

“Love, Sex and Lasting Relationships”



In The Beginning!

GENESIS 2:18

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SERMON SERIES:**“LOVE, SEX AND LASTING RELATIONSHIPS”****# 1: “VENUS AND MARS IN THE BEGINNING”****GENESIS 2:18****INTRODUCTION**

THERE ARE FEW SUBJECTS IN LIFE THAT IGNITES AS MUCH PASSION AND LONGING WITHIN US AS OUR DESIRE FOR LOVE, OUR INTEREST IN SEX, AND OUR HOPE FOR LASTING RELATIONSHIPS.

NO MATTER WHO WE ARE, WHAT BACKGROUND WE COME FROM, HOW INTELLIGENT WE ARE, OR HOW OLD WE ARE, WE ALL LONG TO BE LOVED.

EVERY ONE OF US WANTS TO BE CHERISHED BY SOMEONE ELSE.

EACH OF US IS DRAWN LIKE AN INVISIBLE MAGNET INTO THE WORLD OF RELATIONSHIPS.

PUT SIMPLY, WE HUMAN BEINGS ARE RELATIONAL BEINGS.

WE ALL CRAVE INTIMACY, ACCEPTANCE, AND SECURITY, THE KIND OF FEELINGS THAT FLOW WHEN WE BOND WITH A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX.

THINK ABOUT IT. AFTER TAKING CARE OF THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE LIKE FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER, MOST OF US SPEND THE BULK OF OUR TIME PONDERING, PURSUING, OR SOLVING PROBLEMS RELATED TO THIS AREA OF LIFE.

JUST TURN ON THE RADIO AND YOU’LL HEAR SONGS LIKE: “I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND” AND “WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT”.

ADD TO THESE ALMOST ANY OTHER SONG ON THE CURRENT TOP FORTY LIST.

DAY AFTER DAY, PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD SING ABOUT THEIR DESIRES FOR LOVE AND THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT WITH LOVE.

WALK INTO ANY BOOKSTORE AND YOU'LL FIND ROMANTIC NOVELS OR SELF-HELP BOOKS ON RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX.

OR THE NEXT TIME YOU GO TO THE GROCERY STORE, LOOK AT THE COVER OF THE MAGAZINES IN THE RACKS BY THE CHECKOUTS.

HAS COSMO EVER HAD A COVER WITHOUT THE WORD "SEX" ON IT?

WHO'S ON THE FRONT OF PEOPLE OR THE INQUIRER? THEY'RE FULL OF WHO'S TOGETHER THIS WEEK, WHO'S RUMORED TO HAVE CHEATED ON HIS OR HER MATE, OR WHO'S SPLIT UP AGAIN.

WHY DO THESE MAGAZINES SELL? BECAUSE, WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE LOVE, SEX, AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE AT THE TOP OF EACH OF OUR LISTS.

THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY LONG AGO DISCOVERED THAT OUR PREOCCUPATION WITH BEING IN RELATIONSHIPS AND WITH SEX SELLS MERCHANDISE.

THEY USE IT TO SELL BEER AND CARS AND EVEN TO CONVINCE US TO CHANGE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE COMPANIES ALL THE WHILE MAINTAINING THE SAME UNDERLYING MESSAGE – "THE KEY TO HAPPINESS AND FULFILLMENT IN LIFE IS LOVE, SEX, AND LASTING RELATIONSHIPS."

BUT SOMETHING'S WRONG BECAUSE, IN SPITE OF ALL THE HYPE IN MAGAZINES, BOOKS, AND MOVIES, PEOPLE, FOR THE MOST PART, AREN'T DOING VERY WELL WHEN IT COMES TO THIS AREA OF LIFE.

THE WORDS DIVORCE, BREAKUP, WOUNDS, ALIMONY, CHILD-SUPPORT, BAGGAGE, EX-MATE, AND ABUSE HAVE BECOME ALL TOO COMMON PARTS OF OUR VOCABULARY.

EVEN IN SURVIVING MARRIAGES, THE ATMOSPHERE IS OFTEN ONE OF UNHAPPINESS, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND LACK OF FULFILLMENT.

I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY COUPLES I HAVE SAT WITH WHO HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING WITH MARRIAGE.

I CAN'T BEGIN TO CALCULATE THE NUMBER OF HOURS I'VE SPENT WITH COUPLES WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO EVEN MAKE IT ANOTHER DAY.

THE THING IS: PEOPLE ARE STRUGGLING WITH RELATIONSHIPS IN GENERAL.

THE MARRIAGE STATISTICS ARE STAGGERING WITH MORE THAN HALF OF ALL MARRIAGES ENDING IN DIVORCE.

FRANKLY, I'D RATHER NOT HEAR ABOUT ANY MORE MARRIAGES AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE BREAKING UP.

I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW IT PAINS ME TO WATCH A COUPLE GO THROUGH THE STRUGGLE OF DIVORCE.

I HAVE EXPERIENCED AND I'VE SEEN ENOUGH PAIN IN PEOPLE'S LIVES TO LAST ME A LONG TIME. SO MUCH OF IT COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED.

BUT IF YOU WERE TO ADD UP THE NUMBER OF HOURS I'VE SPENT WORKING WITH THE MARRIAGES OF OTHERS, THEY WOULDN'T COME CLOSE TO THE NUMBER OF HOURS I'VE SPENT ON MY OWN.

I'M NO DIFFERENT THAN ANY OF THE REST OF YOU. I DON'T HAVE IT TOGETHER. I CAN'T SEEM TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE IT WORK ALL OF THE TIME.

SOMETIMES I DO A PRETTY GOOD JOB, AND THEN OTHER TIMES I REALLY MESS THINGS UP BIG!

HERE'S WHAT I'VE DISCOVERED OVER TEN YEARS OF MARRIAGE AND 45 YEARS OF MINISTRY, AND THIRTY EIGHT YEARS OF PASTORATE: WE ALL LONG TO LOVE AND BE LOVED BUT FOR SOME REASON WE ALL FALL SHORT.

EACH OF US HAS EITHER EXPERIENCED THE DIFFICULTIES OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX OR WILL SOON EXPERIENCE IT.

AND IF YOU'RE IN A RELATIONSHIP OR HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN ONE, THEN YOU KNOW THAT MAINTAINING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP IS NOT EASY.

BUT IN SPITE OF THE STAGGERING STATISTICS ON MARRIAGE, THERE IS HOPE!

THERE'S A BETTER WAY TO FIND LOVE, STAY IN LOVE, AND GROW IN INTIMACY FOR A LIFETIME.

FOR THAT REASON I WANT TO SPEND THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS TALKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT: "LOVE, SEX, AND LASTING RELATIONSHIPS."

I CAN ALREADY HERE THE QUESTION "IS THIS A LEGITIMATE TOPIC FOR A SERMON SERIES?"

I BELIEVE THE ANSWER IS "ABSOLUTELY!" THE CHURCH FOR TOO LONG HAS BEEN SILENT ON THESE ISSUES AND ALLOWED THE WORLD TO EDUCATE US.

OUR ENTIRE LINE OF THINKING, WHEN IT COMES TO LOVE, SEX, AND RELATIONSHIPS HAS BEEN FORMED BY OUR EXPERIENCE WITH MOVIES AND MUSIC.

AND YOU CAN SEE THE CONDITION THAT OUR CULTURE IS IN AS A RESULT OF IT.

IT'S TIME THAT THE SLEEPING GIANT, THE CHURCH, AWAKE FROM IT'S SLUMBER AND STAND UP AND SPEAK AGAIN!

IT'S TIME THAT WE ONCE AGAIN HAVE A VOICE IN SOCIETY. AND THAT VOICE HAS GOT TO BEGIN RIGHT HERE IN THE PULPIT.

FOR THAT REASON, I CAN THINK OF VERY FEW SUBJECTS WHICH ARE MORE APPROPRIATE IN THE DAY AND AGE IN WHICH WE LIVE THAN THIS.

WHILE THE CHURCH HAS FOR MANY YEARS BEEN AFRAID TO SPEAK ON ANY OF THESE TOPICS, THE BIBLE WAS NOT AFRAID.

IN FACT THE BIBLE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.

IN THE BEGINNING OF GENESIS WE HAVE THE STORY OF THE FIRST MARRIAGE, ADAM AND EVE WHO BECAME ONE.

AND THROUGHOUT THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE, WE HAVE STORIES OF BOTH MARITAL FAITHFULNESS AND ADULTERY.

THERE'S SOME REALLY GRAPHIC STORIES OF SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS WHICH WOULD SHOCK YOU IF WE SPENT TIME LOOKING AT THEM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE BOOK OF SONG OF SOLOMON SHOULD GET AN "R" RATING FOR SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONTENT.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THE GOSPELS TELL US THAT JESUS DINED WITH THE WOMEN OF THE NIGHT.

AND IN PAUL'S WRITING WE HAVE EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIVING AS SEXUALLY PURE LIVES, WHETHER IN MARRIAGE OR OUT OF MARRIAGE.

YOU SEE, THE BIBLE WASN'T AT ALL AFRAID TO DEAL WITH THESE TOPICS.

THE AUTHORS DIDN'T BEAT AROUND THE BUSH LIKE WE DO TODAY.

SO FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS I DON'T INTEND TO BEAT AROUND THE BUSH AT ALL.

MY HOPE IS THAT NO MATTER WHAT STAGE OF LIFE YOU'RE IN, WHETHER YOU'RE SINGLE AND HOPE TO BE MARRIED SOME DAY, WIDOWED, MARRIED, OR DIVORCED, THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GAIN SOMETHING FROM THIS SERIES.

BEFORE I CAN BEGIN THIS SERIES I'VE GOT TO LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE SECRET ABOUT MY WIFE.

IT'S SOMETHING I DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL ABOUT A WEEK INTO OUR MARRIAGE. SHE'S STRANGE! IN FACT, SHE CAN BE DOWN RIGHT WEIRD! I GOT TO TELL YOU, I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE QUITE LIKE HER BEFORE.

WE'LL GO TO THE MALL AND SHE'S GOT TO CHECK OUT THE PRICES ON THE SAME ITEM AT SEVERAL DIFFERENT STORES BEFORE SHE'LL EVER BUY IT.

SHE'LL GET A COUPON TO SAVE \$.30. SHE CAN SPEND TWO HOURS LOOKING FOR CLOTHING AND COME AWAY WITH NOTHING!

I TAKE HER OUT TO EAT AND SHE CHANGES HER MIND ABOUT WHAT SHE'S GOING TO ORDER THREE TIMES, SOMETIMES AFTER THE ORDER'S ALREADY BEEN PLACED!

AND HER SENSE OF DIRECTION! WE WON'T EVEN GO THERE!

AND HER PURSES. I'VE GOT ONE WALLET THAT I'VE CARRIED FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. WHEN IT FINALLY WEARS OUT I'LL GET A NEW ONE. NOT MY WIFE. SHE'S GOT TO HAVE A NEW PURSE EVERY COUPLE OF MONTHS.

IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS OF MARRIAGE, IT'S THAT WOMEN ARE STRANGE CREATURES!

OF COURSE YOU KNOW THAT I SAY THESE THINGS WITH TONGUE AND CHEEK AND WITH A SENSE OF LOVE AND ADORATION FOR MY WIFE.

IN ORDER TO PROCEED WITH THIS SERIES OF SERMONS, I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND FOUR KEYS. THEY'RE LISTED IN YOUR OUTLINES.

I. FIRST OF ALL, MEN AND WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT!

A. WHEN I MAKE FUN OF MY WIFE I DO SO RECOGNIZING THAT SHE COULD STAND UP HERE AND SAY HOW STRANGE I SEEM TO HER.

- 1. WE'RE DIFFERENT CREATURES.**
- 2. WE THINK DIFFERENTLY.**
- 3. WE DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY.**
- 4. AND WHAT'S SO INCREDIBLE IS THAT IT'S THOSE DIFFERENCES THAT ATTRACTED US TO EACH OTHER IN THE BEGINNING OF OUR RELATIONSHIP.**
- 5. BUT THE COMBINATION OF THOSE DIFFERENCES AND THE HUMAN CONDITION MAKE IT HARD TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH A PERSON OF THE OPPOSITE SEX.**

B. IN ADDITION TO LEARNING HOW DIFFERENT MY WIFE AND I ARE I'VE ALSO LEARNED SOMETHING ABOUT MYSELF THROUGH MY MARRIAGE, I'M SELFISH.

- 1. I WANT THINGS MY WAY.**
- 2. AND WHEN YOU COMBINE MY FAULTS AND EMMA'S FAULTS WITH OUR DIFFERENCES, YOU COME UP WITH A REAL MESS.**
- 3. IT'S THE TENSION THAT'S CREATED BY THE COMBINATION OF OUR IMPERFECTIONS AND DIFFERENCES THAT MAKES MAINTAINING A HEALTHY, STRONG RELATIONSHIP A REAL TASK.**

C. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT'S NEAT? GOD DESIGNED THE DIFFERENCES FOR A REASON:

1. SO THAT WE MIGHT COMPLIMENT EACH OTHER.
2. MY WIFE AND I BALANCE EACH OTHER OUT.
3. WHEN IT COMES TO PARENTING I'M THE MORE FIRM PARENT.
4. AIJANAE KNOW THAT SHE CAN GET AWAY WITH MUCH MORE WITH MY WIFE THAN WITH MYSELF.
5. WHEN IT COMES TO THE FINANCES EMMA IS THE SPENDER AND I AM THE MORE CONSERVATIVE PERSON.
6. WE BALANCE EACH OTHER OUT. AND GOD DESIGNED US TO BE THAT WAY.

D. THE PROBLEM IN A RELATIONSHIP IS WHEN TWO PEOPLE ARE TOO MUCH ALIKE.

1. IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE WHO'S A MORE STRONG PARENT, OR ONE'S WHO'S BETTER WITH THE MONEY, THEN YOU END UP STRUGGLING IN THAT PARTICULAR AREA.
2. THOSE DIFFERENCES THAT SO FREQUENTLY DRIVE US CRAZY ABOUT OUR SPOUSES WERE DESIGNED BY GOD SO THAT WE MIGHT COMPLIMENT EACH OTHER.

E. THE FINAL KEY TO UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS IS THAT MARRIAGE IS A SACRED CALLING FROM GOD.

1. OUR CULTURE HAS CHANGED TREMENDOUSLY OVER THE PAST HALF A CENTURY.

2. **THE VALUE THAT WE PLACE ON MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY HAS ERODED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT MARRIAGE IS MORE A MATTER OF CONVENIENCE THAN ANYTHING ELSE TODAY.**
3. **IT'S NO LONGER HELD IN THE SAME ESTEEM AS IT ONCE WAS.**
4. **WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT MARRIAGE IS A SACRED CALLING FROM GOD.**
5. **I TELL COUPLES WHO ARE PREPARING TO GET MARRIED THAT MARRIAGE IS NOT A CONTRACT.**
 - a. **IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE CANCELLED WHEN THINGS BECOME UNPLEASANT.**
 - b. **MARRIAGE IS A COVENANT.**
 - c. **IT'S A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS SACRED AND THAT GOD CALLS US INTO FOR A LIFETIME.**
6. **IT'S TIME THAT THE CHURCH START SPEAKING UP ONCE AGAIN ABOUT HOW IMPORTANT MARRIAGE REALLY IS.**

ILLUSTRATION

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A BOOK ON THE NEW YORK TIME'S BEST SELLING LIST ENTITLED "MEN ARE FROM MARS WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS."

IT HIGHLIGHTED TO US THE FACT THAT MEN AND WOMEN ARE DIFFERENT.

F. WHAT I WANT YOU TO GO AWAY FROM HERE TODAY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THOSE DIFFERENCES ARE NO MISTAKE.

- 1. OUR SCRIPTURE READING THIS MORNING TOLD THE STORY OF THE CREATION OF THE FIRST WOMAN, EVE AND THE UNION BETWEEN ADAM AND EVE.**

II. LOOKING AT THE STORY FOUR THINGS ARE EVIDENT.

A. FIRST OF ALL, GOD CREATED MEN AND WOMEN TO BE DIFFERENT.

- 1. IT'S NO MISTAKE.**
- 2. GOD DIDN'T MAKE ANOTHER MAN TO BE ADAM'S COMPANION.**
- 3. GOD CREATED A WOMAN TO BOND WITH ADAM. WE WERE CREATED TO BE DIFFERENT.**

B. SECOND, MEN AND WOMEN NEED EACH OTHER.

- 1. I KNOW THAT THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN CALLED TO BE MARRIED OR HAVE NEVER FOUND THAT RIGHT PERSON, BUT I CAN TELL YOU THIS MUCH; MY LIFE WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT MY WIFE.**
- 2. I NEED A WIFE.**
- 3. IN THE MOVIE "JERRY MAGUIRE" TOM CRUISE MAKES UP WITH HIS WIFE RENEE ZELWEGER AT THE END OF THE FILM BY SAYING TO HER "YOU COMPLETE ME." GOD MADE US THAT WAY. IT'S NO MISTAKE.**

C. THIRD, SEX AND SEXUALITY WERE MEANT TO BE BEAUTIFUL.

1. **THE CHURCH HAS BECOME AFRAID OF THESE WORDS BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF SEX IN OUR CULTURE TODAY.**
 2. **THE MEDIA ISN'T AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT IT OR PORTRAY IT ON THE SCREEN, BUT THE CHURCH HAS BECOME VERY FEARFUL OF EVENING MENTIONING IT.**
 3. **WHAT WE'VE GOT TO REALIZE IS THAT GOD CREATED SEX BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN TO BE A BEAUTIFUL THING.**
 4. **SEX WASN'T MAN'S INVENTION. THERE'S NO WAY THAT WE COULD HAVE CREATED SOMETHING THAT UNITES TWO PEOPLE IN THE WAY THAT SEX DOES.**
 5. **GOD CREATED SEX TO BE A BEAUTIFUL EXPRESSION OF LOVE BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN WITHIN THE WALLS OF MARRIAGE.**
 6. **IT'S TIME THAT WE STOP BEING SO BASHFUL AND COURAGEOUSLY SPEAK ABOUT SEX AND SEXUALITY AGAIN.**
- D. THE FINAL TRUTH WE DISCOVER FROM THIS STORY IS THAT MEN AND WOMEN WERE CREATED, IN PART, TO MEET ONE ANOTHER'S NEEDS FOR COMPANIONSHIP AND HELP.**
1. **GENESIS TELLS US THAT GOD SAW THAT IT WASN'T GOOD FOR MAN TO BE ALONE.**
 2. **HE NEEDED A COMPANION.**
 3. **HE TRIED CREATING ALL THE ANIMALS AS HIS COMPANIONS BUT VERSE 20 TELLS US THAT THERE STILL WASN'T A PARTNER FOR**

THE MAN AND SO GOD CREATED THE WOMAN.

- 4. THE WOMAN WAS CREATED NOT AS A SUBORDINATE BUT AS HIS PARTNER OR AS HIS HELPER.**
- 5. THE WORD HELPER HAS THE CONNOTATION OF MUTUALITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE.**
- 6. SO RATHER THAN THE WOMAN BEING A LESSER BEING, THE WOMAN WAS CREATED AS THE MAN'S EQUAL TO COME ALONG SIDE OF HIM FOR COMPANIONSHIP AND HELP.**

CONCLUSION

THE FACT THAT MEN AND WOMEN ARE SO DIFFERENT IS NO MISTAKE. WE WERE CREATED TO BE THAT WAY FOR A PURPOSE. IT WAS NO ACCIDENT.

I WANT TO INVITE YOU TO STICK WITH ME OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AS WE CONTINUE IN THIS SERIES.

MY PRAYER IS THAT BY THE END OF THIS SERIES YOU WILL HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH GOD'S EYES,

AND IF YOU'RE IN A RELATIONSHIP OR SOME DAY HOPE TO BE WILL COME AWAY WITH SOME PRACTICAL INSIGHTS ON HOW TO MAKE YOUR RELATIONSHIP INTO A LASTING RELATIONSHIP.

JOIN ME NEXT WEEK AS WE LOOK AT TWO PASSAGES FROM EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS AND DEAL WITH THE TOPIC "WHAT WOMEN WISH MEN KNEW ABOUT WOMEN."

WOMEN, I'D LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE SOME INPUT INTO THIS SERMON ON NEXT SUNDAY AT 10:45 A.M.

I'D LIKE TO HAVE SOME DISCUSSION AROUND THIS TOPIC. I WANT TO ASK YOU TO THINK SPECIFICALLY ABOUT TWO QUESTIONS:

FIRST OF ALL, "HOW DO YOU FEEL MOST LOVED BY YOUR HUSBAND"

AND SECOND, "WHAT DO YOU WISH YOUR HUSBAND UNDERSTOOD ABOUT YOU?"

PLEASE WRITE DOWN YOUR ANSWER AND GET IT TO ME. YOUR HELP WILL BE VERY VALUABLE AS I PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK.