

# Husbands and wives

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn to our subject for this evening. We're thinking about husbands and wives.! So we need to look at some scriptures first.

! So let's turn and read in Genesis chapter 1.

Genesis 1 verses 26 to 31 says this, Then, this is on the sixth day, God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

And then God said, Behold, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth, and every tree that has fruit with seed in it, they will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground, everything that has the breath of life in it, I give every green plant for food.

[ 1 : 48 ] And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning the sixth day. Now we'll read in Genesis 2 from verse 18.

So this is a second complementary account, as you might say looking at it from a different angle. In verse 18, having explained the task for the man and the trees in the garden, verse 18, The Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib or side he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

[ 3 : 16 ] And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.

So that's Genesis chapter 2 and Ephesians 5 we've already read. So I wanted to say a word about the helper. What it says about helper in verse 20 and verse 18.

I will make a helper suitable for him. As my memory serves, the word suitable means exactly matching. So, like a key exactly matches a lock, or a door exactly matches the door frame, or whatever.

There's an exact match between the capacities and abilities of the man and the capacities and abilities of the woman. So, a suitable helper.

[ 4 : 36 ] And in case we were to think that the idea of being a helper is a demeaning thing, please look at Psalm 54 verse 4.

Psalm 54 verse 4. Catherine, could you read that for us please? Thank you.

It's one of a number of verses in which God is spoken of as a helper. So it's not a demeaning idea to be a helper. It's not the same thing as slave, something like that.

It would not be found in Scripture, the Lord is my slave. That just wouldn't work. But it is found in Scripture, the Lord is my helper. So it's not a demeaning thing to be a helper.

So what I thought we would look at is three questions. What, why and how. And in those three questions, I am not at all confident that I can cover very much ground.

[ 5 : 49 ] Here is a book by Christopher Ashe on marriage, which is a super book. And you see how thick it is. I met Christopher Ashe once, and he said, he spoke about the book that he had written, and he said, I have met a lot of people who have got this book.

But very few of them have read right the way through to the end. And then he quoted a bit of what he had written, and he said, hmm, did I write that? Not surprising that people haven't wrote to the end of it. But it is actually a super book.

And have I read to the end of it? Not quite. But I did notice some markings on the page, on page 339. So I've read quite a bit of it. I, nobody can cover that in half an hour on a Sunday evening. And that's all about marriage. That is not a book on the problems that go wrong with marriage. That's another two or three books. So I'm just going to scratch really the surface and hope that in scratching the surface you get some idea.

Don't miss out too much. So what and why and how. So what are husbands and wives? So definition of what are husbands and wives.

[ 6 : 59 ] Let's pray, shall we? Lord, do help us as we look at this subject. We don't want to approach scripture without first approaching you and asking you to show us wonderful things out of your word by your Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Well I'm going to borrow Christopher Ash's definition or almost borrow it. As he's defining marriage.

Okay, so husbands and wives is not quite the same thing as defining male and female, is it? Because you can be male without being a husband and you can be female without being a wife. And you can be a husband but that might not be your wife, that might be somebody else's wife. So we're getting to what husbands and wives are.

Now they are male and female, but not just male and female, any old how, but in a committed, exclusive, lifelong, social, public and sexual union.

[ 8 : 06 ] And that's really a definition of marriage. I'll give you what Christopher Ash says because he says it very well. Marriage is the voluntary sexual and public social union of one man and one woman from different families.

This union is patterned upon the union of God with his people, his bride. The union Christ with his church.

Intrinsic to this union is God's calling to lifelong, exclusive, sexual faithfulness. So he said that in careful length and I've got most of those points not necessarily in the same order.

That's what marriage is. That's what marriage is. And a husband and wife are the two partners in that arrangement.

So let me say what Christopher Ash says. He says that's what marriage is.

[ 9 : 15 ] That's what it is. And even if the government redefines it, that's still what it really is. Do you see my point?

You can redefine it if you want to. All you do is create unintended, unhelpful consequences. It's part of being human.

It's hardwired into humanity that that's what marriage is. Let's look at a couple of texts. Matthew 19, 1-6.

Which I don't think is what I meant.

I think I meant Matthew 19. Yeah, it is 1-6. Matthew 19, 1-6.

[ 10 : 18 ] Steffi, please could you read that for us? When Jesus had finished late evening, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea, to the other side of the Jordan.

A lot of crowds followed him and the other was there. Some Pharisees came here to test him. They asked, is it normal for a man to support his wife for any and every reason?

How many friends were right? I said at the beginning that the Creator made them male and female. And the third, this reason that a man will be his father and his mother, and be united to his wife, that they all become all the flesh.

So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let's no longer be one.

Thank you very much. So notice that Jesus, when asked a question about marriage and divorce, Jesus goes right back to Genesis, and he sees there the definition or the origin of marriage.

And he starts drawing things out from that. He says, what God has joined together, let man not separate. So he, having picked up the picture in Genesis of man and woman, then you get the idea of them leaving father and mother.

[ 11 : 38 ] So there is a leaving of a previous social group and becoming together as a new social group. And the sexual aspect of it, they will become one flesh.

They are no longer two, but one. And what God has joined together, let man not separate. So, as you think about it, the different elements of the sort of definition that we are now thinking about, are there if you draw them out.

Male and female in a committed, exclusive, lifelong, social, public, sexual union.

Let's look at Exodus 20, 14, because this flags up another part that is not immediately obvious from Genesis, but is certainly part of the biblical idea.

Exodus 20, verse 14. Exodus 20, verse 14. Exodus 20, verse 14.

[ 12 : 55 ] Lindsay, please, could you read that to us? Thank you very much. So, this emphasizes the idea that, okay, there is a sexual union between two people.

And there are boundaries to that. So, outside of that, in other words, if of this couple that have a sexual union together, there is sexual union sort of which breaks that particular covenant or that particular relationship.

It's given a word called adultery. And it's not to be done. So, we're building up a picture of male and female.

We've committed commitment, exclusivity, the lifelong bit, what God has joined together, let man not separate.

The fact that it's social. The fact that it's social. So, it isn't just for sexual purposes. And then they go off for the rest of the time. It's a social union.

[ 14 : 08 ] And it's public. There's a leaving of father and mother. And a joining together. So, it's obvious that one social group has been left.

And a new social group has been formed. And it includes this, the sexual aspect is essential to it. So, that is what husbands and wives is about. And we can differentiate it from, for example, singleness.

So, a single person will meet people of the opposite sex, perhaps work alongside them. And there will be a degree of the interplay between what men are particularly good at and what women are particularly good at.

So, single people aren't immune from the idea that, as it says, there's that helping aspect of the woman.

[ 15 : 17 ] That she can do what he can't do. And there's a working together. But singleness is not the same as marriedness. It's a different state.

Jesus was single, wasn't he? There's nothing wrong with being single. So, I differentiate it against the churning of partners.

So, churning is when you, I mean to say, when you have a sexual partner and then it all sort of grow tired or you weren't expecting to stay together and have another sexual partner and another sexual partner and another sexual partner.

So, that is different from marriage in that it isn't lifelong, is it? It's not committed. It's a sexual union, but it isn't a committed one.

And we differentiate it again as from same-sex relations. So, you could be good friends with somebody of the same sex.

[ 16 : 20 ] You could work together with them. I would say you could share a flat together with them and be good friends. I've omitted anything sexual in this, at this point.

You could be partners in that sense, but it wouldn't be marriage. And now, let's bring the same-sex aspect into it. And what I'm going to say at this point is, whatever you want to call that, it isn't the same as marriage.

Because the distinctive thing about marriage is that you've got the two opposites. You've got male and female. And I would say, even from the grammatical point of view, why can't we have a word which particularly means the sexual union of male and female?

Because there's something special about that. So, I think one could complain to the government and say, why have you robbed us of the word which says, here's a sexual union between these two opposites?

Because, of course, we have been robbed of that word, haven't we? Because we can't, apparently, now legally distinguish between the sexual union of opposite male and female and the sexual union between same-sex couples.

[ 17 : 40 ] But anyway, I would still want to maintain that this is what marriage is, and we ought to have a word for it. So, perhaps I'll get thrown into prison for that.

And we distinguish it, again, from unfaithfulness, where the bond of marriage is broken.

So, even, even, I think, even if you were to speak to people who would claim to have no particular liking for Christian morality, and Christian sexual morality included, but if you were to say, such and such a person cheated, everybody would know what you meant.

Because they would know what cheating is. They would know that a sexual union has an implication of faithfulness in it, and that there is such a thing as cheating on that.

OK, so that is what. It was the aiming for a definition. So, I'll stop and ask if anybody wants to make any observations or ask any questions.

[ 18 : 59 ] I'm going to do why in a minute and then how. I'm going to do why in a minute and then how. Christopher Ash, yeah.

Well, it's a very, very good question. It's a very good question because what exactly makes a couple married in the Bible, biblically speaking? Do you have to go to the Church of England to be married?

Do you have to go before the state and sign something to be married? So, in traditional thinking, you know, if you take up to 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago, I think you could make a statement without fear of much contradiction to say, to be married, in the biblical sense, you need to have made a public promise in a recognized, public, state-controlled or state-sanctioned legal framework.

But you notice in Genesis, when Adam and Eve were married, they weren't married according to the canons of the Church of England, were they?

God brought the man to the woman. He said, this is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, and they were married.

[ 20 : 41 ] So, it's a question, did it involve a promise? Or is it simply a public statement? I used to be at home with mum and dad, now I'm with so-and-so.

I think it's a good question, I don't particularly know the answer. What we're talking about is when it becomes unclear whether we're to understand somebody to be married in the eyes of God.

I think it would be helpful if people did try to be clear. I think it would be helpful for the people concerned to say, do we want to be married?

Do we want to be... What sort of relationship do we want to have? If we want to have a sexual union, it ought to be a committed one, and it didn't ought to be secret. So, there's a way of doing that, which is called being married.

You go to the registry office and sign something. So, I don't see why people can't do that. But, on the other hand, do we have to insist from the Bible that to be married people ought to have gone through every particular...

[ 21 : 53 ] you know, thing that's in our particular culture? What do you think, Steve? Well, if any of those are any of those are any of those are any of those are any of those.

Yes. Yes.

I don't see why they shouldn't make it clear. And as you say, if they wish to be recognized by the state in sort of economic terms as being a married couple, then to go through the procedure of making a public statement and having it signed and witnessed and everything, I mean, why not? Why might life difficult? Why not do that?

But having said that, the Bible doesn't go as far as to make that sort of thing explicit, does it?

When Jesus says, you know, what's a married couple? Well, he says, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.

[ 23 : 39 ] So I'm thinking that if people move in together, which is a public thing, and if they, I mean, does that constitute a promise?

Does it imply a promise? Certainly isn't a public promise made before witnesses and signed and sealed, but is it more like being married than anything else?

Is it sort of irregularly, improperly married than anything else? Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. They don't and yet they do. So, this is sort of the dilemma that we have nowadays, isn't it?

I think it would be helpful to everybody to be clear and public and whatever steps you need to take to say we're married, to take them. However, the Bible doesn't actually stipulate that in the eyes of God.

[ 24 : 52 ] I just have one thing to tell you about what marriage is. There's one aspect of the biblical thing that perhaps you have thought down first. If this is an opinion, particularly in the Proverbs 4, verse 18, it may you rejoice in the wife of your contribution, and it may you be captivated by her love, especially if you're like a relationship as well.

Okay. Thank you very much. Which verse was that? Proverbs 4, verse 18 and 19. Proverbs 4. Proverbs 5.

Ah. Yes. Is that part of the definition of marriage, or is it part of what it aspires to?

So if people live together in a public union, but they don't particularly enjoy it, have they stopped being married? I think they've stopped being married in a full sense.

I mean, yes and no. Yeah. Yeah. I think he probably covered that in the voluntary part of it. There's a willingness, isn't there?

[ 26 : 04 ] Because you think, this is what I want to be. This is something I'm happy being. So, yep. Thank you for that. So let's go on to why.

Why? What is the thinking behind marriage, if there is such a thing? And I think there is some thinking behind it. Let's go back to Genesis chapter 1. So we read 27 and 28.

Would anybody like to suggest any connection? Is there a rational connection between verse 27 and 28, which would answer the question, why should there be husbands and wives?

So Genesis 1.27 says, male and female, he created them. And verse 28 says, God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.

Do you think there's any rational connection between those or not? Yeah, I think that is entirely logical.

[ 27 : 24 ] So you need male and female in order to get from verse 27 to 28. You can't be fruitful and increase in number unless there is some way of doing that.

And that can't be done by Adam on his own, nor indeed by Eve on her own. It needs both of them together, doesn't it? So I think that there is a rationale here in terms of the human race, in terms of the propagation of the human race.

So it's to do with reproduction, having babies. So you need husband and wife to have babies, and God has made it that he wants babies to be made in this context of a man leaving his father and mother and being united to his wife and the two becoming one flesh.

That's the way God wants it done. So it's not like lions that have one male and loads and loads of females. He doesn't...

I mean, I suppose you could propagate the human race that way, but God says, no, I don't want it done like that. I want a man and his wife, and the two become one flesh, and they stay together, and they're faithful to one another, and that's the way I want it done.

[ 28 : 52 ] Does that make sense? Let's look at 2.18. Is there a rationale there for male and female?

Chapter 2, verse 18. Is there a rationale there, I beg your pardon, for having husbands and wives? Yep.

Chris is nodding. Yes, there is. Anybody like to say what the reasoning is, if there is any reasoning to it? Yes, the ruling is a joint project.

It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. So he can't do this on his own. It's a joint project. I think it's not unreasonable to say that the joint project that God has got of filling the earth and subduing it, and the whole human project, can't be done just by men.

It can't be done just by women either. There needs to be an inter-matching of different gifts and capacities to do this project. He needs a helper, and interestingly, he goes through all the beasts of the field, and none of them are up to it.

[ 30 : 13 ] They either don't have enough conversation, or they can't put his tie straight for him, and all the things that these beasts can't do, and for Adam, no suitable helper was found.

So the Lord says, right, I will take something from your intimate makeup, a rib from you, a side from you, and make a companion for you, and you will be almost identical, in the sense that I've extracted something from you, and yet she will be wonderfully different.

And it seems to me there's always that magnetism, that having been taken from Adam, there is always a sort of magnetism to come back together. So, simply, reproduction is something that the

man could not do on his own, and the whole project needs male and female, and a third why I've put here from Ephesians 5, to image Christ and his church.

I don't think that's going too far. I think there is a purpose that's beyond, beyond reproduction, which is to say that this union, of the two opposite poles of humanity, the loving, intimate union, of those two unlike creatures, if you like, is meant to image, to show to the world, the real big marriage, between Christ and his church, the two unlike Christ, in his holiness and his glory, and the church, in her weakness, and indeed her sinfulness, and Christ the Saviour, who so loves the church, that he sacrifices himself for her, to make her a radiant bride, without spot or blemish or wrinkle, and to bring the two together, in a wonderful union.

And I'm suggesting that a third reason, for the existence of marriage, is to show in a small way, that big future thing that's to come.

[ 32 : 38 ] And the reason I point that out, is of course that it is possible, for people to be married, when they're too old to have children.

Isn't that right? That it's a genuine thing. It isn't that you can only be married, when you're young enough to have children. It isn't that reproduction, is the only thing that matters. And indeed it isn't just, I don't think, about productivity and ventures.

I think it's a way of relating. And as Ephesians 5, you will have noticed it, it alternates between Christ and the church, and the husband and the wife.

And he says, even at the end of it in verse 32, this is a profound mystery. Now hang on, I'm not talking about marriage, I'm talking about Christ and the church. So he alternates between saying, this is how husband and wife should be, but of course I'm really thinking, about the great marriage of Christ, and the church.

So there's a little look at why. Shall I move on? So then I thought, how? How do you become a husband or a wife?

[ 33 : 50 ] Aha, you were wondering that, weren't you? Well, I've got, I didn't have enough time to think of good answers for this, so this is what I thought of.

Number one is by arrangement. It's a very good way of finding a husband or wife, get somebody to arrange it for you. In many parts of the world, this is part of a pastor's job. He's got to, mercifully not in this part of the world, but to think, oh, sister so-and-so would just, should be an ideal wife, a brother so-and-so.

So arranging marriages, I think, I'm all in favour of, as long as I don't have to do it. But prayerful seeking, so I think for most single people in a European context, Christian people, there's a right prayerfulness, is this, what is God's will for my life?

And a seeking in the sense of, I mean, not sort of, but in the sense of, well, you know, has God got a possibility there for me?

I don't think it's wrong to, to go to, whatever it is, Oak? Not Oak Hill, Oak Hall. Yes, good, good idea to find a wife by going on an Oak Hall holiday, or a husband.

[ 35 : 26 ] Prayerful seeking, and then I think in the end, it's God's providence, isn't it? It's God who brings people together. So, how do you become a husband or a wife? Well, perhaps by arrangement, but by being prayerful, and waiting on God's providence.

How do you become a husband or wife? I would like to say by sober judgment. I don't know whether I'm being at all realistic in this, but I think it is worth thinking through, is this person a suitable partner?

when life becomes nitty gritty, when you've got two children to look after, and they won't go to sleep, and things like that.

How will we get on? I would like to put in a plea for sober judgment, rather than just gut feeling. By loving adjustment, how do you become a husband or a wife?

if you love one another, and you have to learn to adjust to one another, you have to learn to live with a creature who sees things very differently from yourself, you're probably wrong, but there's a process of adjustment, so I would advocate that.

[ 36 : 54 ] And then, by aspiring to these two model characteristics that he has in Ephesians, and the husband is to aspire to loving, sacrificial leadership, so the husband is to, as it says, husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water, through the word.



