

Sermon – The Hard Conversations: Marriage - Should We or Just Live Together

Pastor Ed Blonski | January 15, 2023

The Hard Conversations

We continue this message series called “Hard Conversations” where I am tackling the difficult talks that many followers of Jesus find themselves facing.

Baptism – When & Why?

Last week I took on the challenge of facing the hard conversation of baptism – when and why we do it.



Marriage – Should We or Just Live Together?

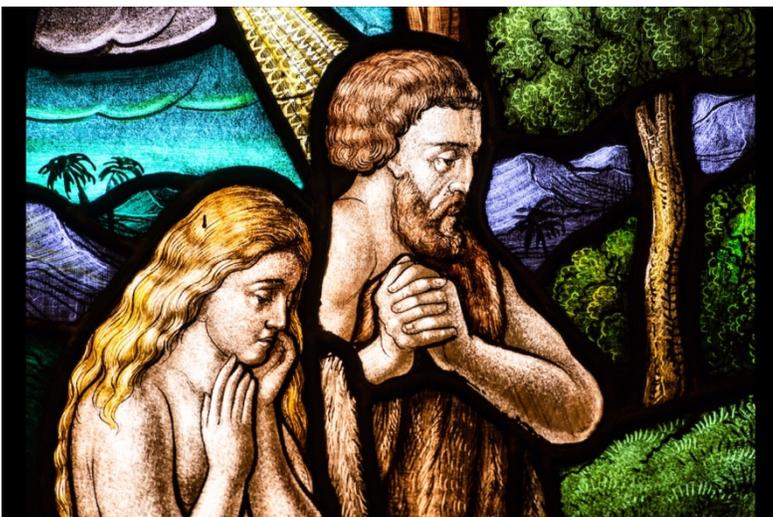
This week I’ll focus on marriage – should we get married or just live together?

Pregnancy – Pro-Life or Pro-Choice?

Next week is the kickoff of our Lutheran Schools Week celebration. And after that I’ll get to the end of this series with a message on pregnancy – pro-life or pro-choice.

After that, well, we’ll have to see what comes next.

Marriage – An Overview



It is as old as the Bible itself, if not older.

If you believe what the Bible says, marriage has been around since the beginning!

Established By God – Genesis 2:18-25

In Genesis is the story – most followers of Jesus believe it to be the

true story – of how God created the entire universe.

God speaks and time, the sun, moon, stars, plants, fish and animals all come into being.

And the last to be created are humans.

But Adam quickly realizes that something is missing.

Not that God made a mistake or forgot something. No, God delayed the creation of woman because He wanted Adam to realize that there was someone for him just as there was a mate for all the animals.

So, God creates Eve out of the rib of Adam.

And right after that, God establishes marriage.

It is a Gift of God – Meant to be Used

Marriage is a gift from God.

Like all of God's gifts, it is one that is meant to be used. God establishes the estate of marriage, and gifts it to humans to use.

Why?

It is the home of love

Because marriage is the home of love. The home of the love of spouse, parent and child.

So, marriage is established by God, it is a gift of God meant to be used, and it is the home of love.

Let's take a deeper dive into these three points.

Established By God

Genesis 2:18-25

If you have a Bible open it to the second or third page or so – to Genesis chapter 2.

You can also use a Bible app on your phone, two that I like to use are YouVersion Bible App and Bible Gateway.

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for[e] him." 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed[f] 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[g] 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[h] 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."[i] 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.

Those last four verses are the ones that tell us of the first marriage – an estate established by our Creator God Himself!

1) God Specially Created Man and Woman

It doesn't surprise me that God establishes something special for humans that he doesn't give to the animals, fish and birds.

After all, God specially creates the man from the dust of the earth and breathes into him the breath of life and makes the woman from the rib of the man.

2) God Brings Them Together in Marriage

And immediately after the creation of the woman, God wakes the man up, brings the woman to him and marries them.

Can you imagine it? God officiates at Adam and Eve's wedding! What an incredible gift!

It is a Gift to be Used

Marriage is an incredible gift and like all the gifts of God, it is meant to be used.

Looking back in your Bibles, look first at Genesis 2:24.

1) Genesis 2:24

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

Not just the first man – but "a" man. In other words, all men that have a mother and father are meant by God to use this incredible gift of marriage. And all women are created to be wives!

Now look at the previous chapter, verse 28.

2) Genesis 1:28

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."

The husband and wife, using God's gift of marriage, receive God's blessing! The blessing of children, of family, and of being stewards of the creation God just completed!

It is the Home of Love

This makes marriage the home of God's love for man.

1) In Marriage We First Know of Love

In marriage we first know of love.

a) In Our Spouse

The love that we feel for our spouse and the love of our spouse.

b) In Our Parents

The love of our parents and the love of our children.

But It Was Quickly the First Casualty in the Fall Into Sin

Sadly, seemingly before the honeymoon of Adam and Eve was even over, marriage became one of the first casualties of sin.

Sin Caused Division Between Husband and Wife

Adam and Eve are tempted by the devil to disobey God.

Immediately they are ashamed of themselves. They hide from each other and they hide from God.

When God calls to them, seeking to restore what had been broken, Adam turns on his wife, blaming her – and God – for what happened.

Their marriage was broken by sin.

It continues to Do So Today

Sin continues to break marriages today. Not always completely – thank God – but certainly to the point where we recognize that the estate is not all it should be, was created to be.

It Also Broke the Plan for All Men and Women to Enjoy

Sin broke marriage to the point that it can be altered so that the joy is much harder to find.

1) Marriage

There was supposed to be joy in marriage, as I say in the wedding rite:

“Marriage was ... ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another.”

But sin causes division, and where there is division there is pain and certainly not delight and joy.

2) The Blessings of Marriage

Sin also broke the blessings of marriage. There are three:

- The mutual companionship, help, and support that each bring to the other
- Enjoying a holy delight in each other
- The procreation of children.

Since it is Broken, Isn't it Best to Forgo Marriage and Just Live Together?

So that hard conversation for today is a question, “Since sin has broken marriage, wouldn't it just be better to forgo marriage and just live together?”

After All, So Many Do So!

After all, there are many, many people who do live together without being married. And they have children together without being married.



1) 57% of Couples in Lutheran Churches!

A Lutheran pastor once did a survey for a thesis he was working on and found that among the 51 pastors in the parishes he contacted, they report that 57% of the couples in their parishes were living together without being married.

Over half of the couples – Lutheran couples! – were living together without being married, having children without being married.

Ask Why We Choose This Path Instead of Marriage

When asked why they chose this path instead of marriage, many answered – in effect – that practice makes perfect.

1) “Practice Makes Perfect”?

At least they are anticipating getting married to each other someday! But first they wanted to “try it out” and see if they were compatible.

I get that, I really do. With sin breaking marriage, they are trying to do what they can to “beat the odds” of having a bad marriage.

a) The Odds Are Against You

Unfortunately, the odds are against them.

b) 50% of Cohabiting Couples Break Up

Statistics shows that half of all cohabiting couples eventually break up instead of getting married.

If They Do Marry – Divorce Rate 50% higher than couples who do not cohabit.

And if they do get married after living together, the divorce rate is 50% higher than that of couples who do not cohabit.

Bottom Line – over 75% of cohabiting couples eventually break up

That adds up to 75% of cohabiting couples eventually breaking up or divorcing.

Sin has indeed broken marriage in our world. That’s the bad news.

But here’s the good news!

So Jesus Came to Undo What Broke The Gift of Marriage - Gospel

Jesus came to overcome all sin. Even the sin that breaks marriage. Even the sins that continue to stifle couples and prevent them from receiving the full blessings of God.

Because Jesus died on the cross to appease the wrath of God for all sin, Jesus restores the gifts of God to us – including the gifts and blessings of a godly marriage.

For in a godly marriage, God promises to bless.

And a godly marriage is an incredible public witness to the love of Christ for all those inundated with sin and its destructive nature.

Where Do We Go from here?



So, where do we go from here?

First, let me state that not everyone should be married. The Bible clearly says that there are some people whom God would have remain unmarried – gifting them to be a blessing in other areas of ministry that do not involve being married.

St. Paul goes into a lot of detail about being married and not being married in 1 Corinthians 7 – so much so that I can't go through it with you now.

God does not have a spouse for everyone, that is true, but for the vast majority of people, marriage is God's plan for them.

If you are not married at the moment but anticipate or are contemplating being married in the future, here's what I say to you: *understand what a godly marriage is.*

Contemplate a Godly Marriage

1) One Man or Woman for Life

It starts in Genesis – one man and woman for life.

It sounds simple and it so not simple. I understand that. I appreciate that.

So, I would counsel you who are planning or contemplating marriage to get in the Word, stay in the Word, and talk with others to learn more about a godly marriage.

If you are divorced

Even if you've been married before and that marriage ended, God still has a loving plan for your life. You haven't blown it! God is a merciful and forgiving God. And just as importantly, God is a redeeming God – He can redeem your past and make a godly future out of it!

So, same counsel: get in the Word, stay in the Word, and talk with others to learn more about a godly marriage.

If You Are Married

And, if you are already married, here's what you do.

1) Seek to Make it a Godly One

Seek to make it a godly marriage – or seek to continue to make it a godly marriage.

Pray together, worship together, find daily devotions you can do together – there are tons of couple's devotions out there.

2) Share Your Experience with Those Who Are Not in a One

1) Marriage Mentoring

Now, you can certainly celebrate and thank God for your godly marriage! But knowing that it is a gift from God, what do you do with God's gifts? That's right! You use them.

Here's an incredibly powerful and important way to use the gift of a godly marriage: Share your experience with those who are contemplating marriage or may be in one that is less than godly.

Become a marriage mentor. In our church we have couples who have been married to the same man or woman for 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years, 50 years, and even a few that have been married for over 60 years and 70 years!

Don't keep that experience to yourself! Share it by becoming a marriage mentor. Call me this week and I'll set you up with some resources and we can talk about starting this kind of ministry here at St. Matthew.

Why This Is Important

Let me wrap up this message with this question: Why is this important? Why is it important to understand- and for those who are going to be married or already are married - to have a godly marriage?



Marriage is the Bedrock of Human Life

First, because marriage is the bedrock of human life and relationships.

1) It's the First Thing God Established after Creating Us

It was the first thing God established - some people use a church word "ordained" - after God created humans.

God did not have them have children first. God didn't have them enjoy the sights and sounds of the Garden of Eden first.

As soon as Adam was awake from divine rib surgery that God performed to create Eve, God brought Eve to Adam and married them.

If We Get Marriage Right - Life Tends to Be Much Better

Second, if we get marriage right - that is, if we are able to build and continue in a godly marriage - life tends to be so much better.

In a godly marriage, husband and wife enjoy each other and their lives better.

In a godly marriage, children thrive. In a godly marriage, men can teach their sons how to be godly men and how to respect all women as special creations of God.

In a godly marriage, women can teach their daughters how to be godly women and respect all men as special creations of God.

In a godly marriage, husband and wife - father and mother - raise their children to love and cherish God and to seek out God's plan for their lives.

That's the special gift of marriage given to us by God.

God's Gift of Marriage Sets the Stage for Every Other Gift of God

In fact, God's gift of marriage sets the stage for just about every other gift of God!

The gift of children. Being a parent. Family. Community. Peace and contentment that goes along with marriage and family!

1) It Won't Save Us – Only Christ Can Do That

Don't misunderstand, I'm not saying marriage is so important that it can save us – because only Christ can do that. Salvation is by grace alone – Jesus' death and resurrection.

2) But Marriage Gives Us the Picture of Christ's Saving Relationship with us

But it isn't a coincidence that God – in St. Paul's Ephesians 5 – shows us that the salvation and love of Jesus Christ can be seen most clearly in the godly marriage relationship between a husband and wife.

I'm looking forward to your comments and questions about this hard conversation of marriage – should we get married or just live together.

I'll close with this invitation: for those married, allow the love of God to create in your married life such a passion. A passion which gives you the courage to create a beautiful and God-filled marriage. A passion which allows you to bring the best of yourself to your marriage.

For those who are not married, I invite you to consider a future where God may lead you to create a marriage which gives life to you and to those around you. A marriage that has within it a passion for God, the one who gives us the ability to love and to work at love.

For those who have put many years into a marriage, I invite and encourage you to stay close to God because God is the source of this power and love. And share that power and love so that others may also know it in marriage.

In Jesus' name. Amen.