

Message Summary

God's beautiful design of marriage begins with humanity's creation on the sixth day, after God has created all else in the cosmos "good" (Genesis 1:25). God created man in his "own image" (v. 26), intended to image forth the Creator to all of his good creation. He had a place: in the Garden of Eden, exactly where God intended him to be (2:15a). His work was the cultivation of the ground and care of the animals (1:28-30; 2:15b). Despite all of creation's bliss, however, God saw a problem with creation: there was no helper fit for Adam (2:18). As Adam slept, God took a rib and formed the woman, corresponding to him (2:23). Marriage doesn't stop at creation. In seeking a godly wife for his son Isaac, Abraham begins with prayer that God would send just the right person (24:12-15), a prayer God answered by sending Rebekah.

Part of the beauty of marriage is the complementary nature of our gifts to bear God's image together. God has designed his body diversely, so that all our various gifts can mutually contribute to the body's good (cf. 1 Cor. 12; 1 Pt. 4:10-11). When two become one in marriage, they are together successful in complementing one another. When the church assembles, we are brought together as various components of the body under "one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:5-6).

God has done His part in providing our place, occupation, and companions. He will provide everything to do his work in his place. One question remains: Will we trust and believe God enough to do what he has called us to? Our obedience must be unconditional. Ruth provides a fitting example. Ruth and Orpah both faced a choice of whether to stay at home or follow their mother-in-law Naomi to Israel. Ruth courageously went. Ruth and Boaz were the great grandparents of King David (Ruth 4:17-22), through whom ultimately would come Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world (cf. Mt. 1:1-17). The purpose of marriage, ministry, and missions is the Messiah. It is our privilege and joy to be part of his work to secure praises for himself from all people, nations, and tongues (Rev. 7:9-10).

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why does the Bible celebrate a diversity of gifts (cf. Rm. 12:4-6; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Pt. 4:10-11)? What is the purpose of the various gifts God has given us? In what ways in your life have you seen God use a diversity of gifts to corporately achieve His purposes (in marriage, the church, community, etc.)?

Marriage, at the pinnacle of God's perfect creation, shows God's image in the man and woman mutually achieving God's purposes. How does marriage also show God's perfect redemption in this fallen, Genesis 3 world (cf. Eph. 5:22-33)?

What special challenges did Ruth face in following Naomi to Israel (cf. Ruth 1:6-22)? What is the source of our courage and strength to face similar challenges in fulfilling God's call today (see esp. Rm. 15:18; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:28-29)?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Are you being faithful to minister in the place God has called you, or are you passing by opportunities where God ordained you to be?
2. Are you trusting the Lord to provide just the right community for you to live out God's purposes? Singles, do you trust the Lord to provide just the right companion if he calls you to marriage? Are you trusting the Lord to fight for you (Ex. 14:14)?
3. Are you thankful for the diversity of gifting God gives his church, or do you pridefully insist everyone's giftings should line up exactly with yours (cf. Rm. 12:4-6)?
4. Are you cultivating your spiritual gifts and opportunities for the building up of Christ's body? Married persons, how are you cultivating your spouse's gifts for the edification of the body?
5. Is there an area of obedience God is calling you to you have been neglecting? Do you lack faith for God to fulfill his purpose in you? Is your obedience to God conditional in any way?
6. How can you more faithfully be a "missionary," a bearer of the gospel on mission, right here in Gadsden?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for his love for us, not only in creation in his image but in redemption as his bride (Eph. 5:25-33). Thank God for the perfect example and achievement of love for us on the cross.
 - Pray for the Lord's blessing on marriages at Christ Fellowship. Pray that the Lord would give grace for couples in our church to walk in thankfulness and sacrificial love for one another, and use strong marriages as a witness for the gospel in our community.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that CFC would be faithful to minister in the places and occupations to which God has called us here in Gadsden.
 - Pray for the Lord's blessing on the Dream Center VBS and cookout. Pray that the Lord would reach this community with the love of Christ and establish the Dream Center as a place of gospel hope and love for children and families.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for Jeff and Misti Fairchild in their transition to Honduras as missionaries. Pray that the Lord would bless their efforts in language school in Mexico and use their ministry richly to reach many Hondurans with the love of Christ. Pray that we would pray for and support them actively as a sending church. Pray what Paul requested prayer for on his missionary journeys: *"that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak"* (Eph. 6:18-19)
 - Pray for short-term mission trips leaving this week to Honduras (medical missions) and Romania (pastoral training). Pray that the Lord would bless these trips with many opportunities for gospel service and love, and that they would be strategic in supporting the long-term efforts in Romania and Honduras.
 - Pray that the Lord would enlarge CFC's sending capacity, and raise up many missionaries for the spread of the gospel both here in Gadsden and among the nations.