

A Better Marriage

Gen 2:15-25, Ephesians 5

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

Intro. – Gen. 2:15-25, Eph. 5

We are continuing in our *FaceTime* series, and the title of the message today is: **A Better Marriage.**

We're talking about how to make the most of important relationships in life, and there is no way could we do a relationship series without covering one of the MOST important of relationships and that is the relationship between a man and a woman who have come together and committed their lives to one another.

Now, I realize that when we talk about marriage and family here at the church that I have my work cut out for me. Because even when I say these words: marriage and family...what probably comes to your mind, is what you grew up in and/or what you have experienced on an extremely personal level.

For some, it's great memories. You look at your parent's marriage or the home you grew up in and you are reminded of the safety and security you knew as a child.

- You were loved...
- You were valued...
- Home equates to happiness for you...

And now by God's grace you are carrying it over into your own family. Things may not be perfect, but by all measures they are seemingly healthy and you're continuing to move forward together.

For others, though when I say the words marriage and family...you cringe. Happiness and home for you have never been synonymous.

Perhaps you watched your parents go through a messy divorce...or there was abuse in your home. When you think of marriage and family – peace, security and love...loyalty and commitment...standing together – that's the last thing that comes to your mind!

In this room today, all walks of life are represented. We have husbands and wives sitting on pews together...some whose marriages have never been stronger. And others who even right now are planning their exit strategy out of the marriage.

We have blended families represented here...single parents here...and young singles in the room preparing for marriage and hoping to one day have a family...here's the point:

Wherever you are...whatever situation you find yourself in, God's Word speaks to it:

- If you're not married and hope to be one day, take what we talk about to heart and begin to pray over it. Ask the Lord to bring the kind of person into your life that you can have this "better marriage with".
- If you're not married and don't want to be, well then God's Word doesn't void, take what is said today and learn from it. You may help someone who is married that is having a tough time by simply pointing some of what we learn today out to them in the future.
- If you are married, let God's Word show you how you can have an even better marriage – no matter how long you have been married or where you are at in your marriage, it can always get better!
- If you've been married, and now a widow or widower, you keep being faithful to Jesus and I hope today will be an encouragement to you as to the kind of marriage you once had.

Now, I want to show you this image (**SHOW IMAGE**) and we will talk through it to start our time today. Jesus spoke in Matt. 7 about a person who is wise that listens to his word is like someone that builds his house on a firm foundation.

Illus. Weddings – This is what I always say! Well, I want to bring this into the message today and show you this image in how you can build a better marriage.

The foundation of course is love. If we had time, I'd walk you through 1 Cor. 13 or talk your through this love of God that we receive into our lives and then model toward one another. If the marriage is to have any chance of success, it has to have a great foundation with no cracks in the mortar. Love is the foundation.

But, what don't live on the foundation, we build on it! And I want to look at today three pillars that are needed...that we are to build on the foundation of love in order to have a better marriage.

Let's look at these pillars one by one. Pillar number one is what I'm calling the:
Complementary Pillar.

This pillar has to do with our mind...it's the way we understand and view marriage. It's how we think about marriage – that's why I have the "mind" there at the top of this pillar.

The word "complimentary" is a big word that theologians use that simply means men and women while completely equal in worth and value have different roles and functions within the marriage and family.

The dictionary defines complementary as "**combining in such a way as to enhance or emphasize the qualities of each other or another.**"

I say this pillar has to do with the mind because in order for us to have better marriages, we must see the marriage as God sees it...as he created it.

Let's remember that remember that before there was ever a government...before there was ever the Church...God instituted the family by bringing a man and woman together in marriage - and this FACT has HUGE implications!

The family has always been designed to be the building block of society...it is the nucleus...the foundation of civilization. And if this is the first thing God designs and orchestrates, then we can reason that he's going to ensure he gets it right.

And so, you remember what happened...you have the creation narrative and as God creates he deems his creation as "good". We see this in Gen. 1, verses: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25.

We then get to v. 18 of Gen. 2 and let's see what God says...and then what God does:

Gen. 2:18-25 – “Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the Lord God had 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. 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. 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. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

We read in these verses the divine design of marriage and family. This is before sin enters into the heart of mankind. What we see here is the ideal...before it's ever tainted or messed with – here is how God set marriage up!

One man...one woman. BOTH are equal worth because BOTH were created in the image of God.

Gen. 1:27 – “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Both men and women reflect the glory of God. We are alike in many ways (equal worth, equal value, both made in the imago dei) but men and women are completely different in many ways - specifically in how they relate and function...in their roles and responsibilities.

This is what is meant by the word “complementary”. And it's what we must understand and fully wrap our minds around going into a marriage.

Men and women are the same in that as humans we are the prized creation of God, but we are very different by design...God purposed it this way!

Illus. Trinity – complimentary nature within the Godhead – yes, one God in three distinct persons, but have different roles and functions.

We see these roles and functions being played out in v. 18. The Bible says God wanted for the man, “a helper fit for him”.

God saw that man was alone. Now, notice man wasn't lonely! Being alone and being lonely are two different things! If you're single in the room, don't get married because you are lonely...that's NEVER a good reason for marriage!

One lonely person plus another lonely person is not going to equal one fulfilled marriage. We find our cure for loneliness and our desire for security in our relationship with Christ, NOT in another person!

Again, marriage is to be complementary, but marriage does not complete us. Only a relationship with Christ can complete us.

Illus. Young singles pastor – another person is not going to complete us! They weren't designed to! That's God's job!

God did not create Eve in order to cure Adam's loneliness! He created Eve because to rightly reflect him and worship him more fully, Adam needed a “helper”...someone to come alongside him.

This is so important to understand and think about...it's why I say this pillar has to do with the mindset of marriage. The purpose of our marriage is NOT:

- for your spouse to meet all your needs...
- for your spouse to fill your emotional cup...
- for your to make sure you feel satisfied and secure...

The purpose of our marriage is to reflect the glory of God so that people see him more clearly. And this happens as you “help” one another...as you balance one another out...as two different people come together as one.

God, in an interesting way shows Adam just how wonderful his “helper” is...he starts by showing him all the animals of the land in order for Adam to name them. See it?

Gen. 2:19-20 – “Now out of the ground the Lord God had 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. 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.”

Adam sees all these animals...names all these animals...as wonderful as they are...they are not made in the image of God.

Of all the animals, there is not a “helper” fit for Adam.

I love how the NIV puts it. It says, “But for Adam no suitable helper” was found. The old King James used the word “help-meet”. The idea here is that there was not a match!

Illus. Matching games – There’s not a match!

God sees this and notice...he takes the initiative! **Gen. 2:21-22** – “**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. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.**”

Can you even imagine this moment? Adam is asleep...he’s just looked at all the animals and not found a match. And then God walks this creation...made from Adam’s side and presents her to him.

I’ve heard it said like this at weddings before: “Eve was not taken out of Adam’s head to top him, neither out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him and near his heart to be loved by him.”.

Again, complementary. Adam is not better than Eve. Eve is not less than Adam. Both made in the image of God, they have different roles and functions. Did Adam celebrate these differences? Look at his response!

Gen. 2:23 – “**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.”**

In other words, “YES SIR! WOW! It’s a match!” In Eve he has found someone like him, but very, very different! And notice, he celebrated these differences!

This is a good lesson for us to learn! In our marriages, we should celebrate our differences. The world doesn’t need another you...and neither does your home...trust me! It doesn’t need another me.

Celebrate your differences...the fact that you see things different...view things differently...come to different conclusions...you are two different people!

Don’t let that drive a wedge between you. Instead celebrate and respect it. Let it reinforce this idea that God has brought you someone to help you (“helper”) to reflect his glory so that people see him more clearly.

Pillar number one: Complementary Pillar

Pillar number two: **Covenant Pillar**

Where pillar one had to do with the mind, pillar two – covenant has to do with the will. (**SHOW IMAGE**)

Essentially what makes the foundation strong, is what makes this pillar of marriage strong. God changes us by his love directed toward us on the cross and in the resurrection and in return, this is the type of love that we show toward our spouse.

Gen. 2:24 – “Therefore a man (masculine) shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife (feminine), and they shall become one flesh.”

This is God’s math! One plus one equals one...and this is something only God can do! Now, I LOVE this aspect of marriage.

And I say covenant has to do with the will because sometimes our mindset is weakened...curveballs happen...conflicts arise and sometimes we don’t see things from God perspective. It’s hard to have the mind of Christ when:

- Culture continually assault us...
- Emotions and feelings deceive us...
- In the day to day routines of life it can be difficult to celebrate the differences...

So, what keeps the marriage from crumbling? Covenant.

The word covenant is mentioned over 300 times in the Old Testament alone. It means to have a “solemn agreement with a binding force”.

We see in our Bibles God made a covenant with Noah...a covenant with Abraham...he made a covenant with Moses...a covenant with David...he made a covenant with Israel.

You look at the scripture and you see God is a covenant keeping God. He says in:

Duet. 7:9 – “Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.”

God made a covenant with us in Christ in sending him to die on a cross for our sins and shedding his blood to purchase our salvation. God is a covenant God...the Bible is a covenant book...and we are a covenant people.

And a marriage that lasts begins when a man and a woman mirror the covenant God has made with them in Christ to one another.

Listen to how authors, **Les and Leslie Parrott** put it: **“Godv promises faithfulness to them. And that helps couples keep faith. God’s covenantal faithfulness embodied in our partner makes a home for our restless hearts. It accepts our whole soul by saying, “I believe in you and commit myself to you through thick and thin.” Without faithfulness and the trust it**

engenders, marriage would have no hope of enduring. For no couple can achieve deep confidence in the fidelity of themselves and each other until they first recognize God's faithfulness to them."

So, see what happens. God takes the initiative to bring one man and one woman together...they are suitable for one another...they help to one another. And then they covenant together, mirroring God's covenant love to them – this is the way to a better marriage!

Notice the covenant is **permanent**...man and woman are leaving father and mother and they become "one flesh". All other relationships take a back seat to the marriage partner.

Illus. Counseling – "When you say 'yes' to him/her you are saying 'no' to everyone else that walks the earth! From a very practical standpoint cut the old relationships that you had – that means don't friend them on social media...don't follow them – to me, that's dancing with danger!

Illus. Facebook divorces – One study I found cited Facebook being the source of 1 out of every 5 divorces in the United States, according to the Loyola University Health System. According to the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers Facebook is the "unrivaled leader for online divorce evidence."

The covenant permanent. It is **sacred**. This is God's doing! I say in the weddings I perform that the vows we take are sealed upon the heart and engraved upon the soul. In other words, it is sacred!

And the covenant is **exclusive**. One man...one woman...equals one flesh. We leave mom and dad and we "hold fast" to who? One another!

We don't hold fast to the image of what we think our partner will one day become...we hold fast to our partner today! We don't hold fast to some dream that we wished would come true with marriage...we hold fast to the one that we did marry! The words "hold fast" mean "glued together" "cemented".

Illus. Charles Lowery preaching – "You can decide today to rip up the fantasy and live for what is real or rip up the real trying to live for the fantasy."

Jesus affirms this idea of marriage being a covenant that has permanence...that is sacred...that is exclusive. A lot of times, you will hear people say, "Well Jesus never defined what a family is or what marriage should be!" That is just not true!

He affirmed that marriage is complementary and rooted in covenant! Listen to Matt. 19:3-6.

Now, the context is the Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus by having him misinterpret the law. They bring up the issue of divorce in order to do it. There were different rabbis teaching different interpretations of Old Testament law and so they wanted to see where Jesus stood.

Matt. 19:3-6 – “And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?” 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. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

And so here we have Christ affirming the original...the ideal...and then adding his commentary, “What God has joined together, let not man separate.”

We need to value the covenant of marriage. And we value it the most when we value it with our will!

For some, when times get tough as they inevitably will, covenant brings you back to reality and help your emotions conform to your will instead of the other way around.

And speaking of emotions, let's look at the image again (**SHOW IMAGE**).

First pillar – complementary/mind.

Second pillar – covenant/will

Third pillar – **Companionship Pillar** – this has to do with emotions.

Gen. 2:25 – “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Now, part of companionship is the intimacy part. The two become “one flesh”. Certainly, this speaks of the sexual union between the man and the woman, but it is so much more than that.

Intimacy in its purest sense is being fully known without fear of rejection. I've heard it put like this – intimacy is “into me, you see!”.

Often times when I am counseling people preparing for marriage, I tell them, “You ought to be marrying your best friend!”

Steve Carr in his book, “Married and How to Stay that Way” mentions six areas of companionship in marriage. As I list these out grade yourselves.

What kind of friend are you to your spouse? Singles, take notes...this is how marriage matures! (Talk through each).

1. **Spiritual Companionship** (worship and prayer)
2. **Verbal Companionship** (communication)
3. **Emotional Companionship** (expressing feelings)
4. **Recreational Companionship** (having fun together)
5. **Parental Companionship** (parenting together)
6. **Sexual Companionship** (loving one another)

These are just some small ways that you can grow in your friendship with one another.

John Gottman and Nan Silver write in their book *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*: **“Happy marriages are based on deep friendship. By this I mean mutual respect for and enjoyment of each other’s company. These couples tend to know each other intimately – they are well versed in each other’s likes, dislikes, personality quirks, hopes and dreams. They have an abiding regard for each other and express this fondness not just in the big ways but in little ways day in and day out...Friendship fuels the flames of romance because it offers the best protection against feeling adversarial toward your spouse.”**

If we want better marriages, let’s build on the foundation of love (**SHOW IMAGE**).

1. Pillar One – Complementary – Understand the God-ordained difference and celebrate them.
2. Pillar Two – Covenant – This is an exercise of the will, knowing that our marriage is rooted in the cross of Christ and when feelings come and go, covenant keeps us in it!
3. Pillar Three – Companionship – Feelings are important and we should work toward building the friendship part of our marriage – and btw – it does take work! Godly marriages are not for wimps!

Now, I want to close with a more sobering tone. Marriage is glorious...it really is. I want to show you this pic of my grandparents at their 50th wedding anniversary (**SHOW PIC**).

I have this pic in my office as a reminder to me of what is really important and what I want! This is what I desire!

Don’t you know this is why Satan attacks the marriage and family like he does? I mean, God institutes the marriage in Genesis 2 and Satan immediately comes after it in Genesis 3. He knows if he can just get to the family!

- think about the heartbreak that comes with a broken home...
- think about the collateral damage...
- think about the hurt and pain if Satan can deal a blow to the family!

In many ways, he can destroy society...and that’s exactly what he’s doing.

So, how do we prevent this from happening? How do we keep the foundation from cracking and the pillars we are building our marriage upon strong and secure?

And look, I know this is complex! It takes two to make a marriage work! It takes two to make a marriage better. Both people have to want it and both people have to move toward it. For some your partner didn’t do or isn’t doing their part.

I don’t pretend to know the answer – I imagine that has be as frustrating and defeating as ever. All I can encourage you is to do your part and do it with integrity, and here is what “your part” looks like:

1. Pray – can't emphasize this enough...Pray, pray, pray.

Pray for yourself...pray for and with your spouse...pray over your children together and over their future spouse. Prayer is what softens the heart and keeps us repentant. Prayer is what engages the resources of heaven so that we can be aware and fight against the schemes of the Enemy.

Prayer is what focuses our mind...strengthens our will...and brings our emotions under the control of the Holy Spirit. Eph. 5 links to the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). We have to be men and women of prayer if we are to have a chance in today's culture.

2. Give grace – You didn't marry Jesus...and you are not Jesus. In other words, we are going to mess up...we are going to get it wrong. Give your partner grace.

It's amazing how often we give grace to others when they fail us, but when it comes to our own spouse...the one God has given us, we keep records. We hold grudges. We don't forgive...and we certainly don't forget.

It should not be this way. Some of our marriages are in real trouble today because we are not extending grace. We need to give grace to one another just as we depend upon God giving us his grace.

Illus. Look to the cross

BTW – college students, young singles...even teenagers - don't settle! If you are not married...if you are not yet in covenant, this doesn't apply to you. If someone is not treating you as you deserve, you are not obligated to stay in that relationship...don't settle! And you be patient and let God bring the right person along (look to right/left).

3. Trust God's Word

When in doubt, trust what God says in his word regarding your marriage. Don't trust your feelings...they will deceive you. Don't trust what the world promotes and esteems as the answer to what problems you may be facing.

Counselors are good and have their place...books can help and give great insight – but more than anything, you have to trust what God's word says regarding your marriage.

He will never fail you and you will NEVER be steered in a wrong direction when you follow his direction for your life. Base any and all decisions regarding your marriage off his word.

This is why time alone with him is so important...it's why being in church is so important...its why a small group is so important – we can't get isolated! We need God's word and we need to be around God's people.

I know it sounds simplistic, but if your marriage is broken, it just makes sense to go back to the one who created it...designed it...authored it. He is the only one that can really fix it.

Illus. Phone/apple, car/mechanic, marriage/God

Showed you earlier a pic of my grandparents. Here is the last pic I have of them together – to me this is what a “better marriage” looks like in the end. **(SHOW IMAGE)** – sitting side by side, maybe not even saying a word – just enjoying one another’s company as the days go by.

Let’s pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.