

The Maker of Marriage

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 0 0] Well, some of you have probably heard by now, this fall and possibly a little bit into the new year, we're going to be taking a number of Sunday sermons to focus on the topic of marriage.

This morning is going to be our first sermon about it, and we'll plan to have one every month or so, just kind of mixing it in with our series through Luke. First of all, why marriage? As we look at the world around us, we're very quickly seeing the Christian foundation to our society crumbling, and the effects of that are quite alarming.

By God's good design, the family unit is one of the most important building blocks of a healthy society and a healthy community. And by God's good design, the marriage relationship is the foundation of a healthy family unit.

And so where marriages are failing and faltering and crumbling, so are families and so are communities. There was a time not too long ago when everyone in Canada held a view of marriage that was quite biblical.

But our culture has been slowly drifting away from the Bible and its author, and along with that, from a biblical view of marriage.

[1 : 1 9] And the results have been devastating and heartbreaking. Kids are growing up without a father, or in some cases a mother. Children are being bounced back and forth between their parents' homes while their parents fight.

What began with love and joy often ends with something bitter and painful. There was a time in Canada when the vast majority of married couples would simply stay together, even through the hard times, because it was just understood that this is what marriage means.

Nowadays in Canada, about 40% of first marriages end in divorce. And the annual rate of divorce is actually going down, owing to fewer and fewer younger people getting married.

According to a Stats Canada article published a few years ago, and this is a direct quote, According to the Vanier Institute, since the 1970s, couples have become less likely to marry, and a growing proportion are choosing to live common law.

Also according to Stats Canada, another direct quote, In 2021, nearly 8 in 10 people, age 20 to 24, who were part of a couple, were living with a common law partner.

[3 : 0 1] From 1981 to 2021, that's 40 years, the number of common law couples increased by 447%. That's a direct quote from Stats Canada's website.

A much faster growth than that of married couples over the same period, which was only 26%. They say that apparently this doesn't mean that marriage is being thrown aside altogether, just that many Canadians are choosing to delay getting married.

And there's lots of stuff we could talk about for the demographics and the percentage, how they arrive at that conclusion. But some of these sources suggest that younger people are just coming to view marriage as a sort of later in life kind of relationship that you get to eventually, and that's meant to last, but there's no rush.

There's nothing wrong with just sort of, you know, trying it out before you buy into it. Cohabiting, also referred to as common law, is becoming increasingly popular among young people.

And there's even a growing number of people in what they are now calling a living apart together relationship, or LAT. Three out of ten young adults aged 20 to 34 are choosing to live as a couple, like for a time, going on for a while, but not under the same roof.

[4 : 28] And so what has marriage become in Canada? For some, it's that thing that led up to my parents' divorce. For others, and I've heard this, and maybe you've heard this from people actually saying it to you, it's just a piece of paper.

Some even believe that our society must move on from marriage, because, you know, it's just an old, traditional, outdated, patriarchal way of relating to one another where people needlessly bind themselves to one another for life.

To highlight the problem that we see today, where do kids growing up today learn about marriage? If they're not being taught it from Christian parents, or the church, where do kids growing up today learn about it?

About three out of ten kids these days are born out of wedlock, and with 40% of first marriages ending in divorce, many of those born in wedlock are not seeing a healthy marriage.

What they see of it is often the failure of it. Separation, divorce, fights. It's becoming rare for a kid to grow up with an example from their own parents of what a good, healthy marriage is.

[5 : 51] And so where do kids growing up today learn about marriage? And let's just broaden the focus. Not just marriage, but where do they learn about romance, dating, relationships, sex?

Well, aside from whatever they may see with their parents, they learn it from online media, television, movies. In many ways, these things have become the teacher in the absence of parents in a healthy marriage.

Think of the movies for a minute. How is marriage portrayed in movies these days? Can you think of a movie that portrays a strong, healthy, loving marriage relationship between a man and a woman where both respect one another and love one another deeply and are loyal to one another?

Anybody got a title? If it is, it might be an old movie. The number of movies or television series with this kind of marriage in it are very few.

What view of romance and dating and marriage do we typically get from the movies and from TV? Something like this, maybe. At some point, two people experience this powerful attraction to one another.

[7 : 18] They might even kiss before they do anything else together just to feel it first and then go forward or if not, they might go on somewhere between one and three dates and sometime in those three dates already, sleep with each other and then just ride the powerful wave of romantic feelings towards one another like a surfer rides a wave until it seems like it's either going to dissipate and fade away or until it seems like there might be something there that will last for a while and then if the feelings dissipate in a few weeks or months well that's that.

I guess we'll just wait for the feelings to happen again with someone else hook up with them sleep with them see how it goes and if the feelings don't dissipate well let's move in with each other let's see where this goes.

If it keeps going well based on how we relate to one another and feel about one another maybe we'll both realize that we want to spend the rest of our lives together and if that happens we'll have a wedding and we'll get married and we'll live happily ever after.

Isn't that the way relationships are often portrayed in the movies in the television shows these days? But then there's another part to that as marriage is often portrayed in movies and TV people all go into it thinking they'll live happily ever after only to realize after a while that marriage is hard some portrayals of it show it to be stifling restricting boring preventing me from doing what I want to do and from being with this other person who's now come along that I'm interested in that I'm attracted to more than my spouse and then it turns into fighting and arguing and having an affair and often ends in divorce.

This is what kids today are growing up with is their understanding of marriage and relationships how to do it. Even the animated Disney movies have contributed to this from the youngest of ages.

[9 : 24] Many of the they call them coming of age stories include some sort of romantic relationship that starts with a powerful attraction maybe love at first sight kissing on the first date a story perhaps of forbidden love a marriage built on the shifting sands of feelings that they hope will lead to happily ever after and of course in Disney movies many times it does they get married without hardly even knowing each other and we don't even see any real substance to their relationship because it's just a happy ending for a kid's story.

Where in the movies where in the TV of our day are the relationships that last? the marriages that are truly marriages it's no wonder teens who haven't grown up in the church are skeptical about whether getting married is even needed and besides do I want to lock myself into that kind of commitment to one person for the rest of my life?

What if I choose the wrong person? What if I find myself unhappy like so many do? Why not just do what all my friends are doing and just live together with someone for as long as it lasts?

That's just the movies that's just the TV to say nothing of the effects of internet pornography on our world's view of marriage and sex what about celebrity culture?

We here in the church many of us might not be interested in that or even care about it but it's having an effect on up and coming generations and even on our kids. Now I'm not going to try and diagnose or speculate about how we got here too much whether we as the church have failed in the past several decades to address this I don't know but here we are today and what can we do?

[11 : 17] We are people who believe in the authority of Jesus and the authority of God our creator and God has spoken about marriage and Jesus has spoken about marriage and relationships how they can be what it is how it should be could it be that we've been listening too much to the godless chatter of our world about these things and too little to the one who made marriage and so in this series of messages on the subject our main source must be God's word your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path you might wonder if you tune into these series or are here for these Sundays if this series is for you and whether it's relevant to you and your situation but I hope you know it's not just a series for married couples on how to have a better marriage it relates to singles even to kids some of you may someday be married and how you understand marriage and relationships today will affect how you approach them and enter into them in the future

I'm also aware that there are some of you who have experienced a marriage failure or divorce this series is not attempted to rub salt into fresh wounds or old wounds or to make you feel guilt over that sin has done damage to every part of our existence as human beings on this earth including marriage and sexuality and the gospel of our Lord Jesus brings forgiveness and healing and a path forward for all of us wherever we may find ourselves whether single married divorced widowed dating by looking to what God has said about marriage we're out of batteries maybe by looking to what God has said about marriage we stand to benefit in so many ways those of us who are married can only be helped in our marriages those of us who are not can be better prepared to engage in this special relationship down the road and I hope to even do one sermon just on singleness and what God has to say about remaining single its special advantages and how it brings glory to God as well so this morning we're going to go back to the beginning if you have your

Bible with you you can open it up to Genesis we're going to look at where marriage came from and what do we learn from that what has God said there the book of Genesis tells us about how God made the heavens and the earth it tells us about how God filled the earth with all kinds of plants and creatures and it tells us how God made us human beings in his image male and female in his image and God's declaration over all that he had made was that it was good more than that it was very good that's a very brief summary of the first chapter of the Bible the overview of creation but then in the second chapter of the Bible we get kind of a zoomed in account of the creation of man how God made Adam the first man how he placed him in this beautiful sustaining garden called Eden we read of how

God set the man to work and entrusted things to his care in this garden we read about the special trees in the middle of the garden and the commands that God gave about those and then in verse 18 of chapter 2 through to the rest of the chapter God goes into more detail about how woman came to be and how marriage came to be let's just read this and I'm sorry I don't have it on the screen but you can just listen 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 wild animals and all the birds in the sky 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 in the sky and all the wild animals 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 then closed up the place with flesh then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man the man said this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame let's start from the top in verse 18 up until this point in the creation story all through chapter 1 we've been hearing something over and over and God saw what he had made and it's it's detailed what it was he made and it was good seven times

[16:59] God says it and then here in verse 18 we read about the first thing in all creation that was not good it is not good for the man to be alone God is a relational God for us to be made in his image requires that we also be relational he is father son and holy spirit three persons yet one God and it's a great mystery he is relational in his very being and so it was not good for the man made to image him to be alone we too were made relational and for relationship and so we read about how God made the first woman out of the first man so that they would share together in what it means to be human we share the same essence or nature despite the differences that we have as male and female to say it another way this one man all by himself was incomplete he was lacking he was in a state of not good he was not good by himself and so

God made the first human relationship by making the first woman and I want to be so careful with how we apply these words some have been quick to say here see it was not good for the man to be alone he's incomplete by himself therefore single people today are incomplete and it would be better for them if they were married their lives would be better if they were married and we can sometimes speak of marriages if it's the great purpose of man and woman the thing that truly fulfills us and completes us but I think when we apply these words in this way even when we mean well we're not helping our children or our youth or the unmarried around us to think of marriage as they should marriage is a fundamental building block of humanity but not to the point that a person who is unmarried is somehow less than human or is somehow being deprived of the fullest and richest experience of life let's not forget that our Lord

Jesus himself was unmarried and he was truly man as man as it gets did he lack in his humanity because of that no a second thing to remember here is that in the next chapter of Genesis humanity will be corrupted by sin and that will so affect our relationships with God and with each other that there will be lots of situations where it will be good for a man or woman to remain unmarried and we're going to go into more detail with that in a future message it's not good for said God but we must not press these words in creation history so far that we make all the unmarried people feel like they're missing out on God's best in life because they aren't in a marriage relationship it's not true what is true that we see from these words is that we were made for relationship and marriage was the first way that God chose to remedy the loneliness of this particular man and increase humanity from one to many this building block would give rise not only to the first family and the first family relationships but to community and to friendships with people outside the family eventually and for some the not goodness of being alone will be remedied not by a marriage but by deep and lasting friendships with people from other families but let's stick to the text here

God said it's not good for the man to be alone I will make a helper suitable for him let's start with the easy part here what does it mean that she is suitable for Adam God describes how he brought all the animals to the man and he gave names to them and yet in verse 20 for Adam no suitable helper was found it's almost as if God wanted Adam to see that he was in a certain way different from all the other creatures that God had made it's as if God wanted Adam to know that he was more like God than any other living thing on earth here's all these creatures and some of them very unique and different we got the four-leggers we got the flyers we got the swimmers even some two-leggers who stand almost upright like I do and have two hands and two feet but there's no soul in them they can't talk like I do they can't seem to think

I can't have relationship with these at least not deep relationship they're wild and in the context here what makes her suitable for him is that unlike the animals she shares in his nature and is one of him albeit with some differences and God does this in a very deliberate and obvious way there's no question that she's as human as he is the same sort of being because God makes her out of one of his ribs we see this in verse 21 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 then closed up the place with flesh then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man remember that Adam was formed like the creatures of the earth from the dust of the earth and then God breathed into him the breath of life

[23 : 03] God could have made Eve that way too but doing it this way is deeply symbolic and meaningful she is not just the same kind but she is actually of him and from him this is what makes her suitable for Adam this is what enables true and deep relationship between them they are both of them man both human both of them in the image of God now we come to the hard part at least hard for our culture and our world she was made to be a helper that statement alone is enough to make feminists angry and even if you're not a feminist but just a woman this word this statement might bother you I will make a suitable helper for him helper implies inferior we think helper implies subordinate we feel are you saying that he was made to be the head of the household and that

I only exist to serve him and to help him and help him do what he wants to do why does it have to revolve around him what about all the ways and times that men have domineered women and abused them and the thoughts go but as I said earlier the corruption of sin which is coming in the next chapter that's what causes all the kind of damaging effects on human relationships that we see between men and women between husbands and wives that's the reason for the ugliness but even before sin entered the world and ruined everything God made marriage in such a way that husbands and wives have different roles in marriage Adam was made first and he was charged first with what to do on this earth he was given work to do before she was even made and by God's own word she is the one made to be his wife was made to be a helper for him and there was no sin yet there was no selfishness he would lead like a kind gentle loving servant leader just like

Jesus was and she would follow his leadership and lovingly help and find great joy in doing so recognizing that his work was their work they were together they were one in all of this a helpful analogy may be the human body the human body has different parts but some of those parts have different roles it doesn't make one more important or less important than the other I got thinking of this you know the brain is kind of the control center part it exercises control over the other parts of the body but what good is the brain without the heart which pumps the life blood into every other part of the body and even into the brain and keeps it alive and vital and responsive they serve different roles one is under the control of the other one shrivels and dies without the other but it's not a bad thing in the same way husbands and wives were intended by God from the beginning to have different roles in relation to each other and to the family and it wasn't a bad thing there was perfect love and harmony in relationship between them this is how

God set it up and it was good but then sin came and we began to fight we began to live each for ourselves and not for the other and it falls apart and husbands began to abuse or to abdicate their responsibilities to their wives and wives began to manipulate and subvert their husband's leadership and authority to get and to do what they wanted we'll talk more about roles in another message we'll talk more about the effects of sin another time but let's just keep on with the passage here a little more verse 22 then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man what is marriage marriage is not just a piece of paper marriage is not just a government law or policy about who gets certain privileges and benefits in society it's not just a social contract between two people marriage is older than our nation itself it's older than every nation kingdom empire that has ever recognized it on this earth marriage was made by

God himself it was he who brought the first woman to the first man and do you see the point of explanation there in verse 24 that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh not only did God invent and design marriage but he performed the first one and that's why marriage is holy among all other relationships that we may have with people on earth it's unique because when a man and a woman are married God is the one who joins them fast forward all the way to the new testament Matthew chapter 19 Jesus the son of God is in a discussion with the Pharisees about the issue of divorce and they want to know when it's okay when it's lawfully permitted to divorce their wives and listen to

[29 : 02] Jesus response in verse 4 Jesus says haven't you read that at the beginning the creator made them male and female and said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh who said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh who said that according to Jesus God himself said it and so what's Jesus point look at verse 6 so they the two people are no longer two but one flesh therefore what God has joined together let no one separate what we tend to hear most from that is that we ought not to separate and we'll talk about that at some point but the part we often miss is where

Jesus says therefore what God has joined together God is the joiner of men and women in this thing that he made called marriage when they marry God himself is at work uniting them to each other and making them one it's not the piece of paper that makes them one it's not the recognition of the government that makes them one it's God himself who makes them into one flesh one unit one family that's why for centuries it's been called holy matrimony marriage is a thing of God it's holy it's a special unique relationship created by him and that's what we're losing sight of in our culture today marriage is sacred actually sacred in the true sense of the word because God made it as a special relationship he himself ordained he decreed for the reason that he made male and female like this in the beginning and brought the first man to the first woman for that reason this is how it shall be this is how it shall go from here on a man shall leave his father and his mother and be united be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh

I hesitate to use the word spiritual to describe this union or even supernatural because it's natural it's to be normal it's to be ordinary for humanity and it's not just the intertwining of souls but of flesh of course that's what the sexual intimacy is and symbolizes but it's a union so deep that Jesus can say they are no longer two but one one flesh one family a unit together now to be together from then on the original intention and design of God was for marriage to be permanent listen if you're not yet married listen up that includes you kids God made this kind of relationship for us as an amazing gift a sweet and special union like no other on earth all our friends come and go through life sometimes God blesses with some enduring friendships that last quite a long time they're usually rare but family is special marriage is special it's the closest of human relationships that's intended to go with you through life where you go

I go because we're one God made it good for men and women to have one deep abiding and yes romantic and loving relationship that lasts for life and I know that's hard if you're listening to this and your marriage is in a rough spot or has ended in divorce sin has made a mess of things and that's why we cry that's why we grieve for one reason or another when one flesh union is separated and ripped apart it was meant to be permanent just as we were made to be perfect but now here we are as sinners in need of redemption and grace and the good news is God is full of that grace that we need not just for our sins but for our marital situations too we read in the

New Testament that marriage is permanent but not eternal that there's only one kind of a marriage relationship that is eternal and it's our relationship to our Lord Jesus the ultimate eternal reality to which marriage points and that that union can never be broken and so if your union has been broken know that there is a far greater relationship for which you were made a union that cannot be broken with our Lord Jesus and one day when he returns all earthly marriages will be dissolved and the greater relationship they point to will be ours to share in all together with Jesus but I really want to speak to those of you who are unmarried apply this to those who are unmarried maybe those who are seeking marriage or someday may get married listen to me for a moment don't take your ideas of marriage what it is what it should be from the world around us from

[35 : 08] YouTube from the influencer on social media TikTok from the movies who is most qualified to teach us about marriage and what it is and how it should be how to get into a good marriage how to have the best marriage we can who is more qualified to teach us about that than God the one who made it when two people who fear God and love God and listen to him and follow him and obey him when two people who do that are married the marriage that results is among the best and sweetest of our relationships that the world has seen but only if we both seek the Lord only if we put our trust in his words when it comes to relationships and sex and love and marriage when one person in the relationship isn't following God or both that's when we struggle the most that's when things often fall apart we need to look back to the creator of marriage and relationships he wants us to be happy that's why he made marriage because it's not good for the man or the woman to be alone but the corrupting effects of our sin will undo!

and damage and ruin our dating relationships and our marriages unless we are deeply trusting and closely following all that the Lord Jesus has said so let's end here marriage is a wonderful creation of God we were made for relationship in the image of our relational God sadly marriage is often spoiled by sin the best of it we can still enjoy by faith in Jesus if we walk closely with him but the ultimate glorious relationship for which we were made is what marriage points to and that's our being joined by God to Christ forever our union with him will never end and cannot fail or be spoiled he has the remedy to sin and even to death and he loves us like no other on earth ever could and that's the happily ever after that we long for let's pray father in heaven thank you for your word

I pray that you would press it deep into our hearts and that for each one of us in whatever relationships we have now that you would guide us and give us wisdom and speak to us and help us see what's true and what's good and what's right and what we need to do in the days ahead we ask this in your name and for your honor amen