

Preaching Christ...
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God

Date: 3 June 2007
Services: 8.30am, 10.15am and 5pm
Series: Its all about relationship
Passage: Genesis 2:18-25
Title: When it comes to marriage

- Made in God's image, we have been made for relationship – with him, first of all – then with one another.
- Made in God's image, we have been made for other-person-centredness – as God is – Father – Son – Holy Spirit – within his being.
- If you have missed the last two weeks you may feel a little out of the loop – but today is week 3 of a topical series we've called 'It's all about relationship' ...
- Week 1 – when it comes to God – its all about relationship
- Week 2 – when it comes to life – it's all about relationship
- and today "When it comes to marriage, its all about relationship".
- Now of course you may think 'well that's stating the obvious isn't it' – of course marriage is all about relationship...
- ...the only trouble is – many people don't live this out in their marriages... more of that later...
- because there are three things to say first as you'll see from the outline on p2 of the NEWS.
- A word to the not-yet married.
- I say 'not-yet' married, because you know its never too late... you may not be able to marry until you're 18 – but there is no *upper* limit...!
- It may be that you feel that today's message has nothing to do with you...
- ...but I want to urge you to three things.
 1. to get involved with what is being said because you *may* be married one day... or married again
 2. and also to stay involved, learning about what is so vital for many of your brothers and sisters who *are* married – so you can pray for them, talk to them about these things... encourage them in these things.
 3. there will be principles here for singles that you can put into practice – at least to some extent – in all relationships!
- Now a word to the once married.
- Once married, now a widow; Once married, now a widower; once married, now divorced. Even once-married, now married again.
- this message *may* be painful for you today.
- Painful because you will be reminded of what you have lost.

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- Painful because it may remind you of what brought about an end to your relationship... it could reopen some wounds.
- I am sad for you regardless of the means by which you are now among the 'once-married' ... and trust you may be able to bear with any pain, and turn these thoughts away from your own experience, that you may be a blessing to others.
- Now I need one further caveat... in that you may not fit in to either of the first two!
- You may be engaged now
- Your marriage may be in a complete mess right now...
- You be in the midst of a divorce...
- You may be married to someone who is not yet a believer...
- So - you see - there are many many circumstances in which people here may find themselves today, which I cannot possibly cover in a message such as this... and I pray you'll bear with me in that; that there'll be other help for you from the scriptures in other circumstances, or that if I can help in any way, you'll come and see me... I'm only too happy for that.

- From the beginning - marriage was all about relationship!
- you'll remember that after the description of everything God had made in creation as 'good' and 'very good', we get to Genesis 2 and we find the first thing that was not good.
- It was not good for the man to be alone.
- Adam had had a really busy time naming all the animals... but although we know dog to be man's best friend, no suitable helper for Adam was found.
- In other words - as great and wonderful as all those animals were, Adam could not relate to them as he would another person.
- So Adam is ecstatic when God makes woman for him... *bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...* he exclaims.
- Relationship.
- Someone he could relate to on the same level of knowledge and intimacy and understanding...
- And that first marriage establishes the ensuing pattern for all marriages following - *for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.*
- One flesh.
- One in the physical union - yes
- But one purpose, in mind, in direction, in spirit. //
- To the married here today - can I ask - is that how you see your marriage...? is that how you understand your relationship with your spouse? - that you are one?
- Never a decision taken without weighing up the impact on the other?

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- no plans made without discussion and agreement?
- On the same page with priorities and spending and home and holidays and cars and entertaining and giving and children and discipline and? – well – I could go on and on...
- In our individualistic society, I believe we have lost some of what it means to be one flesh!
- Marriages have become about two people living together – sharing house... and all too often couples have lives which are pretty separate... I've known of couples who have separate holidays, separate bank accounts, separate real estate, separate portfolios...
- Now – some of those may be to maximise tax effectiveness or minimise debt exposure...
- ... but often – those are not the issues... self protection is the issue... insurance policy in case of divorce is the issue... self interest is the issue...
- And the whole Biblical vision of what it means to be 'one flesh' is lost! //
- Do whatever you can to give practical expression to what it means to be 'one flesh'.
///
- Now I want you to notice v25 – *the man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.*
- This is the **absolute brilliant nature** of **marriage**.
- There is no **embarrassment** here – and nor should **we** feel **embarrassed**.
- It is a **beautiful picture**...
- on view here is **physical** nakedness and the wonder and beauty of the **physical union** for a **married couple**.
- It is **profound**. It is **liberating**. It is **exhilarating!**
- But as **wonderful** as that is – there is **more** than that here.
- Because being **naked** together paints a wonderful story of **Christian** marriage.
- For in **every** sense – much more than the **physical** – married people are to **be naked with one another**.
- I.e. - you are to allow the other person to see the **real** you. You are to **peel back the layers and the masks** we are all so clever at putting on and let the other person see what lies behind.
- In all our marriages we are to be **completely open** with each other, to **hide nothing** from each other, to **share honestly**, to **talk** about everything, to **let one another into what we are thinking**, to be **utterly ourselves** with one another, to make ourselves **vulnerable** to one another, to be one another's **closest confidant and companion**.
- This is a **beautiful picture** here. Its **wonderful**, its **profound**. Its a thing of **great joy**.
- *The man and his wife were naked, and they felt no shame. //*
- However... we need to remember – that although this came **naturally** for the man and women in Genesis 2 – it won't come **AS** naturally for **us**...

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- Why **not**? Because in the very next chapter, the man and the woman **de-godded God**... they **de-throned** him and set themselves up **against** him.
- And do you know what **happened**...? **IMMEDIATELY** they **realised** they were naked and **hid** from **God** and covered up from **each other**!! *They* made coverings for themselves - Genesis 3:7 and the *Lord God* made garments of skin for them - Genesis 3:21.
- And ever since men and women **pushed God out** – men and women have been hiding their true selves from each other... and its *never* been the **same** between **men** and **women**...
- Where does that leave us now?
- You will recall that we are gradually being remade in the image of God – as the Holy Spirit lives within and challenges us and shapes us and moulds us into the likeness of Jesus...
- ...and as he does that work and we grow in him, then together, married couples must **work** on being **open and honest and candid**... must work to build **trust** and create an environment where it is **safe** to open up and be their true selves...
- but it will only be as **we dethrone self** and **re-enthroned God** – that we will come any **near this ideal!** ///
- Married friends – be naked with one another – be real – be candid – be true – be vulnerable...
- Don't go off and be open up with someone else about what a pain your spouse is being – open up with **them!**
- There ought never be a situation well you tell a girl-friend or a mate – “please don't ever mention this to my spouse but...”
- That's not marriage!
- And to my single brothers and sisters – can I add - you won't be getting physically naked with your close friends – but allow your friends to see the real you...! Your friendships will deepen and become more and more of a blessing as you reveal what is really going on in **your** heart to **others**. ///
- When it comes to marriage – it's all about relationship.
- It's not about – convenience, or using someone; it's not about sex, it's not about hunting and gathering and providing, it's not about nesting or even about parenting; it's not about manipulating and plotting and planning; its not about bargaining or making deals or agreeing on contracts...
- Its about relationship... it's about being one flesh – in every sense of the term – it's about being naked together – in every sense of the term!!
- For from the beginning – it was all about relationship
- And in Jesus Christ – it's all about relationship. ///
- Get married at St Andrew's and you'll hear me say these words: *Marriage is the symbol of God's unending love for his people, and the of the union between Christ and his church....*

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- You see in marriage – we understand something of God’s love for his people – and in God’s love for his people we understand something of the nature of marriage.
- Because the New Testament pictures Jesus as the bridegroom and we his people as his bride.
- When **Jesus** comes on the scene, he boldly refers to **HIMSELF** as the **Bridegroom**. It comes up in **Mark 2** when Jesus is questioned about why his disciples don’t **fast**, and Jesus says they cannot fast while (he) the bridegroom is **with them**.
- Its pictured in Jesus’ parable about the **maidens** (Matthew 25) being ready as they wait the arrival of the bridegroom – i.e. as they wait for **Jesus’ return!**
- The end time **feast** of eternity is pictured as a **marriage feast**, (Matthew 21) and in **Revelation 21**, God’s people **are** prepared as a **bride** beautifully dressed for her **husband**.
- Then Paul in Ephesians 5 **vv31-32**, quotes Genesis 2 – *for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and united to his wife and the two will become one flesh....* Then he adds *this is profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church.*
- Brothers and sisters gathered this morning – **YOU** are the **bride** of **Christ**. **He** is our **bridegroom**.
- And our **relationship** with **him** – is a **marriage**.
- And the relationship between man and woman is to mirror the relationship between Christ and the church...
- Christ laying down his life in our service – deep, costly, generous, sacrificial love...
- And we laying down our life in His service – our bodies as living sacrifices... deep, costly, generous, sacrificial love...
- Husbands laying down their life in the service of their wives - deep, costly, generous, sacrificial love...
- Wives – laying down their lives in the service of their husbands - deep, costly, generous, sacrificial love...
- *Marriage is the symbol of God’s unending love for his people, and the of the union between Christ and his church...*
- Is yours?
- Because of the deep, costly, generous, sacrificial love you are exercising, one for the other?

- Well – what are we going to take away from this, this morning.
- When it comes to marriage – it’s all about relationship...
- So are you working at making the relationship work?
- No just work – but be tremendous?
- Here are 10 take home points... Not all that profound... and in reality - not all that

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difficult...

- but let me say – these are not from someone who’s got their act together in this... some of these I manage some of the time – others – I’m working on – especially Susan hears this sermon this afternoon!!
1. **put your marriage second** – by which I mean – make sure your relationship with God is first. If you are putting your relationship with God first and your spouse is putting God first... then guess what – as you grow closer in the Lord – you grow closer to one another!
 2. **make time (rejecting the ‘quality’ time paradigm)** – “we don’t have much time together, but I make sure that the time we do have is quality time” – rubbish!! Quality time only happens after quantity time. I remember going away with Susan for a few days, and it was only after two days we really began to talk! Make time! Which leads me to:
 3. **quit using work/email/blackberry to avoid relationship** - am I the only one who finds it easier to just get another hour’s work in, instead of sitting with Susan – turning the TV and talking?
 4. **learn to talk** – really talk. About nothing, about everything. This is one of the hardest things on the list! Most of us spend all day talking to clients or staff or bosses. We don’t have a choice. And we work up the energy to be patient and kind and careful with words... when we get home... well – we just want to switch off... so the second most important relationship in our life gets ignored once again! Train yourself to talk.
 5. **be naked** – And yes – some probably need to work on the physical relationship – but I also have in mind what I was referring to earlier – of opening up to your spouse... being open, honest, candid... being utterly yourself...
 6. **coffee weekly** – schedule it... can even be done at home
 7. **dinner monthly** – pay a baby sitter if you have to – a worthwhile investment.
 8. **get away by yourselves at least twice a year** – make it happen. Leave the kids. They will actually be OK without you. And the grandparents, or the adopted grandparents, or someone here at church to whom you farm then out, will love it!
 9. **share your first love** – by which I mean – sharing your love of the Lord Jesus together. If for both of you – the most precious thing in your life is your relationship with God - then why wouldn’t you share your joy and delight and passion with the person who is the second most important person!
 10. **pray** – pray together. One of the most intimate things you will do with your spouse is pray together. Sound strange? But it’s true! Nothing will leave you feeling closer or more content, then when you have taken things to the Lord in prayer!
 - When it comes to marriage – its all about relationship.
 - Do you believe that? Do you live it? Are you practising what you believe?