

Activity Sheet, 18 March 2018

The marriage made in heaven

Genesis 2v18-25; Matthew 19v3-12; Ephesians 5v21-33;

- Modern sexual 'freedom' has not produced sexual paradise
- Bible doesn't begin with more rules, but reality – how we are made

(1) Backdrop of paradise

- what marriage should be like [Matthew 19v4-6]

- Which are the Bible's rules more like? (a) the law that we drive on the left in the UK, (b) sign for fish (in fish language!) saying "stay in the tank."

(2) Completion of paradise – male and female:

- image of God
 - relationships to be life giving
 - relationships to be outward-looking - serving
- equal and different
- glued together

- *Who* images God in Genesis 1v27?

- Eve is called a "helper" (2v18). Is this is a lower role? – see who else is called a helper in the Bible (e.g. Psalm 118v7)

- "In the Bible equality means sameness – everyone having and doing the same things." True or false?

- Which of the following words doesn't fit the pattern of marriage in 2v24? (a) private, (b) united, (c) committed, (d) sacrificial?

- See 1 Corinthians 6v16. Why is there no such thing as 'casual sex'?

(3) Last glimpse of paradise

- a place where we have nothing to hide (v25)

▶ *Problem:* whatever relationship we are in, we all fail

▶ *Answer:* Jesus the bridegroom [Matthew 9v15, Ephesians 5v25]

- According to Ephesians 5v31-32 what does the marriage in Genesis 2v24 point to?

Questions for discussion:

1. How happy are people today in their sexual relationships? Does sexual 'freedom' work?
2. Where do God's rules come from? Where do the rules come from in our society?
3. Why is loneliness such a big problem?
4. "There's this ideal of the woman who can compete with a man in any area – athletics, work, wherever. It's as though you're supposed to be a man, but you weren't given the body for it." [Todd Wilson, 'Teaching the Christian view of sexuality - to Christians', *Christianity Today*, Oct 2017, p72-3]. What is wrong with this ideal?
5. What is the significance of *how* Eve was made (Genesis 2v21-22)?
6. Given what Genesis teaches *why* are sexual relationships outside marriage, including homosexual relationships, wrong?
7. How does Jesus being the bridegroom help (a) the single, (b) the married?

God's prohibitions against spiritual intermarriage [i.e. a Christian marrying a non-Christian], sex outside of marriage, and against same-sex unions all make sense given the unique role marriage has in reflecting the union of Christ and his people. It is not that God is arbitrarily against certain forms of sex for no apparent reason. The insistence in both Old and New Testaments that sex is for marriage between one man and one woman fits perfectly into this biblical-theological context.

It also helps us deal with some of the significant apologetic challenges that arise when homosexuality is discussed. If our explanation of why the Bible does not affirm homosexual relationships centres on God's plan for marriage reflecting what he is doing in the world through Christ, then we are moving the discussion towards the very heart of the gospel. We need not fear the issue arising and becoming a distraction from the gospel. We can begin to formulate an apologetic that sets questions about homosexuality in the wider context of the one who has come as the perfect groom to win a people for himself.

[Sam Allberry, 'No longer taboo', *FIEC Primer*, (Issue 3, 2016) p53.]

Marriage is meant to point to the eternal love between God and his people...

- Why isn't co-habiting acceptable? The answer is because such a relationship refuses a legally binding commitment. But that is not how Jesus relates to the church. He has bound himself, before God his Father, to be our Saviour. Co-habitation sets a kind of limit on commitment. But Jesus' commitment to his people is unlimited.
- Why isn't sleeping around with multiple partners acceptable? Why is adultery wrong? It is because such behaviour misrepresents Christ. Jesus is faithful to his bride the church. He is never unfaithful.
- Why isn't sex before marriage acceptable? Ultimately because it does not please God. The Lord Jesus came the first time to win his bride. He will come a second time to bring her to the wedding feast and marry her (Revelation 19v5-8). Christ delays the full pleasures of the consummation which the church will experience until after his return when he publically receives the bride.
- Why isn't a homosexual relationship acceptable? Because it misrepresents the relationship between Christ and the church. Christ and the church are not the same. They are different. He is our Saviour. We are those he has rescued. He is the second Person of the Trinity. We are God's creatures.
- Why does God hate divorce (Malachi 2v16)? Why although he allows that in some circumstances it is necessary to prevent further evil, does God always lament over it? It is because it is a misrepresentation. Jesus will never divorce his bride.

[John and Ann Benton, *Don't they make a lovely couple?* (Christian Focus, 2005) p52-4]

Marriage bespeaks a higher reality – the love of Christ for his church and her joyful deference to him – and is enriched by what it bespeaks. Marriage is not just another mutation of human social evolution, like democracy. It is a divine creation, intended to reveal the ultimate romance guiding all of time and eternity. This is the real reason why pre-marital sex is wrong; it toys with the biblical mystery. The moral imperative is concerned with more than the folly of risking a sexually transmitted disease. God offers a theological rationale in Christ. This is why extra-marital sex is wrong; it violate the mystery. This is why same-sex marriages are wrong; they pervert the mystery. And this is why every faithful and loving marriage is precious to God; it shines with the light of Christ's love for his people, and of their devotion to him, in the darkness of this present evil age.

[Raymond Ortlund, *Whoredom* (Apollos, 1996) p173]