

# <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtcpw3kCbGQ> Family Matters

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.  
(Genesis 1:27 ESV)*

*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.  
(Proverbs 22:6 ESV)*

*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,  
and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.  
(Matthew 10:37 ESV)*

*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household,  
he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.  
(1 Timothy 5:8 ESV)*

**Marriage**  
**September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**Genesis 1 and 2**  
**Rev. Paul Carter**

## **Introduction:**

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Genesis 1; that's on page 1 in your pew Bibles. We are taking a break from our series through the Gospel of Mark. Our general habit here is to preach through books of the Bible. We do that for a couple of reasons. First of all we do it so that you know that I am not picking the topics. Its way too easy for a pastor to ride his hobby horses all over the congregation and its way too easy for the church to dismiss a particular teaching because they think it is the particular interest and passion of the preacher. When you preach through books of the Bible you can't do that. You just have to wrestle with what's next. We also do it because it forces us to deal with a wider variety of topics than we would naturally choose to. Sequential, consecutive reading of the Bible forces us to think about some things our minds naturally turn away from. Thirdly we do it because it helps us see doctrines and ideas and principles in their natural context. It helps us see the big picture and it teaches us how to read the Bible for ourselves. Those are several good reasons to do things the way we normally do things.

**BUT.**

There is also value in taking a break from that in order to look at what the Bible says as a whole about a few issues of particular concern. And that's what we are going to do for the next several weeks. For the next 6 weeks at least, God willing, we are going to be working our way through a series called "Family Matters". We are going to look at marriage, parenting, loss, childlessness and singleness. We're going to talk about how to love your spouse and your kids without making an idol of your spouse and your kids. We're going to talk about aging, caring for the sick, learning from the old and dying with dignity. We're going to cover the whole range of family experience and we're going to start at the very beginning.

Let's begin today by reading Genesis 1:26-31 and then we will also read Genesis 2:15-25. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:26-31 ESV)

Let's continue reading at Genesis 2:15-25:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." 18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 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. 20 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. 21 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. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

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."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:15-25 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Now obviously we are being selective in our readings this morning. We skipped the bits about plants and animals and we zoomed right in on what the Bible says about human beings as male and female. We're talking about marriage today and Genesis 1 and 2 is Ground Zero for that conversation. I want to show you 3 things that this passage says about men and women in general and about marriage in particular. The first thing is this:

## 1. Men and women are equal and different

Look back at chapter 1 verse 27:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.  
(Genesis 1:27 ESV)

Now, we have to remember that this was in the first instance something God told Moses to say to a group of recently liberated Hebrew slaves somewhere in the desert of Mount Sinai about 3500 years ago.

Think about that for just a second.

The Hebrew word for image is *tseh'lem* and it means both resemblance and representative. The Hebrew word for likeness is *dem-ooth'* and it means shape, likeness, manner, or similitude. So when the Hebrews heard this it meant that in some way they were like God and they represented God over Creation. In their cultural context the only person who had ever been spoken of this way was Pharaoh himself. The name King Tut or Tutankhamen, as he is properly known literally means "the living image of the god Amun". So let that settle on you. God has just told a group of recently liberated slaves that they are all – men and women – sons and daughters of the King of Heaven. They are Kings and Queens. Every one of them has tremendous dignity and worth. They are RULING CREATURES. They are ROYALTY. Look at verse 26:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let **them** have dominion (Genesis 1:26 ESV)

Both men and women were made to rule. Equally. God made humanity male and female and he gave THEM dominion.

Men and women are ruling creatures, AND they rule in different ways. Look at the first way they rule in verse 28.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over (Genesis 1:28 ESV)

Humans rule by being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth. Let me simplify that. Humans rule by having and raising babies.

Now, let me just pause for a second. Think of all that we don’t know about the original context for this story. All we know is that God made a garden on the earth and put the man and the woman in it. Think about this – what was going on outside that Garden? Was the whole world Edenic? If it was, what does it mean that “God planted a garden”? No, the most reasonable suggestion is that in some way the job of the man and the woman was to EXTEND the garden. It was to stretch out and show forth the beauty of God over all the rawness and readiness of the earth. How are they going to do that? They’re just two people. It’s a big world out there! They are going to do that, first and foremost, by having and raising babies.

Now, let me ask an obvious question. Who received the necessary biological equipment to carry out that task? The woman. Men don’t have wombs. Men don’t lactate. It would be very hard to argue that women were not particularly equipped to take the lead in this foundational aspect of our dominion mandate.

Let me summarize: the first way we RULE is by having and raising babies and while it is clear that the man and woman will have to work together on that, it is equally clear that the woman has been equipped to play the lead role. Are we together so far? Alright, let’s look at the next way that dominion will be exercised. Look at chapter 2:15-17.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:15–17 ESV)

God tells the man – Adam – to work at cultivating and keeping the Garden of God. Keep it good and make it better and do it all according to the Word of God. Now notice this, Eve had not yet been created when God said this to the man. Look at the very next verse:

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."  
(Genesis 2:18 ESV)

Alright, so let's state the obvious. Men and women as a team are called to be God's Leaders over all the world. We are a RULING SPECIES and we share the dominion mandate EQUALLY. Men and women were made to RULE. BUT. Let's also acknowledge that women were given the lead chair on certain aspects of that mandate and men were given the lead chair on other aspects. Men were made to take the lead on work and word. Women were made to take the lead on having and nurturing children. If you were to translate this into business terminology you might say the woman was given the HR and Leadership Development portfolios and the man was given the factory floor and by-laws. It's a team effort! It's a partnership with each taking the lead in their respective departments.

Now I think we have to be careful in how we apply all of this. I don't think we want to be rigid or inflexible. I think we would want to speak generally and aspirationally. I think we would want to say that ideally in a marriage, the man takes seriously his mandate to work at something that makes the world better while providing for his family. Ideally, the man reads, studies, obeys and teaches the word of God – in the home, in the public square and in the gathered assembly of God's people when called upon. And ideally, the woman takes seriously the tremendous dignity and importance associated with the task of having and raising children. Ideally she understands that she does the very work of God – she is a co-creator. She doesn't despise that work. She understands that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. So she gives herself to it. She spends the best of her energy raising and developing Kings and Queens.

The Bible seems to be saying that it takes two people to live one good life – it takes two people to engage and fulfil the dominion mandate. Men and women are equal but not the same. Thanks be to God we are gloriously and helpfully different. But together – by God's grace - we can change the world. That's what the Bible says about men and women and you can't build a Biblical marriage if you don't start there.

The second thing I want you to see here is that:

## 2. The original reason for marriage was friendship

Look at chapter 2:18:

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”  
(Genesis 2:18 ESV)

It is not good for the man to be alone. Everything in creation thus far has been good – but now for the first time we have not good. It is not good that the man should be alone. God made us to be like him and God enjoys perfect intimate fellowship within himself. He is 3 and 1. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit all the time. God has never been lonely and he didn’t want us to be lonely so he made us male and female.

Now don’t trip on the word “helper” as if that implies inferiority. It doesn’t. The Hebrew word used there is used frequently to describe God. God is our helper. It is a word that refers to a helper whose strengths correspond perfectly to our needs. God is our helper like that and he made us to be that kind of helper to each other.

God never meant for you to be good at everything. He made you strategically deficient to draw you into appropriate friendships and relationships and the most important of those is Christian marriage.

Now the implications of this are far reaching. First of all it means that marriage is about friendship before it is about sex. Sex comes later and it is good. The man and the woman were both naked and unashamed – but that wasn’t given as the original reason for marriage. The original reason was friendship.

So obviously, single men and women, when you are thinking about marriage, before you think about sex and sexual attraction, think about friendship and life partnership. Read some of the passages in the Bible that speak about that. Start with Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 which says:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 ESV)

Friendship is about working together. Friendship is about helping each other. Friendship is about comforting each other and friendship is about defending each other. Think about that and then think about what kind of person you need to be and you need to find in order to have a relationship like that.

Marriage is about friendship before it is about sex – and we should note – before it is about children. Sex and children are the natural overflow of a relationship like that – but they were not the original reason for that relationship. Just remember that. If you couldn't have sex and you couldn't have kids, you could still have a marriage. You could still be intimate allies, male and female in the image and likeness of God.

The third thing I want you to see is that:

### **3. Marriage says something about the nature and character of God**

We've hinted at this already. When we were talking about how God made men and women in his image and likeness we explained that those words meant that as male and female human beings both represent and resemble God. We went on to focus on the representing piece – the dominion mandate. But what about the resemble piece? In what sense does the marriage of a man and a woman RESEMBLE the nature and character of God? Let me suggest three ways, though there may be more:

#### **i. It resembles the singularity and plurality of God**

Look closely again at chapter 1:26:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. (Genesis 1:26 ESV)

That's an odd phrase isn't it? Let US make man in OUR image after OUR likeness. Now obviously it isn't until the New Testament that we get a full statement on the reality of God as Holy Trinity but we are surely right to see the first indications of that doctrine in this passage. Matthew Henry for example writes on this verse saying:

The three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult about it and concur in it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Into that great name we are, with good reason, baptized, for to that great name we owe our being.<sup>1</sup>

Human beings were created to reflect the image and likeness of their Creator – who exists eternally as a singularity and a plurality. Is there then any doubt as to why the Bible says:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 ESV)

When a man and a woman come together they become, physically and spiritually, a singularity. They are one body – one flesh and one life. And yet they are not the same. They are EQUAL, UNIFIED and yet DIFFERENT. Is there anything in all creation that speaks better to the mystery of the God-head? In the man and the woman, equal, united and different you have the only authorized analogy for Holy Trinity. It isn't perfect – nothing in creation could be – but it is authorized and it is therefore sacred and it is therefore not to be tampered with. An assault on heterosexual marriage – an assault on the dignity and necessity of gender – is an assault on the nature and character of God. So we're not going there. This is not one of those things we're going to compromise on. This is essential to our identity and mission as human beings.

Our marriages are supposed to resemble in a very limited and imperfect sense, the singularity and plurality of God.

Secondly, our marriages are also supposed to resemble the creative nature of our Creator God.

## **ii. It resembles the creative energy of God**

Now to put too fine a point on it, but when a man and a woman come together in intimate friendship they tend to overflow in godly offspring. Some overflow more than others, but the general principle remains the same. Our union is essentially productive and creative and in that sense it mimics and resembles the creative working of God.

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible (Unabridged)*, Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), paragraph 69.



This fact is part of Paul's argument against homosexuality in Romans 1. The natural union of a man and a woman leads to life and creation – the unnatural union of same sex couples leads to death and destruction. He says that precisely in Romans 1:25 and following:

25 they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1:25–27 ESV)

Paul says that when people turn away from the truth that God is the Creator and we are his creatures, then all manner of sinful and destructive behaviour is likely to follow and you will see it first in the area of human sexuality. People will be inflamed with unnatural desire and it will result in disorder, death and destruction.

God's ways lead to life. Turning away from God's ways leads to death. You can be offended by that but its very hard to argue with that. Right? Suppose everyone in the world embraced the sexual revolution, denied their gender and embraced a same sex partner in sexual union. What would be the result? Human beings would cease to exist in a single generation. That ought to indicate to us that it is neither healthy nor wise to follow this particular course. The Bible is unambiguous here. God's ways lead to life – turning from God's ways, leads to death.

Your marriage is intended as a theatre for the display of God's goodness and creativity. As you love each other, blessings and beauty will overflow. Give yourself to that. Practice that as an act of worship and declaration. Having sex; having babies – raising beautiful, valuable, dignified, marvellous men and women; is a proclamation of the goodness and the glory of our God.

Thirdly and finally, the marital union of a man and a woman is intended to resemble the essential character of God.

### **iii. It resembles the essential character of God**

We've talked about how marriage resembles the nature of God as plurality and singularity, we've talked about how marriage resembles the creativity and life giving power of God and now we

need to talk about how marriage resembles the essential character and likeness of God. Two words are often used to describe or summarize the character of God.

Twice in the Bible God is referred to as Holy, Holy, Holy. The first time is in Isaiah 6:3:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3 ESV)

The second time is in Revelation 4:8 so Old Testament and New God is HOLY, HOLY, HOLY. The Bible also says that:

God is love. (1 John 4:8 ESV)

Obviously God is not one at the expense of the other – his love does not compete with his holiness. God is not in conflict with himself therefore the two words must interpret each other. That is why many theologians prefer to speak of God as “Holy Love”.

That is who God is.

And your marriage – my marriage – is supposed to resemble that. So what does that mean?

I think it means first of all that our marriages should be holy – they should be separate, they should be distinct and set apart. The Book of Hebrews says:

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled (Hebrews 13:4 ESV)

Our marriages should be honourable and we should be faithful and exclusive in our affections.

Secondly I think it means that our marriages should be loving. Now, Hollywood has changed the way we think about love so we need to go back to what the Bible says about love. The Bible says:

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)

So let’s start with this: love is about giving, its about mercy and its about sacrifice. It is about

feelings that are expressed through meaningful actions. Actions of generosity, actions of mercy and actions of service and sacrifice. Love each other that way and you will be saying something about the essential character of God. Love each other that way and you will be preaching the essential content of the Gospel!

Do you see this? My friends, your marriage is a gift, it is a calling and its a mission. It is for the glory of God, it is for the proclamation of the Gospel and it is for our everlasting good.

Thanks be to God! And all God's people said – amen, let's pray together.