

Title: The Glory of God in Marriage  
Text: Hebrews 13.4  
Theme: Why God ordained marriage and sex as a means to reflect His glory  
Series: Hebrews #54  
Prop Stmt Since marriage is a reflection of THE MARRIAGE, sex is a reflection of our unity with God. This is what makes it so precious and demands that it be promoted and protected.

Read Text:

When we read the Bible, we must remember the original audience in order to properly interpret the text. That is easy to forget when reading certain books, like Genesis. Who was the human author that God used to write Genesis? Moses. And what was the occasion and purpose for Genesis? The children of Israel had been in the land of Egypt for over 400 years. 400 years is not only a really long time, but they were in someone else's land, learning someone else's culture, being exposed to someone else's rules and explanations on why things were the way they were. Every culture tries to answer the questions of: Where did we come from, Why are we here and Where are we going after this life. Egypt had answers to all of those, but their answers were wrong. So, Genesis is God telling the children of Israel the correct answers to those questions and He starts by going all the way back to the beginning of the world. If you are going to know why you are here and where you are going and how you ought to live, you need to know where you came from and why you were made in the first place.

### **1. Once upon a Time...**

It is therefore in the very first chapter of the Bible that we learn that in the beginning God not only made the heavens and the earth, but he made the very first person from the dust of the ground and called him Adam. In fact, Genesis 1.27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." In the very next verse we read, "And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion...." Clearly, this passage not only speaks of humanity's capacity for reproduction, but humanity's sexuality is blessed by God and commanded by God. But do not miss this. God ordains sexuality as a means to reflect his glory as Creator, for sexuality is the means that God has ordained for reproduction. But, the God who has created it and blessed it and has ordained it, also orders it. From the very beginning, sexuality is blessed and commanded within and only within the covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Why? Earlier in Genesis 1, God told the animals to be fruitful and multiply too, but he did not order that they do it within the context of a committed, covenant relationship. That, God reserved for humans. Again, why? The answer to that is found in chapter 2, which goes back and gives us a little more detail about what happened on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation. And what a day that was. God not only made Adam, the first human being from the dust of the earth, but God said noted that there was a problem with His creation that He needed to

address. The problem was not with what He had made, the problem was with what He had not made. Adam was alone and that was not good! (will the men in the room please say – Amen?) Get this! If the world was going to be perfect, I mean God-like perfect, complete and total perfect, then God had to perform one more act of creation. It was his final act of creation. It was the act of creation that enabled him to say at the end of the day, that now, now everything was Very Good. And that final act of creation was the creation of woman, whom He made, not out of the dust of the earth but He made her by forming her in all of her glory and in all of her beauty from a rib of Adam. She was made from man. Even in her creation, there is a unity, a oneness, a relationship, a bond that is put on display. The origin of the woman is from the very flesh of the man. And the man, after naming animals for the balance of the day and realizing that each of them had a companion and that he did not, and was apparently a bit distraught with that, awoke from the divine anesthetic and said in reference to the woman, “*This at last* (like it had been a long time – of course it had been all of his life thus far as far as he was concerned) *is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*” But, don’t miss this. In the verse just before that, we read that it was God who “brought her to the man.”

In other words, the text is saying that God, who does all things for his glory and for the joy of his children, not only made woman for man, even as he had already made man in order to make woman, but then, God brought her to man. I take that to mean that God arranged their first meeting in such a way that he staged it so that He could bring Eve to Adam as a gift to them both. Do you see what is going on? God is the very first father of the bride, who presides over the very first wedding. Wow, talk about a short engagement, they did not even get a chance to register at Kohl’s! And Adam is responding in praise and worship because even though the garden was beautiful, he was alone and had no one to share in and enjoy the beauty of the world with. But, now! Wow! Now, look at what God has done. Even as the Father walks his girl down that first aisle to give her away, the groom is singing (I take the poetry of v.23 to likely be a song). He is overwhelmed with her, yes, her beauty, but her, someone like him, someone that he can share a close companionship with, someone that is like him, but who looks a little different, in a good way. His words, (the very first recorded words that man says) are exuberant, joyful, and expressive of and anticipatory of a deep and abiding relationship. “She shall be called Woman.” He gives her, her name. “I will call her woman, she came from man.” He did not say that she came from me, but that she came from man. It’s like Adam knows what this means. The chapter concludes with these glorious words rich in meaning, glorious in design, offering great delight to those who will abide by them. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The intimacy between a man and a woman is to be pursued and enjoyed and celebrated in marriage. And standing over all of this is God who says that this is Very Good. God created all of this. God made man, then woman and brought her to man and delighted in doing it!

Therefore, human marriage is designed by God, blessed by God and ordained by God to be the ongoing expression of His greatest act of creation. Human marriage is based on the making of Woman out of Man. Marriage is the relationship in which man and woman are to experience being of “one flesh” since woman was taken out of the very flesh of man. Marriage is therefore sacred. (In order for that sacredness and that joy to be known and experienced, walls must be built around the marriage and all walls in the marriage must be torn down.) God is the one who joins a man to a woman so that they belong completely to the other and so that they belong only to the other. But the wedding that God performed in Genesis 2 and the marriage that he created was not the end. That marriage was an illustration of a greater marriage. That marriage was the picture of another wedding. God’s plan for creating the world was to create a bride for his Son. But, this bride is comprised of the people of God who are loved and adored and provided for and protected and called by name by the Groom, who also happens to be the King! The people of God must have walls that protect The Marriage, while they work to ensure there are no walls within the marriage (between them and God). This unity, joy, intimacy and security were enjoyed by Adam and Eve with each other because they enjoyed it with God. The story of creation is a love story. But then came Genesis 3 and the marriage made in heaven, the dream is crushed.

## **2. The Dream-crusher**

The entrance of sin was nothing less than spiritual adultery. The people that were God’s followed another love. It is a pattern that is reflected through the rest of the Bible. God warns against and judges adultery in human relationships because adultery is a symptom of spiritual adultery, the rejection of God’s love.

Exodus 34.11-16

Have you ever wondered why God ordered the Israelites to wipe out the Canaanites from the land? Does that not sound (more than) a bit harsh? When you realize that the people of God are the people who are chosen by, loved by, named by in order to be married to God, then you understand that God is not going to share his bride with other men. What kind of a man shares his wife with others? This text makes it clear that God is jealous because He loves perfectly and purely and personally. God is not a passive husband. God is a pure husband who saw the danger that awaited them in Canaan. Israel had no experience to speak of in farming. What is the secret to making things grow? Well, the Canaanites used to offer sacrifices to the “gods of fertility” in order to have abundant crops and in order to have many kids who help the farmer farm even more land. These sacrifices were themselves permeated with immorality. Sexual immorality is always a form of idolatry and when the perfectly pure love of the Jealous God is offended, He burns with righteousness. So, in this text, God warns them about what will happen. 1) You make a treaty that will be of advantage to the both of you. 2) You pray to your God for a good harvest and he offers a sacrifice to his god. 3) You are both invited to each other’s ceremonies and you get comfortable with each other until 4) Your children intermarry with the

Canaanites. The acceptance of false gods is described by God as being a “whore after their gods.”

The theme of God’s people being his bride can be traced in Leviticus 17 and 20, in Numbers 15, Deuteronomy 20, 31, and in Judges 2 and 8. Sadly, most of these passages are speaking about how the bride of God has become a harlot. This theme, while scattered here and there in the Law and Historical books, explodes on the pages of the prophets. The book of Hosea is the sad and sordid account of the unfaithfulness of God’s people illustrated by the unfaithfulness of Hosea’s wife. But, what are they doing that God considers to be adulterous? The Assyrian empire is a growing threat to their existence. But, even though God saved them from Egypt and saved them through the Red Sea and saved them at Jericho, and saved them from the Philistines, now, instead of trusting in God, they look to alliances and deals with other nations to save them from the Assyrians. But God is a jealous God and will not share the loyalties of his bride with other gods. So, the pattern is very clear. Spiritual adultery sits at the heart of adultery. The people look to another god for their security and in so doing, they end up worshiping and living like the people of the world. Hosea’s personal life illustrates this message. His own wife is unfaithful to him. She does not want to live in faithfulness to Hosea, so she gives of herself to whoredom. For a while, she lives somewhat of a double life, until she finally leaves Hosea. But the story does not end there. The lure and promises of that life never deliver what they said. Hosea’s ex-wife is finally rejected by her lovers and she ends up being sold in the market place as a slave in an effort to cover her debts. Now she will forever be at the mercy of the man who owns her, not just for a night, but for life. One man outbids them all. His bid is modest, which makes it pretty clear that this girl was not worth much anymore. But he gets her and of course, that man is Hosea. She will now be his, forever.

As we try to wrap our minds around that scene, it takes on an even greater impact when we realize that Hosea was ordered to do these things because it illustrates God’s actions of winning back his bride. Hosea was ordered to love her and to keep on loving her until he won her back, because that is what God does. Human sin will not defeat God’s mercy. What the law could not do, God did by sending his own Son into the market place who paid the price of Redemption so that his bride would be captured and kept by Sovereign grace! God’s electing grace is the irresistible wooing of the Sovereign Groom who will not leave our faithfulness to chance, but ensures that His bride is kept.

We could go to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and several others. But Ezekiel 16 and 23 are perhaps the most blatant descriptions of spiritual adultery in the entire Bible. Both chapters begin by saying, “The word of the LORD came to me:” (v.1) And the words that God uses are shocking. Now keep in mind that some of the language is toned down in our translations. A literal translation would be offensive to many of you. Fact is, if I just read Ezekiel 16 and 23, some of you would struggle with whether or not you really believe that all of God’s Word should in reality be read in public. We are shocked by the sexual language and descriptions. The graphic language is used

by God to awaken us to how offended He is at spiritual adultery. If you are the least bit offended by the graphic language of these chapters, then perhaps you can begin to get a sense of how God responds to the infidelity of his people. When the bride that he loves goes after another lover, he views it like debauchery of the worst kind.

### **3. But the story is not over.**

The story of the Old Testament is the story of God's unfaithful wife. Her harlotry is incurable, her unfaithfulness is boundless, and her heart is stone. But throughout the telling of her story, the prophets keep speaking of another day, another time when that which was lost will be recovered. It is therefore no small thing when we open the pages of the NT and we read where Christ repeatedly speaks of himself as the bridegroom. And we wonder. Can it be true? Can there be a restoration? Can the marriage be saved? The groom has come and he has come to woo his bride and while he speaks softly to her and calls her and loves her, the ultimate demonstration of his love is seen in his laying down his life in death for her. You see, the only way for the bride to be his bride and the only way for her to live with him forever is for him to die in her place. The groom loves the bride that much, that he chooses to die, rather than to live without her. If he doesn't die, she will not live. And the amazing thing in all of this, is that the Groom does not love her because she is beautiful and loveable. But, his loving of her is so powerful and so enduring that it ensures that one day she will be beautiful. She will be without any spot, not even a wrinkle. (Will all the women in the room say "amen!")

Beloved, that is the story of marriage, at least part of it. Before I tell you about the end, I want you to see that marriage now is to be a reflection of that marriage.

Marriage Now

Marriage Forever

*Man and Woman in Covenant*  
(till death do us part)

*The King (Groom) and Bride in Covenant*  
(no more death, no more separation)

There comes a time when every husband has to let go of the hand of his wife. The greatest of loves and the longest of marriages on earth are at the mercy of death. But the marriage that is really made "in heaven" will never end.

*Husbands love your wives*

*as Christ loves the church*

The point of Ephesians 5 is not to tell us how to have a good marriage, but to show us how God intended marriage to put his love for his people on display. In fact, there is an amazing statement that Paul makes in this text that is both profound and glorious. Look at v. 30 and 31. You recognize verse 31 don't you? That comes from Genesis 2. Remember that? Eve was taken out of the flesh of Adam, so they are to live as one flesh.

Adam said,

Paul said,

*"This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh"*

Therefore...

*"we are members of his body"*

Therefore...

*"A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh."*

Just as the origin of man defines marriage, so now, our present identity and future realization defines marriage as well. We are one flesh with Christ and therefore we are to live in faithfulness to Him. As a follower of Christ, your body is not meant for sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6.13) because your body is united with Christ because your entire being is united with Christ. You are in a one spirit (6.17) relationship with Christ that goes deeper than any other relationship. Your body, your mind, your heart, your soul, all of you is part of the one spirit relationship with Christ which is why Paul says that you cannot then "take the members of Christ (your body) and make them members of a prostitute." Sexual immorality is so offensive to God because you belong to him. Your body belongs to him. When you take your (now his) body and you give it over to someone to whom you are not married, you are defiling and defaming the body of Christ. At the same time, when you live in delight with your spouse and happily give of yourself to the other, then you are extolling and celebrating The Marriage in your marriage. Your marriage is to reflect The Marriage. Now, you do not have to be married in order to live in a way that puts The Marriage on display. Fact is, if you are a follower of Christ, you are already married. And The Marriage is to be made evident in everything that we do. And if you are married then since The Marriage is so glorious and so perfect and so beautiful and so pure, that your marriage now is to point to that marriage.

There is one more point.

#### **4. And they lived happily ever after**

When we get to the end of the Bible (Rev. 21), John tells us of an amazing scene, where "one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues" came spoke to John and said, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And then he carries John away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain and showed him the holy city the new Jerusalem which the text described as being "as a bride adorned for her husband." And then, right at the end of the last chapter, (22.17) we read that "the Spirit and the Bride say (to Jesus) 'Come'." We are waiting for you to come and complete that which you started.

So, when the author of Hebrews says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled." Do you hear this? This is an appeal driven by our understanding that God performed the first wedding and ordained marriage in order to show how he loves his people. This high view of marriage reflects the supremacy of Christ who is the Bridegroom and it reflects the fact that sexual purity,

as incredibly important as that is, is a reflection of spiritual purity and devotion to our King/Husband and Lover – Christ. Finally, the honoring of marriage is delightfully demanded because we are going to live with God as his bride forever and ever and ever and we will live happily ever after, where there is no more sin, therefore, no more death, no more separation, no more sickness, no more night, no more disease, no more frustration, no more arguing, no more misunderstanding, and no more tension. We will love perfectly and be loved perfectly and will forever enjoy God and therefore enjoy each other. This is not a random thought, but an important theological point (12:18-24)

You can't understand this marriage, until you understand THE MARRIAGE.

Conclusion:

To the Unmarried:

- 1) Recognize, if you are a believer that you are married to Christ. The greatest marriage on earth pales in comparison to THE MARRIAGE. Therefore, do not cheat on your King/Husband. Your Husband is perfect, and because of that he is also jealous. Pursue purity. If you are involved sexually, stop. Stop right now. Make no excuses, repent, ask forgiveness, and establish walls around your marriage to Christ.

To the Married:

- 1) Recognize that your marriage is to be a picture that shows THE MARRIAGE. THE MARRIAGE is the perfect union. Live out your unity. Pursue unity by getting rid of all barriers in your marriage. Most barriers are constructed from self-centeredness. Pursue each other spiritually, relationally, emotionally, physically and hold nothing back. You belong to the other because we belong to Christ.
- 2) If you have allowed adultery into your marriage, like the love of stuff, the love of sports, the love of career, the love of self, the love of another, recognize it, repent right now. If you are considering getting involved in a literal adulterous relationship, take this as a merciful wake-up call from the true lover of your soul and run away as fast as you can and as far as you can from it. If you need counsel on this, and you probably do, call one of the elders or contact the staff, we are here to help you love Christ.

