for personal fulfillment. Again, all those are built into a healthy marriage. They’re all intended to be blessings within marriage. But God’s purpose was God-centered. God created marriage so that we would find great pleasure in God, and in finding great pleasure in Him, communicate Him as a God that is good and glorious and wonderful. In short, every Christian marriage is to be a sermon. It’s to be a proclamation of the gospel.

As followers of Jesus, when we ask, “What makes a good marriage?” the first question we have as people who are centered on worship, we say, what pleases God? Because if our marriage pleases God, then it must be good. And if it doesn’t please God, then no matter what else good is happening inside that relationship, we can’t declare it to be good, because that’s its ultimate end.

The truth that we learn all through the Bible is that God is the ultimate Judge of the goodness of all things. That’s a simple truth, but it’s really profound. It’s one that impacts almost every area of ethics, every relationship, every area of life. God is the Judge of what is good and what is not good! So if God says something is good, then it is good even if the whole world stands up and says, “No, that’s bad! That’s terrible! That’s awful!” And if God says something is not good, then it’s not good, even if all the world stands up and applauds and says, “Yes, this is what we want!” It’s really important as followers of Jesus, that we get this. We understand that the world will never get it because it doesn’t submit to God. Indeed, it can’t submit to God because it’s enslaved to its own rebellion and sin. But it’s really important that the church not get mixed up with the world in this wrong kind of thinking that we are the ones who become our own standard of what is good and what is not good. Because of our natural rebellion against God, it’s possible for us to look at a marriage and say, “Wow! That is a great marriage. A+++!” And yet, for God to look at that same marriage and say, “Fail! This is not good.”

At our Small Group this week, I asked the question, “What makes for a good marriage?”One of the men in the group smiled and said “A good marriage is one that is God-centered.”He understands what we as Christians all embrace. And that is that a good marriage is focused on the Lord. A marriage is created by God to bring glory to Himself. And a marriage that doesn’t glorify the One who created marriage is not good. And so, our Small Group continued along that line. What is a God-centered marriage? We talked about how in Genesis 3, it indicates that Adam and Eve walked with God together in the garden in the cool of the day. That was their habit. Before sin came into the world, that’s exactly what they did. They walked with Him, and they walked with Him together. They walked with Him, they talked with Him, and they listened to Him and they got to know Him, and then they got to talk about Him and make Him known to one another. And they got to enjoy Him and worship Him. That’s what they did. That’s what a God-centered marriage is.

So whatever standards we use to measure whether a marriage is good, we are right to ask: Does the husband and the wife walk together with God in daily communion? Let that just set there for a moment! That’s a heavy question for us to ask of our own lives. Does the husband and does the wife walk together? So, it’s not just individual relationship with God. They walk together with God in daily, not once a week, but daily communion. That’s the standard Adam and Eve set for us. It’s the standard of God’s design. Do these two, husband and wife, listen to God through God’s Word? Do they talk with God together in prayer? That’s what it means to walk with God.

We also discussed that a God-centered marriage is one that communicates the Gospel through their relationship. As a husband and wife walk with God together, then they can’t help but after coming out of that fellowship, reveal God both through their words, but also through their example, through just the relationship itself that God forms. I love the story that God shares with us regarding how He created marriage. That story is begun in verse 18. It’s such a sacred design, isn’t it?

**God’s Sacred Design for Marriage**

***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.”*

And then we skip down to verse 21.

***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.*

We couldn’t make this up! This is God’s design of saying, “I’m going to make a suitable partner, a helpmate suitable, fit for him, corresponding to him. And I’m not just going to do it out of some more dust and dirt of the ground like I made man. I’m going to take a portion of him so that even by creation, it would recognize my sacred design is that these two would be one. They came from one, and thus they are to be one.” That’s what God does inside the covenant of marriage. Remember last week, we considered that marriage is the life long, covenantal union that God creates between one man and one woman for the display of His glory in the world. That’s what marriage is according to God in His Word.

Well, we continue now in our thoughts about this union, this special sacred design. And we ask the question: what is God’s goal in marriage? What is the target that God has us aiming toward as we enter into marriage?

**God’s Special Goal in Marriage**

Many marriages miss the target because they don’t see the target. I am not a person who goes out to the gun range very often. I’ve done it in the past. But if you go out to a gun range to shoot at some targets, can you imagine if the first thing the person who brought you there would do is to put a big blindfold and then spin you around and say, “Okay, shoot!” That would be terrifying! That would break every rule of a gun range. First, it would be dangerous for everybody else. And secondly, there’s no way you’re going to hit a target. If you can’t see the target, you’ll never be able to hit it. And yet, this is exactly what we do with our marriages. We shoot without clearly seeing what it is we’re aiming at. Worship is always the target. The target is right there and God says, “I want you to have this God-centered picture of what marriage is, be your target. This is what you’re shooting at.” It’s the overarching goal; to know God, to know His greatness, to know His goodness, and then to communicate His love and His beauty to others.

How is it that we glorify God? How is it that we worship God? And the text takes this fuzzy picture, this target of bringing God glory, and it sharpens the lens so that we see the exact, precise bull’s-eye that God would have us aim at. Verse 24 does that. Verse 24 is quoted so often in the New Testament because it’s such a significant, foundational text regarding marriage.

***24*** *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

That’s the end. That’s the goal. That’s the means by which God is glorified. It’s that the two become one flesh. And this is a mystery. We know that God Himself is active

personally in the making of the two into one because that’s what Jesus says. He says, “What God has joined together, let no man tear apart” (Matthew 19:6). So God Himself is at work bringing this mysterious oneness to come to pass. So the principle I want you to observe here is simply that oneness is God’s target for our marriage! The target for marriage at which God has us set our hearts upon is not financial stability, it’s not the raising of children, it’s not sweet companionship, it’s not sexual satisfaction, it’s not personal fulfillment. These are all sweet gifts found within marriage, and I believe come about as we pursue oneness, but the target itself is oneness.

What does it mean for the two to become one? This oneness is far more than external unity. It’s more than living in the same house, more than sharing the same last name, more than sleeping in the same bed, more than sharing coffee together in the morning, more than a joint checking account, more than parenting children together. The essential nature of oneness in this covenant of marriage is a union so intimate, so connected, so united, that one person is inseparably welded body, mind, soul, heart; welded to the other person. And as a result of that welding together, they experience all of life in togetherness through that union. So every part of their lives, even when they’re separate, there is a togetherness. Even when they’re physically separate, there’s a togetherness to those parts of their lives that is shared.

Here is the definition that I would offer. Oneness is a complete union of two lives in which every part of the man is glued to every part of the woman and every part of the woman is glued to every part of the man. The two experience their individual lives together as a united whole. It’s hard for me even to put words to this because as Paul says, this is a great mystery. I believe that God Himself gives a functional explanation of oneness in verse 25. Notice what He says.

***25*** *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

Now certainly, there’s a physical aspect to Adam and Eve’s nakedness. But I don’t think it stops there. I think there’s an emotional nakedness. There is a spiritual nakedness. There is a life nakedness, a whole life nakedness that is spoken of here, and they’re not ashamed. In other words, they’re saying, “I want to be known completely and I am making all of myself available to be known. I’m communicating all of myself to be known.” And the other person says, “Yes, I’m doing the same and I want to know all of you.” And there’s no shame. There’s no fear about that. There’s nothing in their lives that they would say, “We have to hide, here. We have to protect ourselves.” That’s, I think, a beautiful functional description of oneness.

This oneness finds expression in at least three important areas. You might just jot these down. They’re simple, but they’re important as we think about oneness in our marriage and pursuing worship of God as we pursue oneness together. There is physical oneness. Marriage calls us to commit ourselves to physical union, to physical vulnerability with each other. And that is, again, through this intimacy related to a sexual union. A oneness in marriage calls a couple to lifelong expression of this kind of physical intimacy and faithfulness. Now, physical intimacy is far more than the joining of two bodies. There is something more, in other words, that is happening in this gift from the Lord. But it’s not less. In other words, it’s physical oneness.

But then there’s also emotional oneness. Marriage calls us to commit ourselves to emotional communion and vulnerability. It’s to open up this inner part of ourselves that is invisible, that is not physical. And in marriage, God joins hearts, not just bodies. And so there’s a mutual sharing of all these emotions, all these feelings, these hurts, these hopes, these dreams, these fears, these concerns, these joys, these sorrows. And so, again, there are obstacles that stand in the way of this kind of emotional oneness. A person may say, “I’m not really one to share my feelings with anyone.” But in marriage, God says you have to learn to. You have to be willing to press in and commit to this. That’s what the goal of marriage is. It’s the worship of God through this oneness.

And then spiritual oneness. Marriage calls us to commit ourselves to spiritual communion and spiritual vulnerability. That spiritual communion involves listening to God together as we open up God’s Word. It involves praying together in dependence upon God and talking to Him. It involves talking about our souls, confessing sins, praying for one another, encouraging one another, all these things that God intends for a Gospel-centered relationship to be. And it’s through this way that a man and his wife draw near into this and experience this oneness. God is present, and so God is working. He’s active in such a marriage.

The application is simple. If you’re married, take aim at God’s target. Consider your relationship and say, “Is it a good marriage?” Here’s the target. How close is it hitting this oneness physically, emotionally and spiritually? And then communicate your desire to your spouse. Say, “You know, I really want to pursue the kind of marriage that God created. I want to fulfill this purpose that God has. I know that’s a source of great joy. Tell your spouse that you would like to pursue oneness with him or with her. And then ask God to lead that conversation. To get started in that conversation with your spouse, I would encourage you to take some time within the next 24 hours. And I say that because if you wait more than 24 hours to do this, I know you probably won’t do it at all. Those of you who are married, take some time to ask your spouse two questions:

1. On a scale of 1-10 how close are we to hitting the physical, emotional and spiritual oneness target? And then don’t be defensive. Don’t be critical. Don’t be contradictory. Just simply listen. Say, “Okay, I just want to hear from you. How close?” And then the other one should ask the question as well, in return. But simply listen and then take it to the Lord in prayer. It’s not the time to point fingers of why that target may not be being hit. It’s the time just simply to observe and to say, “We both desire to hit the bulls-eye. And by God’s help, by God’s grace, we believe we can.” And the numbers on your 1-10 scale may be different. Keep in mind that they may be different numbers and reflective of those three different parts of oneness.

2. Ask your spouse, “Would you be willing to pray with me over each of these areas asking God to give us grace to grow?” So again, you’re not just telling the other person what they need to do in order to make this happen. That would be a bad conversation in most marriages. Now if you have a really great marriage, maybe your marriage can sustain that. But if it’s already struggling, if you’re saying 5 or below already, then don’t start offering suggestions about what the other person should do. Instead, just ask, “Would you be willing to start praying with me before the Lord, asking us both to know exactly what we can do to start moving toward this target together? Men, I urge you to initiate these questions. But I would also say, women, it’s not wrong for you to initiate these questions with your husband. I know this is scary work, but I believe that God will give grace as you press into Him by faith.

**God’s Specific Instructions to Married Couples**

How do we pursue this oneness? Other than prayer, what else do we do? Again, Jesus’ comment is really important in Matthew 19. Jesus quotes this text from Genesis 2.

**Matthew 19:4-6** He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh.

And then Jesus makes this comment. He says

**Matthew 19:6** What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

What Jesus is telling us is that this oneness is always a work of God’s grace. It’s always a miracle from God. Man doesn’t join himself to his wife so that the two become one. We can’t make that happen. Even if we tried and tried and tried with everything in our being, we couldn’t make that happen. This is a mystery. It must be a work of God. And God does that. That’s what God designed into this whole thing called marriage, from the very beginning. It’s that He would be active doing this mysterious thing of taking two people and making them one flesh. Now, the fact that God is the one doing the joining together does not mean that we are to be passive in the pursuit of experiencing the oneness that comes on the basis of grace. God gives some very clear instructions right here in this passage in Genesis 2:24. They’re very simple. He says

***24*** *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

There are two action points. They’re very simple. We leave and we hold fast. Leaving is a necessary negative instruction. It’s not a positive thing we do. It’s something we refuse to do. We separate ourselves from dependence that we’ve had on other relationships. Without that separation, without that leaving, the bonds of the two becoming one can’t be forged.

My two older sons are married and one is engaged. The emotional bonds I have toward my sons are still very strong. I remember crying tears of joy at each one of their births. There was a flood of happiness filling my heart from that moment to this present day. Just thinking about each one, memories just start flooding into my heart. As strong as the bond is between a dad and his son, the bond between a husband and wife is stronger, still. And that’s necessarily so. I rejoice in that! When a son or daughter marries, they must leave the dependence; leave the central nature of any other relationship that interferes with the oneness of the married couple.

To leave is not a call to sever all relationship with parents. From the day we’re born to the day we die, God says “Honor your father and your mother.” And I believe that applies even to deceased fathers and mothers. You just honor them. That’s what a godly thing is. It’s one of the big Ten Commandments. But honor does not include remaining physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually dependent on a mom or a dad. When a son or a daughter marries, they must leave.

Moms and dads, if we desire God’s glory in our children’s lives and marriages, we must make leaving really easy for them. Sons and daughters, if your parents do not make it easy for you to leave physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially so that you can hold fast in your marriage, don’t feel guilty about leaving, anyway. It’s a God-honoring thing. God doesn’t call you to honor your father and mother in a way that they would say is pleasing to them. He just simply calls you to honor your father and mother in a way that is pleasing to Him. So this leaving part has some really important significance to every marriage.

But then hold fast. Many have no problem with the leaving part, but it’s the holding fast. It’s a very active word. It’s a super strong word. It means grab onto and don’t let go. It means cling to it. It means focus the energy of your life in pursuing oneness. Holding fast is a priority of that special relationship. It’s holding fast to marriage over all these other priorities that get in our view and that begin to take preeminence; things like our jobs, things like other friendships, things like our children, things like hobbies or entertainment or sports or even ministry, all these things. God says to let go of everything else. Leave, leave, leave, leave, leave, leave, leave and hold fast. Cling on to this one thing. It’s central to life. It’s central to worship.

Even before the fall, oneness required the work of holding fast to each other. I want you to notice that. So this commandment to hold fast, which is a strong word…It’s a word where we exert energy and effort to do this. That was not given after the fall. It was given before the fall. Now, the fall makes it even all the more necessary and laborious. There’s no question about that. Because we’re selfish, sinful people, it’s even more work to hold fast. But even in the perfect garden, it was required for Adam to get up in the morning and say, “I have to apply energy into this relationship.” And it was required for Eve to get up and say, “I’m going to apply energy into this relationship, to hold fast in order to experience this oneness.”

My first experience on a horse was kind of crazy. This friend of mine, he was a college friend, he remarked on how gentle this horse was. So I got on him and sure enough, he was gentle. We just kind of walked, clop, clop, clop. It was still kind of scary to be on an animal for the first time. Clop, clop, clop down the road about a half mile or so. And then my friend said, “Okay, let’s turn around.” So we turned around and suddenly, that animal knew its way back to the barn and it wanted to get back there. It took off like a shot. And I am just holding onto that reign and of course not doing anything you’re supposed to. I was just screaming in terror and holding on because I know that at any moment, I’m just going to get bucked right off this thing. Finally, he got to the barn and he stopped. That’s what it means to hold fast. (Laughter!) There are lots of natural forces seeking to unpry our grip from this, from our marriage. There are lots of natural forces! And those forces are strong and they are furious and they are fearsome. But God says, “Hold fast!” In other words, this requires work.

There are three applications to hold fast. What does it mean to work hard in marriage? First, it means you hold fast physically. Invest together physically; time, energy, passion, financial resources. Natural forces are at work to pull a husband and wife apart physically. It’s not just in the realm of intimacy. That’s a part of it, but it’s just physically not being in contact with each other. Again, these forces are not bad in themselves; a person’s career, a person’s children, a person’s grand children, a person’s interests, hobbies, ministries, friendships. If you are to be together in oneness in this physical realm, it requires that you hold fast. You say, “We’re just going to cling onto each other and we’re not going to let go.” We’re going to work and plan our way to as much as possible, be physically proximate with each other and to have the kind of physical relationship where we’re together, that pleases the Lord.

Secondly, communicate together emotionally. In other words, hold fast emotionally. Most emotional oneness comes about through communication. It comes about through talking and through listening. It doesn’t require continuous talk, but it does require an uninterrupted flow of communication. This means that emotionally, we aren’t disconnected from each other.

My son, Daniel, is once again deployed in the Air Force. Lord willing, he’ll be back next week. But even when he is in the Middle East, he remains emotionally connected through communication with his wife. There is some great technology that allows that. So you can have video talks today. And he uses that technology. But he uses it to say just simply, “I want to stay connected emotionally. I want to communicate. I want to listen to you and I want to share what’s going on in my life.” The point is, we can find ways to communicate in any circumstance if we simply commit to holding fast. Now, observe that the same technology that can help us communicate better can also hinder our communication. And of course, it’s the proverbial phone in our hand that we’re listening more to what’s on our phone than to what’s in our wife’s heart. The key to communication begins with selfless listening. Both men and women need to work on the art of listening.

Now it’s likely, men, that your wife…and I speak to men because I am a man so I understand more about what that’s about. It’s likely that your wife would love to hear what you think, what you like, what you know, what you want. But you haven’t yet made the effort to share with her in a way that esteems her. And again, God would have us work hard to say, “I know sometimes when we get home it’s the last thing we want to do is to invest energy into a long conversation. We just want to veg out in front of the television or in front of a book or in front of something else. But God says, “No, hold fast!” That’s the command and that requires that we exert energy.

I read a statistic that the average couple spends twenty minutes talking with each other each week in meaningful conversation. Twenty minutes a week! That’s the average. Wow! That’s not even three minutes a day. So I want to encourage you. Oneness grows when we speak words of appreciation, when we communicate in a way that opens up our life to the other and we listen in a way that affirms the other.

Finally, pursue God together spiritually. In other words, hold fast spiritually. Look for ways to worship God through your life and your family. Begin simply. Men, again, I believe that if this one thing would happen, it would set off a chain reaction. Sort of, the dominoes would start falling in marriages toward oneness. Men, if you would just simply open your Bible. Every week we have a passage of Scripture. You can read that every day leading up to Sunday. This week, we’re just going to read Genesis 2 each day. So let’s just read it and say, “What do you think God is speaking to us and how can I pray for you?” It’s just that simple. If we have that walk with God in the cool of the day with an open Bible, listening to Him with prayerful hearts, saying, “Let’s talk to Him together. Let’s do this together.” I know that there are many, many roadblocks and hindrances, but know this is a command of God upon our lives. And it’s the means by which God would have us pursue this oneness which is incredibly satisfying. The last thing I want to talk about is

**God’s Sufficient Grace for Marriages**

In verse 25 we read that beautiful description of functional oneness.

***25*** *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

The idea is that the man allows himself to be fully known by his wife. And the wife allows herself to be fully known by the husband. So the man fully knows his wife and is fully known by her. That’s the description. And the wife fully knows her husband and is fully known by him. So nothing is hidden. It’s a beautiful, vulnerable, intimate relationship. We read verse 25 and we can say, “That sounds easy.”

***25*** *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

That sounds wonderful! Why is this so hard, then? Verse 25 is an introduction to Genesis 3, where we learn about Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God; their disobedience. We learn then after the disobedience, that death fell upon them. And part of that death was the death of a right relationship with God and with each other. And they sought to resolve that problem by cutting off some fig leaves and covering themselves. So now, right away, as soon as sin entered, they were no longer naked without shame. They were filled with shame. So this impacted their oneness not just physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. Sin broke God’s gift of marriage and sin continues to break God’s gift of marriage. Even in the best relationships, our sinfulness makes it difficult to press into this kind of relationship. It makes it difficult for us to allow ourselves to be fully known because we say, “I have some things to hide. I have some things I’m ashamed of. I have some fears now that if you know this, you won’t love me. You won’t accept me.” I want to give you a couple words of encouragement.

First, God’s grace is sufficient for you, period. Without knowing your marriage, without knowing where your spouse is, know that God’s grace is sufficient for you. God is the God of grace. In Genesis 3, right away, He made this promise in verse 15. He says to Satan

**Genesis 3:15** I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

That’s the first statement of the gospel. It’s that God is going to send One born of a woman, who is going to crush Satan, this interloper, this enemy of God who tempted man away from worship and led him into darkness. He says, “There’s going to be one who is going to come and who is going to deliver mankind from the power, the oppression that you have placed over them.” And then at the very end of chapter 3, we learn

**Genesis 3:21** And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

In other words, He killed some animals and made a blood sacrifice in order to provide a covering for them so that they could be in this oneness relationship. Even though it’s broken, they wouldn’t always see one another’s shame and guilt and hide from each other. But He made them a covering. So in other words, God in His grace doesn’t leave us in the brokenness of our sin. He never does. And He provides us with a victor, with a Savior. And that grace we see in Genesis 3 points us forward to fullness that we all know, that we as Christians have experienced. And that’s best expressed in the simple verse, John 3:16.

**John 3:16** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

All that the garden was before the fall, before sin, was this beautiful expression of life. Sin came and then death came. But God in His grace said, “But I want you to know that you don’t have to live continuously in this state. There’s hope now. Right now, I’m sending my Son. His name is Jesus and He provides you with eternal life. He provides you with grace so that you can experience and in great measure, what I originally designed. And you’ll be led to ultimately a future day when sin and brokenness will be no more.” What a day that is! So even in the midst of our struggle with sin and brokenness and difficulties in our marriages, it’s all a reminder to us to look ahead and to humble ourselves before the Lord to find sufficient grace from Christ. The answer to all difficulties in marriage is Jesus.

I want to close with just a thought here about this design of marriage that God has given. It’s given for us to present a picture to the world of Jesus’ relationship with His church. Here’s the way I have thought about it this week. My marriage is a painting of God’s love for the world. I need paint if I’m to paint this picture. I need paint and I need talent or ability. God provides the paint and the ability. Isn’t that a wonder? I never have to fear whether or not I am able to paint this picture. That’s not on me. God is the one who provides the paint. God is the one who provides the ability. All I need to do is humble myself before Him and say, “God, I’m a mess-up. I’m a sinful mess-up. And if it were left to me, my marriage would be a mess-up. But thank God you’ve sent your Son, Jesus to be my Savior, to be my strength, to be the ever constant flow and supply of grace.” I believe that if we have that posture to the Lord, then God will use you and me to paint a beautiful picture of the gospel through marriage.