

(A Heavenly Home) 3. a Marriage Like a Garden

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of cultivating a marriage like a garden, rooted in God's love and guidance.

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, Proverbs 24:30-34, Song of Solomon 4:12, Song of Solomon 4:16, Isaiah 58:11, Matthew 22:37-40, John 19:41

Topics: "Marriage", "Cultivation of Relationships"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the significance of cultivating a marriage like a garden, drawing parallels between the first marriage in Eden and the relationship between Sandeep and Laura. He highlights the importance of nurturing their relationship to prevent it from becoming a wilderness, as seen in Proverbs. Poonen discusses three gardens in Scripture: Eden, Gethsemane, and the Bridegroom's garden, illustrating how sin and salvation both occurred in gardens. He encourages the couple to prioritize their relationship with God, ensuring their marriage is a private garden for the Lord, and to cultivate it with love, humility, and selflessness. Ultimately, he reminds them that their marriage can glorify Christ and bear fruit in both adversity and prosperity.

Transcript

(Message given at the wedding of Sandeep (my third son) and Laura)

The first marriage was conducted by God - in a garden. So it is good for us to be in surroundings like we have here, at this wedding. Eden was something like this garden we see here, but a lot prettier. So we are very thankful to God that we can meet here for this wedding.

Sandeep & Laura, I want to give you a promise from Isaiah 58:11: "You will be like a watered garden". And I would add "Your marriage will be like a watered garden."

It says in Genesis 2 that "the Lord God planted a garden and He put the man and woman there to cultivate it". But there was another garden that God gave Adam and Eve to cultivate too - and that was their mutual relationship. That was the garden they did not cultivate. They allowed the devil to come between them.

The Lord has given you both a garden today, to cultivate. A garden can very easily become a wilderness if it is neglected. In Proverbs 24:30-34, we read about the garden of a lazy man that had become such a wilderness. That is what has happened in many marriages. But it need never happen in yours. God's

promise to both of you is, "Your marriage will be like a watered garden."

I want to speak to you today about three gardens found in Scripture.

1. The garden of Eden.
2. The garden of Gethsemane and Calvary.
3. The Bridegroom's garden (in the Song of Solomon).

Sin came in a garden. Salvation also came in a garden. And your marriage can be like a garden that glorifies Christ.

The Garden Of Eden

How did sin come in that garden? It was basically because of two wrong attitudes that Adam and Eve had.

The first was pride. They thought they knew better than God. They thought they could disobey God and get away with it. That's how many people in the world think today too.

The second was selfishness. They thought of what they would get for themselves if they ate of that fruit. It says there that "the woman looked at the fruit and saw that it was good, that it would satisfy her desire and make her wise."

Pride and selfishness were the causes of sin in the beginning. And these are the root-causes of all the sin in the human race today - and there are many manifestations of these.

Basically, man is centred in himself and wants to live a life independent of God. That is how sin comes.

The Garden Of Gethsemane And Calvary

Sin came in a garden. And Jesus wrought our salvation in a garden too.

Many know about the garden of Gethsemane. But they don't know that Jesus was crucified in a garden too and that He was buried in a garden as well. John 19:41 says, "In the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid."

Jesus was betrayed in a garden, He was crucified in a garden, He was buried in a garden and He was raised from the dead in a garden. Salvation has now come for both of you in that garden. The benefit of all that Jesus did in that garden can be yours today.

When we look at the earthly life of Jesus, we see in it, the exact opposite of the pride and selfishness that we see in Adam's race.

In Christ's life we see a humility that was willing to do exactly what His Father wanted Him to do - even if it was to die on a cross. He readily chose that way - without any reservation whatsoever.

Christ also selflessly thought of the needs of others and not His own - and was willing to sacrifice Himself in order to help them. This is the attitude He wants both of you to have as well

The Garden Of The Bridegroom

The third garden I want to mention is one which is not so well known to most Christians. This garden is mentioned in the Song of Solomon (which is a song that describes the relationship between a Bridegroom and a Bride, between a husband and a wife).

In Song of Solomon 4:12, the Bridegroom says, "My bride is like a private garden". The bridegroom here is Christ. And we, His bride, are to be a garden reserved exclusively for Him. This is what you need to recognize first of all: You are to plant a garden together in your marriage. But that garden is not primarily for your benefit, or even for the benefit of others, but for the Lord. Keep this in mind always - that your marriage is to be a private garden for the Lord. Then, as a by-product, others will also be blessed through it.

This is what Jesus taught. When somebody asked Him what the greatest commandment in the law was, He said, "The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart - and then will you be able to love your neighbour as yourself" (paraphrase of Matt.22:37-40).

Our life must always begin with God first. That was why God created Adam and Eve separately and not together - so that when Adam opened his eyes, the first person he would see would be God and not Eve. And when Eve was created later and she opened her eyes, the first person she saw was God - not Adam. That's the way it must be in your life always, if your marriage is to be like a watered garden.

Every garden needs rain. And in the new covenant, we have the opportunity to be filled with the Holy Spirit - the rain of heaven. I want to encourage you to seek God wholeheartedly for this. To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to have every area of your life under the control of the Holy Spirit. Open yourself to heaven's rain then, every day of your life.

I find there is a lot of difference between Eastern culture and Western culture. But pride is the same in both cultures! In Eastern culture - in marriages in India - they don't sing, "Here comes the bride". They sing, "Here comes the bridegroom". In some Indian marriages, the bridegroom comes riding in on a horse because he is the important person in an Eastern wedding. And the bride just walks behind the horse, because she is considered inferior. That is Eastern culture.

In Western culture however things are the opposite. Here everybody stands up for the bride during the service, but no-one stands up for the bridegroom! Because the emphasis here is on the bride: "Here comes the bride"!

But in a Christian culture it should be, "Here comes the Lord". Both Eastern culture and Western culture have been defiled by sin. In one, the man is prominent, and in the other, the woman is prominent. But when the Lord is given first place, then you can say "Here comes the Lord".

Further: in Eastern culture, the man glories in saying, "I didn't go and ask for her. Her father came and asked for me." Do you see the pride there? In Western culture however, it is the girl who says "I didn't go seeking for him. He came and wooed me and won me". There is pride there too.

In Christian culture however, we humbly say, "The Lord brought us together. We love the Lord and we are both equal in His eyes."

I want to encourage both of you to rise above the pride of your respective cultures and to be Christian. Let your song each morning be, "Here comes the Lord" - and may both of you be His humble servants. Then your marriage will be like a watered garden.

Along with pride, selfishness also is common to all cultures. When a man looks for a girl to marry, he selfishly looks for beauty - for a pretty girl. And when a girl looks for a man to marry, she selfishly looks for money - for a rich man. This is true all over the world.

But in a Christian culture, you choose a person primarily because He loves the Lord and honours Him. And so I want to urge you both to rise above the selfishness of the human race too.

Since both of you are from different cultures originally, I thought I would make it clear that no culture is superior to the other. Easterners think they are superior to the Westerners, and Westerners think they are superior to the Easterners. But they are both wrong. Christian culture is the highest - and that is what God wants you to follow.

I did a 'Google' search, to find out how to plant a good garden, and here are five rules that I found:

1 Use seeds that are resistant to disease. The key to good disease-control is prevention. We sow seeds with our tongue. Make sure you don't spread disease with the words that you speak to each other. Use words that are resistant to disease, when you speak. Some diseases require frequent spraying with chemicals to protect the plants. You'll have to be ruthless in dealing with your tongue, if you want to avoid having weeds in your garden. I hope you will never have allow weeds to grow in your marriage.

2 Improve the soil with fertilizers. If you want a happy marriage, encourage one another and appreciate one another. Put fertilizers such as these into the ground - and then you will get a really good crop!

3 Destroy any plants that have diseases that cannot be controlled. This refers to activities that have become uncontrolled and addictive - like watching too much television. Destroy that - I don't mean the TV set, but the time wasted in front of it. Be in control of such activities. This rule refers to diseases that cannot be controlled. If you can control them, then it's fine. But it is important to control such activities.

4 Cut off diseased leaves as soon as you notice them. This means that as soon as you realize that you have hurt the other person - that's a diseased leaf - cut it off immediately. Ask for forgiveness immediately. And forgive immediately. And then the leaf is cut off. Otherwise such problems can become severe. And one more thing: Throw away that diseased leaf: Don't remember the past.

5 Do not plant more than you can take care off properly. Don't overcrowd the plants. Over-crowding prevents good air movement and exposure to adequate sunlight. That means you shouldn't try to do so many things in 24 hours a day, that your marriage-garden gets neglected - and your family becomes your last priority. The garden of your 'family' must always be your Number One priority. Over-crowding will prevent exposure to adequate sunlight (God's light) and also good air movement (good fellowship between both of you).

These are the laws that God Himself has made for gardens all over the world. So make your family your first priority.

And now let me turn to Song of Solomon 4:16. "Awake, O north wind, And come, wind of the south (the wind from the north is cold and the wind from the south is warm). Make my garden breathe out fragrance. Let its spices be wafted abroad. And may my Beloved Lord come into his garden and eat its choice fruits!"

In every marriage, we will face the cold north wind of adversity, and the warm south wind of prosperity. But when Jesus is our Head and we allow Him to control our lives, then whether we face adversity or

prosperity, trial or comfort, both these winds will spread abroad the fragrance of Christ through us.

In the world, they are unable to do that. In the world, they complain about everything. They complain even against God in times of adversity. Everyone in the world can handle the south wind of prosperity. But they cannot handle the north wind of adversity.

But the Bride of Christ can handle both adversity and prosperity triumphantly. It can be like that for both of you - and for all of us who are married.

And finally: We read here, "May my Beloved come into his garden and eat its choice fruits!" Your triumphs in times of adversity are for the Lord alone to see - and not for you to show-off to others. The Lord sees your life in secret, at times when others do not. And when He comes into His garden, He should find something there always, that delights His heart.

May God bless you both. Amen.

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