

Genesis: Foundations of the Faith 4) The Gift of Marriage

Genesis 2:16-24 • 2020-06-28 • Series: Genesis - Foundations of the Christian Faith



There is a Korean spin-off to the Tom Hanks' film *Cast Away*. Just like in the movie *Cast Away* a man was stranded alone on an island. It was a little different because this man was in plain view of a large city yet was living alone on the uninhabited island under a busy overpass. Just like Tom Hanks, this character did something that seemed comical yet made a lot of sense. He made an inanimate object into a buddy to pass the time with. Our lives comprise of physical health, spiritual health, and emotional health. Perhaps the hardest part of living alone on an island is maintaining your emotional health. When our relationships with others are broken or missing, we struggle. We may not form imaginary buddies out of inanimate objects, but sometimes our methods of dealing with loneliness are less than ideal. Today we look at the very beginning and see the first man who was in the truest sense without any human companionship. And we see a foundational truth of the Christian faith: at the very beginning God instituted the gift of marriage.

Adam had been brought into a ready-made world. From the very start of life, he was able to use his mind and contemplate all the wonders of God's creation. God had provided him with everything to satisfy his needs! He had food, a home, the beauty of creation, and meaningful work to do in the care of the garden. But there was still one more need: companionship. As the sixth day went on God revealed he wasn't finished. He was going to meet Adam's final need. The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper who is a suitable partner for him."

At first glance we might wonder at God bringing all the creatures for Adam to name them. But God clearly had a higher purpose than merely naming all the creatures. In Jane Austen's book, *Emma*, the protagonist, Emma Woodhouse, thinks she has things all figured out. She is constantly seeking to pair up two people together. She thinks she is so smart that others just need a little nudge in the right direction to find their perfect match. With a strong twist of irony, she finds that all her matchmaking only ended for the worse. It turns out that the couples she pairs together don't really match. They were prodded together by Emma's scheming but don't really want to be with the other person. Meanwhile Emma believes that she herself is above the need for romance. It takes a long time, but in the end she discovers how she desires a partner too. She discovers a perfect match which she was blinded to all along. Adam was no fool. He was an intelligent being who was far above all the creatures around him. And you can imagine the gears turning in his perfect mind as he spends the sixth day of creation without his own equal. God didn't need a novel or a long series of events to teach Adam. He only had to let Adam experience for himself what what Jane Austen has Emma learn: "I desire companionship and a mate." Adam no doubt had a deep-rooted need brought to sharp focus. He desired human companionship. "It is not good for man to be alone." God led the man to appreciate that truth.

With a deep and profound meaning God created the first woman from the man. He took a part of the man's side and constructed "a helper suitable for him." She was the perfect companion. God brought her to the man –and in doing so he gave a wonderful gift: he instituted marriage.

The man recognized the gift of marriage at once! The first words we have recorded as spoken by a man are a love poem and hymn of praise to the Creator and his wife. "This one is now the one! This one is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called woman for she was taken out of man." The Hebrew words אִשָּׁה בְּיָמַיִשׁ. "woman because from man..." help us understand that Adam sees the special connection immediately. The words which follow are either a prophecy spoken by Adam or are included because God wants all readers to understand. "For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will remain united with his wife, and they will become one flesh." God instituted the family unit and marriage at the very beginning of time.

Marriage is a beautiful gift from the Creator! God's loving design is clear. One man, one woman, now themselves so united they are together one. She is called "a helper suitable for him." She is God's gift. But she is not a gift to look down upon as inferior or to be tossed aside. She is from his side. He values her as much as his own flesh. The woman is immediately loved by her husband. God did it all for them both! He wrought her from Adam and brought her to Adam. And God is no Emma Woodhouse. He created the perfect life-long match.

How could Adam not have rejoiced? Here we see, in Genesis 2 the goodness of our God. He graciously created all things for Adam and his wife. He graciously held nothing back. If there was any need, any desire, it was now fulfilled and theirs. Man and woman were satisfied with every gift: a new world, a position ruling over it, the likeness of God and his image as holy and righteous, a garden to live in and work, a perfect companion. You have to wonder at it all and ask, "What is man that you are mindful of him?"



Sadly, we also must marvel at how man and woman responded to God's gifts, including the gift of marriage. Adam didn't continue loving Eve as he ought. He stopped being the loving head and let her be deceived by the devil. He tried to pass the curse of sin onto her shoulders. How far they fell from being one in love! The family unit was shattered! "God punish

her, not me! Take her from your presence. Condemn her with the devil to hell as guilty, not me.” How’s that for a rocky start to your marriage? Some husband! The first bond of love was broken. Emotional scars appeared.

The sons and daughters of Adam are of the same flesh and mind. There are so many men who think it so clever to look for fault in the opposite sex. Some, after becoming one in marriage abandon their own wives and children. There are men who physically abuse their wives. Men attack their wives emotionally. There are men who so spurn the gift of marriage as they turn to pornography or to other men and women for sexual pleasure. Their hearts grow cold and hard. God hands men over with sin-hardened hearts to what he calls shameful lusts. With a continue yearning for more they are never satisfied. And, yes, of course, there are women who do the same. Instead of being a loving helper they function as manipulators and mutilators of the hearts of men. The bonds of love are broken. Emotional scars appear.

But consider carefully, married men. Are the men who abuse and abandon their wives the only guilty ones? After all, to be one with your wife means far more than simply not divorcing her. It means praising God for her. I want you to imagine for just a second how much all the women of this world would rejoice if all the men of this world valued them as highly as Adam first valued Eve. Do you greet your wife every time you see her and think, “This is now my own equal and one with me”? Or does your wife sometimes get overlooked and neglected by you? Does she become less important than your favorite sport, hobby, or other leisure activity? Do you rejoice that you have the gift of a wife or do you sometimes grumble that your anniversary plans will fall on the opening day of fishing? Do you, as Paul instructs husbands in Ephesians 5, love your wife as Christ loved the church? Do you sometimes demand that she puts in her fair share before you’ll be loving toward her? That’s not love, that’s a transaction. Do you let her see and hear your emotions by expressing your love for her all the time? To fail to share your emotions with her is to fail to be one.

Wives, do you freely express your emotions to your husband? Is that expression of your emotions always a *good* thing? Consider every word or action that indicates you are not one. Is your marriage free from the guilt and ugly stain of sin?

If you are not married, do you praise God for the gift of marriage and family? Do you honor and speak of marriage as a gift of God? It can be too easy to slip into the pattern of this world regarding marriage. Lust, cohabitation of unmarried partners, and all types of sexual immorality is committed by the unmarried. Marriage is dishonored, God is mocked.

What happened? Marriage, the family unit is broken because of a lack of appreciation for God’s wonderful gift. Sadly, the end result is often the greatest emotional harm anyone could ever experience as one flesh is torn asunder by sin. The family is stressed, divided, and sometimes even disbands. And a lot more can end up breaking than the gift of marriage. God tells us in his Word that men who treat their wives harshly should not expect that God will listen to their prayers. He will turn his face away from them. And God warns in his Word, “*Don’t be deceived, the sexually immoral, the adulterer, the homosexual ...will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” (1 Cor 6) The family unit is shattered. Emotional scars appear. And another far more important relationship is broken!

How do we deal with the emotional pains that come with broken relationships? All throughout Scripture, these emotional, fallen creatures called man and woman receive the closest attention. God’s goodness in providing the gift of marriage and the family is only the beginning! He has restored every broken relationship, starting with the one between us and himself. He does not abandon the relationship which we broke. The Lord God refers to us as his beloved bride and says to us in his Word, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” And to show his great love for his bride he came to seek and save her. He gave his flesh for the church. Adam turned away in sin from the one formed from his own side. But Jesus turned in love to those who in sin had left his side. And he allowed his flesh to be torn and his side to be pierced to heal the broken ties. He valued us more than his own flesh and so he sacrificed himself in love for us.

Now God can rightly say, “This is my bride, the spotless and holy.” What we read in Ephesians earlier reminds us of the love of Christ for his bride: he cleansed us from our sins. The water and the Word made us spotless in our baptism. You belong to Christ Jesus and you are now without fault because of him.

Recall that Scripture passage about those who will not receive the kingdom of heaven because of sexual sins? It continues to say that those who put their trust in Jesus are saved through him. You are washed clean. As far as the adulterer, sexually immoral, homosexual offender “that is what some of you were, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of Our God!” (1 Cor 6) Jesus welcomes us to his kingdom and his eternal wedding feast. We will never be alone, never be wanting, and never be neglected.

Because of this great gift and love: husbands, recognize the gift God has given. Treasure your wife. Love her as your own flesh. Thank God for her daily. Wives carry out the loving role which God has given you has a helper for your husband. Show him love, faithfulness, and submission and as the church does to Christ. If you come from a broken family, take the opportunities before you to build up your future family. Thank God if you are once again given the blessing of marriage. To the unmarried, view the opposite sex as the gift they are from God. Show respect to God’s gift of marriage.

This is a foundation of the Christian faith: God instituted marriage as a gift. And though we often will see it broken, he is the God who restores broken relationships. And we will praise the Lord our God who satisfies all our needs.