

Theology of Marriage

Series: What it Means to Follow Jesus

Supplemental Material

By Pastor Molly DuQue



MOSAIC CHAPEL

Theology of Marriage (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-25, Ephesians 5:21-33)

The first marriage happens in Genesis 1:26-28, and is then told in greater detail in Genesis 2:18-25. The first marriage reflects God's second covenant relationship (the first is God with his creation). This covenant relationship is between two people, a man and a woman, under God.

In marriage, male and female, each made uniquely and separately in the image of God, are brought together to make one flesh. Like the triune God himself (one God in three persons), marriage reflects unity-in-plurality. Male and female, both made in the image of God, of the same nature and essence, equal as persons, common in purpose, but different - distinct personalities, roles, capacities, expressions, becoming one, and together, reflecting the image of God. Male himself cannot reflect the whole image of God. Female herself cannot reflect the whole image of God. Yet together, in marriage, the most intimate human relationship, reflects the same relational unity-in-plurality as the triune God. Marriage reflects the relational aspect of God.

There is overwhelming beauty in this covenant promise (Deuteronomy 23:21; Ecclesiastes 5:4-5) that these two people enter into before God. This man and woman, making this mutually sacrificial commitment, not losing themselves, but joining their two individual lives together to make one greater whole.

The Impact of Sin

But then in Genesis 3, everything broke! Sin entered the world and broke everything. Sin impacts everything:

- What we think is ours
- How we think and feel about money and possessions
- Where we find our self-worth and self-perception
- Sin is the source of shame, lies, putting on a false front
- How we perceive others and how we think they perceive us, and our capacity for authentic relationship
- Sin effects our bodies and our sexuality

At Mosaic Chapel, we've been using the language of beauty and brokenness to describe the self. Beauty being the image of God within us, and brokenness the effects of sin the Holy Spirit is transforming and healing in us. We bring that beauty and brokenness into marriage. Marriage is a sacred institution that should be honored and esteemed. It shouldn't be entered into lightly, and it shouldn't be overly romanticized. If God's primary goal for each of us is to know His love and to allow that love to make us look more like Jesus, marriage is a space that can do that.

Marriage as a Refining Process

The overarching goal for our lives, married or single, is to be overwhelmed by the love of God and transformed by His Holy Spirit to think and act more like Jesus. Marriage is not the culmination of the adult life of a Christian. It's a continuation of this process. And a path that's not for everyone.

Pastor Molly's wedding messages always include the following phrase: "A wedding is a day, a beautiful celebration of love, but marriage... Marriage is a 'refining process'. It's not easy, but when cultivated, marriage can spring a lifetime of riches and joy beyond your imagination. But to accomplish that, you must commit yourselves to humility, acceptance, forgiveness and overwhelming grace."

Other biblical purposes of marriage include:

Foundation of the family unit and procreation (Genesis 1:28)

Companionship (Genesis 2:18)

Reflecting Christ's love for the church (Ephesians 5)

Relating Marriage to Christ and the Church

Throughout Scripture God uses the relationship between a bride and a groom to depict how Jesus (the groom) loves us - the Church - (His bride) and will return for us. See Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 62:5; Revelation 19:7; Revelation 21-22. In Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul outlines how husbands and wives should treat each other – as Jesus Christ loves the church.

Marriage is a Mutually Sacrificial Commitment

Some contend that Ephesians 5:21-33 is irrelevant to today's culture. This is incorrect. The command for wives to submit and husbands to love just as Christ loved the church is a call to a mutually sacrificial commitment (Ephesians 5:21). Author Timothy Keller explains that "Paul is applying to marriage a general principle about the Christian life - namely, that all Christians who really understand the gospel undergo a radical change in the way they relate to people. In Philippians 2:2-3, Paul says bluntly that Christians should 'in humility consider others better than [them]selves.'"

Successful Marriages Include:

- Mutual submission and humility (Ephesians 5)
- Each person pursuing transformation in Christ (James 1:22-25, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 1-2)
- Wanting the best for the other person (1 Cor 10:23-24)
- Community surrounding the marriage (Hebrews 10:24-25, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Marriage is a Covenant

Marriage isn't just a legal piece of paper; it's a covenant. As defined by the Hebrew language, covenant (b'eryth) is an alliance, pledge (vow), treaty, ordinance or constitution made between: (1) human beings; or (2) God and an individual. Marriage is a unique covenantal relationship because it is a vow made between a man and a

woman, and between the individuals and God. The following verses reference marriage as a covenant relationship: Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:16-17.

Marriage vows should not be taken lightly. (Deuteronomy 23:21; Ecclesiastes 5:4-5) Marriage vows are a promise before God to love and honor the other person, even when we don't feel like it or when circumstances make it challenging. Marriage can build people up and can reflect the unity and community found in God. Marriage can also lead to broken hearts and destroyed families. Because of this, marriage is to be taken seriously and should only be entered into thoughtfully and prayerfully.

RC Sproul: "I believe marriage is the most precious of all human institutions. It's also the most dangerous. Into our marriages we pour our greatest and deepest expectations. We put our emotions on the line. There we can achieve the greatest happiness, but we also can experience the greatest disappointment, the most frustration, and the most pain. With that much at stake, we need something more solemn than a casual promise."

Marriage: A Covenant Between a Man and a Woman Before God

While we will respect those in our community whose beliefs differ concerning the definition of marriage, we remain committed to Biblical truth as outlined in Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24 – marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman. Malachi 2:14 describes this covenant relationship happening with God as the witness. This is spiritual and biblical commitment that is recognized by God.

How Jesus Defines Marriage

Jesus' conversation about marriage arises out of the Pharisees' question about divorce. See Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12. In Matthew 19:4-5 and Mark 10:6-7, Jesus affirms Genesis 1:27; 2:24: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." The word "united" comes from the Hebrew word *dabaq*. Jesus uses the word Aramaic word *proskolla*, which has a nearly identical meaning - "to glue upon, to glue, to join one's self closely, cleave to, stick to."

What is the difference between a Biblical Marriage and a Civil Union?

A biblical marriage is the covenant relationship between one man and woman, witnessed by God, as described in Scripture. This is different than a civil union, which is the legal agreement between two adults that is registered with the state in which a couple lives (a legal marriage certificate, signed by a judge or religious officiant). A modern-day legal and biblical marriage includes both a biblical marriage commitment and a civil union.

**Portions of this document have been adapted from Eastside Foursquare Church's theological statement on marriage.*