

Old Testament Survey - Part 5

by Dick Woodward

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the creation account in Genesis and its significance in understanding marriage and the family.

Duration: 27:18

Scripture: Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24, Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 5:31

Topics: "Marriage And Family", "Gods Creation"

Description

This sermon delves into the book of Genesis, focusing on the creation of man and the institution of marriage as intended by God. It emphasizes the importance of understanding marriage and family dynamics based on God's design, highlighting the roles of parents, partners, and individuals in the context of God's plan for humanity.

Transcript

For the second time, I would like for us to consider the book of Genesis. As we put the book of Genesis in perspective in our last session, we said that the word Genesis is like our word genetics, and it has to do with beginnings. In the book of Genesis, we are told about the beginnings of many things, but as the author of the book of Genesis puts in perspective for us the beginning of many things, we said in our first session, he's not telling it so much like it was, as he is telling it like it is.

Because God wants us to understand marriage like it is, in the book of Genesis, he tells us about marriage like it was. Jesus set that example for us by the way he approached the subject of marriage in the book of Matthew. And this is the way we should then approach the book of Genesis, looking for the description of the beginnings of many things as they were, not so much with the feeling that God owes us an explanation about the beginnings of these things, but because God wants us to understand these things as they really are.

Now we looked at creation like it was, and like it is, and we saw that God told us in the book of Genesis just a little bit about the creation of everything, because he wants us to understand creation like it is, especially that second act of creation or work of creation that we all need in our hearts. The creation that David was talking about when he said, And the creation Jesus was talking about when he spoke of being born again, because that which is born of the flesh is just flesh. Now as we continue the creation account in the book of Genesis, we come to what's really important in this creation account in the book of Genesis, which is really the creation of man.

Now let me say just one more thing about creation like it was. In addition to what we said in our first session, I'm not a scientist and I therefore know nothing about evolution. My concern is that we might come to this Genesis account of creation and really ask the question, what does it say? I feel that we're forced to accept two alternatives, neither of which are acceptable to me.

On the one hand, we're told that if we really believe the Bible, we have to accept an earth that's only 6,000 years old and ushers chronology. On the other hand, we have those who want to support a philosophy of life that's humanistic, materialistic, secularistic, and perhaps atheistic. And in order to support that life philosophy, they tell us we must accept an atheistic theory of evolution.

I do not believe that those are the only two alternatives that we have. I believe in between those two alternatives, there is a third alternative, and that's the creation account of Genesis. And so what I'm proposing is that we come to the creation account of Genesis and simply ask the question, what does it say? What does it really say about creation? But now as we proceed to what's really important in the creation account of Genesis, and we see the description of the creation of man, we read these words.

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 fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them, and God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.

And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept.

And he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh and stead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman and brought her unto the man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

Now as we look at the creation account of Genesis, as it describes the creation of man, which is what's really important here, we see first of all that man has created a plurality. Male and female created he them, it says. In Psalm 68 verse 6, there's a little statement that I think is a good commentary upon the creation of man.

It says, God setteth the solitary in families. Now as you see God creating man, and if you want to understand yourself as you are, and you want to go back and look at this description of your creation, or the creation of people, you know, as they were, then one of the first things we need to realize is that it was the intent and purpose and design of God to set the solitary man in families. It is not good for the man to be alone.

Now the word man there is used generically. So what that really means is it's not good for people to be alone. God doesn't want people to be alone.

And so he has deliberately come up with a creation plan, when he creates man, that creates man in families. Now it's described, I think, somewhat like a symphony in three movements. And as we look at this basic description of the creation of man, male and female, with the exhortation, with the commandment to be fruitful and replenish the earth and to multiply.

And then we have this exhortation, in the light of this wonderful plan, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. When we put all this together, it comes down to something like a symphony in three movements. First of all, it seems that it's the plan of God to take two persons and bring those persons together into a partnership.

And then as a result of this partnership, these two persons who have become partners become parents. And then as parents, through the miracle of procreation, they produce persons who one day themselves become partners and parents. And then they produce persons who become partners and parents.

And this is the law of life by which the human family has been brought into this world. It's not only the law of life that gets us here, but it's the law of life that equips us to live our lives here. You see, when God created man the way he created him, a plurality, and put him in a family, put him into a marriage and a family, when God did this, I believe he was showing us that he had a plan for populating the earth.

Not just populating the earth with people, but populating the earth with adequate people. Now, of course, the whole law, or the whole scheme of things, depends upon the adequacy of those two parents. If those parents are adequate parents, then they're going to produce adequate persons.

They're going to pump adequate persons into the stream of humanity. Now, in order for those parents to be adequate parents, they have to have an adequate partnership. And in order to have an adequate partnership, you have to have two adequate persons.

What we're saying is that as God creates man a plurality, we see this law of life instituted by God for populating the earth, and we see God automatically creating an institution, the home, the family, which gives us the institution that will nurture people, so that the earth will be populated with adequate people. It's like a pyramid, if we can use this illustration. And, of course, the idea of the pyramid is this.

The broad base foundation of this whole plan is the two persons. They must be adequate persons, and then they must have an adequate partnership, and only then can they be adequate parents. You can't have the top third of this pyramid without the bottom two thirds.

You can't have this third of the pyramid here without the bottom third. What we're illustrating is this. In order for this to work, we simply have to be adequate persons.

And, again, this is the great message, I believe, of the Scripture. There's only one way to become an adequate person, and that's through this second act of creation that David was praying about and that Jesus was teaching us about. This is what makes us adequate persons.

Having become adequate persons, then we can be adequate partners, and then we can be adequate parents. Now, this is an interesting principle. When you give marriage counseling today, I think you should come right back here to the beginning.

That's what Jesus suggested we should do. If you want to understand marriage like it is, go back and study marriage like it was. If you want to understand the family, if you want to understand the home like it is, and we have so many problems in our homes today, we need to go back to these basic blueprints here in the book of Genesis and get some ideas about what marriage is and what the home and what the family is intended to be.

I believe when people come in for marriage counseling, they often make this mistake. The man wants to talk to the counselor about the woman he's married to, and the woman wants to talk to the counselor about the man to whom she's married. And I think if we're realistic, we'll realize that that doesn't get us anywhere, because in the final analysis, you really can't control that other person that you live with.

A friend of mine who's a Christian psychologist says that one of the basic causes of frustration and anxiety in people is that their goals and objectives depend upon what somebody else is going to do. How many people do you know that are very frustrated, or perhaps very unhappy, because somebody didn't do what they wanted them to do? Perhaps their goal for the year had to do with what their husband was going to do, or what their wife was going to do, or what their children were going to do, or what their parents were going to do. You learn through experience that you can't really control other people.

Now, according to the Scripture, you're not responsible for other people. At the judgment, you're not going to answer for other people. You're going to answer for yourself.

So the important thing when you get into this pyramid and you look at this law of life and you look at the creation of man like it was and try to understand man like he is, when you see this law of life which we call the family, you realize right away that the only way this can work, the broad-based foundation upon which it all rests, is those adequate persons. So if you want to see some life come into your marriage, the way to begin is to begin with yourself. If you are adequate as a person, and if you're married to an adequate person, now you have the capacity for an adequate partnership.

And it's only when you are adequate partners that you can really be adequate parents. I believe today we have a gross misunderstanding of these basic Scriptures. And for this reason, in many cases, we don't have a marriage between two persons.

The partnership that many people have is not a partnership between two persons. It's a partnership, if you can call it that, between a person and a parasite. Very often, people misunderstand the role, especially of the woman in marriage.

They think that she's just kind of a tag-along for the man. She's not really a person herself. All she does is just complete the man.

She gives up her name, and that symbolizes the fact that she gives up her personhood. She's not a person. She just tags along with this man and tries to help him become a person.

There are many women whose children have been raised who are burned out and used up, and they have a third of their life left. But they look at themselves one day, and they say, Who am I? What am I? What can I do? The children are gone, and they spent a third of their life raising those children, and the children are not looking back. Now, what is there for me? I think a lot of this is because we misunderstand the role of the woman.

It does say here that she's the completer of the man. That's what that word, help me, means. I will make and help meet for him.

She is supposed to complete the man, but that does not mean that she ceases to be a person. She is a whole person, and she's in a partnership with that man. And Peter says that they are equal heirs together of the grace of life.

Now, if we do a little close-up on the relationship that these two people have as parents, we see something like this. This is what the law of life in Genesis is telling us about the role that these two people have as parents. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife.

Now, what that is describing is the relationship between parent and child. This is an illustration of the relationship between parent and child. This is the child, and this is the parent.

And right away we can see that this is a relationship that's destined to part. It should part gradually. We have our children for about 20 years, but there should be a gradual parting all the time while we are raising those children.

I believe we should think of this when we start with a child. When we're holding a child in our lap and they're still wearing diapers, we should ask ourselves questions like these. One day this child is going to walk down the street of a town, perhaps near a college or near a military base, and they're going to say to themselves, I can do anything I want to do.

Now, what is that child going to do then? I think that's a big question we should think about here at the beginning. We should never make the mistake of thinking that that relationship is not supposed to part. It is supposed to part.

That's the law of life. They are supposed to leave their father and their mother. Now, in the beginning, there should be a very close relationship.

The control should be absolute. I don't think a child makes a lot of decisions in these early years. These would be the ages of the child, 0, 6, 12, 18, and 21.

Now, I think in this process, this educational process that takes place between the parent and child, which is supposed to nurture that child to go out into the world an adequate person, there are several factors involved. First of all, there's control, and then there's correction. You don't have to teach the child what's wrong.

You have to correct the child, so this process is largely a correction process. But while you're correcting the child, your goal should always be this, that what starts out as control on your part and correction on your part must become the child's conviction somewhere along the line. Because if that doesn't happen, when the child gets out here into adolescence, if it hasn't become their conviction, all of these things that you're teaching them, then they are going to reach the point where they can do whatever they want to do.

I believe that means that there should be a real prayer for the child's conversion. You should pray for the child's conversion as you go through this process with them. And as you see, out here, the gap gets wider, and I think our approach to our training of our children should change at that point.

Here in the beginning, it's control, correction, perhaps. But as we get out here into these later years of our relationship to our children, the important thing becomes communication with them. When we get out here, we don't control as much.

We become a counselor. But these are some of the things that are involved, I believe, in the relationship between the parents and the children. And you see, all of that is implied by this first description of the creation of man in the book of Genesis.

Now, to take a little bit more of a close-up of that partnership that these two people have, the key to this relationship that this man and this woman have with each other, what we've called the partnership, is first of all their relationship to God. It's like a triangle. If the man is related to God and the woman is related to God, and they're both moving closer to God, the closer they get to God, the closer they are to each other.

According to this description, again, of the creation of man, like it was and like it is, this partnership between this man and this woman is a tie. It's a bond. When it says that the man should cleave to his wife, that's like two pieces of Scotch tape, sticky side to sticky side, which is almost impossible to separate.

They are really joined together. They're supposed to cleave to each other in this tie that God designed. Now, as you look at this tie very closely, you see, first of all, that it's a providential tie.

When a marriage is a marriage in the sight of God, you can say several things about that marriage. First, you can say God put it together. It was God's idea to make man a plurality, to create him male and female, and bring him together into this sexual union, this holy matrimony, this marriage relationship.

So, first of all, we could say God put it together if it's a marriage in the sight of God. Secondly, I think we could say that God brought it together when it's a relationship that is a marriage in the sight of God. The symbolism here is that God brought Eve to Adam.

He actually brought her to him, so he brought that marriage together. You know, this is a very important question when you get into all the questions about marriage and divorce. What is a marriage in the sight of God? Are all the people who are legally married married in the sight of God? Well, I believe the answer to the question, what is a marriage in the sight of God, is something like this.

A marriage in the sight of God, to quote Jesus again, quoting Moses, would be this. What therefore God has joined together, or whom therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder. If it's a marriage in the sight of God, you can say that God put it together on his drawing board because God planned marriage, and you can also say God brought it together because if marriage isn't based upon divine guidance, it is the biggest gamble in the world.

But when it really is a marriage in the sight of God, you can say that God brought it together. Now, there's a third observation about marriage which makes it a providential relationship, and that is only God can keep it together. When Jesus taught about marriage, when he said we should go back to Genesis and study marriage like it was, if we want to understand marriage like it is.

Remember he also taught the indissolubility of the marriage relationship? And as Jesus taught the indissolubility of the marriage relationship, I believe he made it very clear to us that only God can keep a marriage together. When he said that it was indissoluble, one of the apostles said, well, if that's the way it is, it would be better not to marry. And Jesus' response to that was, well, every man cannot receive this saying, only those to whom it is given.

That's an expression he used frequently when he was referring to the Holy Spirit. And I think what he meant was, unless you have the Holy Spirit charisma, unless you have the energizing dynamic of the Holy Spirit, you'll never have a marriage the way God planned for marriage to be. So marriage is a providential tie in the sense that God put it together, God brought it together, and only God can keep it together.

Marriage is also a very purposeful tie, as we've seen. It's a relationship between a man and a woman which is designed to populate the earth with adequate people. Of necessity, then, marriage is a

permanent tie.

As we look at marriage like it was and try to understand it like it is, we must understand it to be a permanent tie. And the primary reason for this is what we might call children's rights. Children are secure if a marriage is secure.

Children are very insecure if a marriage is not secure. That's why if you're having an argument, if you steal a glance at your children, you'll see a look of terror in their faces because they know they're only as secure as that marriage and when you're having an argument, it doesn't look as if that marriage is doing very well. On the other hand, if you want to get a real picture of serenity, steal a glance at your children when you're perhaps being affectionate with your partner, when you and your partner are being affectionate in the presence of your children, which is something I think you ought to do.

When you're doing that, steal a glance at your children and you'll see a look of serenity and security because, again, they know intuitively they're as secure as that marriage and it looks as if the marriage is doing well and so they're very secure. But because of the children's rights, Jesus and Moses make the marriage relationship indissoluble. It's permanent because it's purposeful.

And then it's an exclusive tie. For the purpose of this tie, for the purpose of this arrangement, for the purpose of this relationship, a man leaves his father and his mother. He leaves the family in which he was born and in which he was nurtured and he cleaves to somebody else.

So he cleaves to that wife, exclusive of all the family behind him. And then, of course, it's also exclusive in the sense of fidelity. This man and this woman are to make a commitment to each other.

As you look at marriage as it was, understanding marriage like it is, you see marriage is a commitment. There is no such thing as a biblical marriage without commitment. That's really what love is.

Love is the commitment to love somebody exclusively. And this is the plan that you see when you look at marriage designed and described here in the early verses of Genesis. We could say that the marriage relationship as we see it described here is also an all-inclusive relationship.

God planned a relationship between this man and this woman on several levels. First of all, he meant that they should come together and be one in spirit. And then he meant that they should be one in mind.

And then he meant that they should express that oneness in these deeper levels of spirit and mind through a physical oneness. Solomon, who was quite an authority on marriage, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. He said that marriage is like a three-fold cord which is not quickly broken.

If you think of a cable with three strands or a rope with three strands and you think of that marriage relationship as being a relationship held together on three levels, you have, first of all, oneness in spirit and then you have oneness in mind. Communication, we call it. The first one you might call communion.

These people have a deep sense of communion. And then you have communication. They talk to each other.

They communicate in many, many ways, more than just talking. They have communion. And then they express this communion and this communication, really, through a physical oneness which is the joyful expression of the oneness that they have.

Now, that three-fold cord is not quickly broken. If the physical, if something happens to the physical, there are still two strong ties holding that marriage together. The really important ties, really, are not the physical tie but primarily the spiritual tie and this intellectual tie that this man and this woman have.

Now, let me say one more thing in conclusion about this relationship that we see when we see God create man of plurality. We might ask this question. Who is sufficient for these things? When you understand marriage like it was and when you really understand marriage like it is supposed to be, you realize in the words of Jesus that unless it's given to you, you'll never make it.

I honestly believe the Scripture teaches that. For example, these two people are supposed to be parents. Now, according to the Scripture, you cannot be an adequate parent without God.

Except the Lord build the house, it's all in vain, Solomon says. He's talking about the home when he says that. And then, as we already pointed out, Jesus said that you cannot be an adequate partner apart from God's help.

You have to have God's help in order to be an adequate partner. You can't get there from here without the Holy Spirit, according to Jesus. And then, I believe, one of the fundamental messages of the Bible is you'll never be an adequate person apart from the Holy Spirit or apart from the new birth.

We might say this as we consider this relationship. If you think of a pie cut in three pieces, you have a description, perhaps, of the life cycle as it's described here when you see man created a plurality, when you see God set the solitary in families. You might say that the first third of that pie would represent that part of your life that you spend with your parents being nurtured and prepared to face life.

The second third of that pie could describe, perhaps, that third of your life that you spend with your partner raising children. Now, that still leaves a third third of that pie. That third piece of the pie, and there are many people getting to this part of life today because the life expectancy is longer, the third piece of that pie could represent the third of your life that's left after your children have been raised and after they're gone.

This means, of course, that you're going to spend two thirds of your whole life cycle with that marriage partner. Now, that's what God intended when he created man. That's the ideal, of course.

Many people today, we have so much divorce, many people today would say, oh, but that hasn't been the case with me. Well, I realize that, but we're talking here about the intent and purpose of God when he created man, a plurality. That was God's design.

That was God's purpose. That was God's intent. It is not good for us to be alone.

He never intended that we should be alone. God had a beautiful plan for populating the earth with adequate people, and that whole plan depends upon persons being adequate, partners being adequate, and parents being adequate. Now, if you were the devil and you knew that that was God's plan, what would you do? Solomon tells us that this law of life, the home, could be pictured this way.

It's as if a bow is thrusting out arrows. Now, that bow is the partnership. That bow is the parents.

That bow is the home. The arrows are the children. The amount of thrust and direction with which children go out into life, that depends upon the bow from which they've been thrust.

Now, if you were the devil and you knew that, what would you do? Wouldn't you cut the string on that bow? It seems that that's what he's trying to do. Well, as we look at the creation of man like it was, trying to understand man like he is, we see that man is intended to be an adequate parent, an adequate partner, and an adequate person, and he can never be an adequate person or an adequate partner or an adequate parent without God.

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