

/ by design series study guide

Speaker: Neil and Sharol Josephson (FamilyLife Canada)

Date: June 8 / 9, 2019

SERMON TITLE: Marriage / By Design

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: Opportunities to connect as a group

1. What wedding have you attended that was memorable for you?
2. Neil and Sharol pointed out that throughout the Bible marriage is used as a metaphor for how God loves his people. How has marriage (whether your own or other marriages you have seen) helped you understand your relationship with God?

PURSUE GOD: Time that is devoted to the Word of God

3. Read Genesis 2:24. Neil and Sharol gave three steps for “leaving” our family of origin in marriage.
 - Get honest about our family of origin – the good and the bad
 - Give thanks for our family of origin
 - Give forgiveness to our family of origin

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 and Ephesians 4:15, 32 to see how the Apostle Paul affirmed this process.

How can these steps promote a healthier marriage/family life in our families today?
4. How did the naming of his sons show Joseph’s own process? (Gen 41:51-52)
5. Why do you think the church has a difficult time talking about sex? In what ways can we have healthy, God-honoring conversations about sex?

PURSUE MISSION: Seek to be the community of God’s people in your community

6. Read John 17:21. How can our marriages be opportunities for “relational apologetics” - modeling the message?

For Personal Prayer/Reflection

Review the steps in question 3. Which of these might you have to revisit in prayer to increase the health of your relationships?

This week’s writers: Edi Dygert, Thomas Attrell, Georgia Harrison, Deb Matiko, Jan Varner, Jared Harrison

Link to other By Design sermons:

<https://www.cschurch.ca/bydesign/#sermon2>

Resources for marriage help?

Resources: Appleseed, RightNow Media,

<https://www.familylifecanada.com/>

THE WORD (NIV)

Genesis 2:24

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Genesis 41:51-52

⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, “It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.” ⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”

Matthew 19:5

and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?

Mark 10:7-8

‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,⁸ and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Ephesians 5:31

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

1 Cor 7:1-5

1 Thessalonians 5:18

give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

John 17:21

that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

/ by design series study summary

Neil & Sherol Josephson of FamilyLife Canada presented Marriage/By Design. For the past 13 years they have been marriage educators, pastor and mentors. They love their marriage, having been married for almost 41 years. Neil and Sherol have learned much from personal and pastoral experience, and from many wise teachers and writers. Yet the Bible is the truth by which they measure everything and the foundation of all they teach. To be clear, as last week's lesson on singleness pointed out, not everyone needs to be married or even wants to be married. We do not need to be married to know God, to follow Jesus, or gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve others and build the Kingdom. Our highest calling as men and women is not to be married; it is to know God and to make Him known. One key truth is woven throughout Scripture that guides all Biblical thinking about marriage; a principle so important that it is taught by Moses in Genesis, Jesus in the Gospels, and by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, **'For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh'**, (Gen 2:24 NASB, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7-8, Ephesians 5:31)

Marriage is about a man and a woman becoming one. Oneness sounds lovely until you actually try to live it. How do we do that – two becoming one? Some describe it as pouring a pitcher of blue water and one of pink water into another pitcher – making a pitcher of purple water. The difficulty is that the change is instantaneous, and that the pink and the blue are no longer distinguishable; and we know that this is not so. Paul follows this up with, "This mystery is great . . ." (Ephesians 5:32) as is the oneness of God who is three in one and one in three. We remain two individuals; each is both a 'me' and a 'we'. How do we become one?

First: A Biblical marriage of oneness requires us to **"leave"** our family of origin. The first clause of the verse requires a new relationship with our family of origin. In ancient times, women left their families with assets (dowry) given by the family, to enter marriage and establish a new family. Today we may enter with few such assets, but we all enter marriage with a relational dowry acquired from life's experiences. The bulk of our relational dowry comes from our family of origin; the primary place we learn how to do marriage, do family, communicate love and manage conflict. Or not. Leaving your family of origin is process of giving and getting.

- a) **Get Honest** - in our families, not everything that happened was good; not everything that happened was bad. **Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)**
- b) **Give Thanks** - a consistent command in Scripture. **1 Thessalonians 5:18.**
- c) **Give Forgiveness** - and choose a different future for you and your family. **Ephesians 4:32.**

Joseph's story (Genesis 37-50) describes a family that could define dysfunctional for several generations back. Joseph showed his trust through all his trials and prosperity: he named his first son Manasseh, meaning "God has made me forget all my troubles" and his second son Ephraim, meaning "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction". The good news is that God can, and does, use broken families. Check out the genealogy of Jesus Christ, (Matthew 1:1-2 ESV)

Second: A Biblical marriage of oneness begins with a covenant promise: **"be joined"** implies someone is doing the joining. A biblical marriage is to be joined by God; God's action and intent is to join husband and wife permanently, completely, unconditionally. "What therefore God has joined together let no one separate." (Matthew 19:6 NASB) God does the joining in marriage and the covenantal gives us the resources necessary to fulfill His command. Marriage throughout the Bible is used as a metaphor for how God loves his people (Hosea, OT prophets) and how Christ loves the church (sacrificially, unconditionally, and eternally). That's the kind of relationship marriage is created to be . . . why we make such extreme promises: complete, unreserved, permanent and unconditional. Marriage is not just piece of paper and not just a contract (if the other party reneges in a contract you are free). It's a covenant promise modeled after God's covenant promise; begun with a promise and sustained by Grace. Be experts in forgiveness; learn to forgive quickly.

Third: A Biblical marriage involves physical union. The third clause declares, **"they shall become one flesh."** A Biblical marriage of oneness involves sex. The church has had a hard time with this; some believe that the gold standard of Godliness would be to never have sex; or if you do, only do it for procreation and for sure don't enjoy it. Other commentaries on the Song of Songs tie themselves in knots trying to make sure we understand that it is all symbolism and metaphor and not saying what they actually say. In the early days of the church, a school of thought arose that believed that God would never be involved with the messiness of humanity; holding that God created a lesser god, who created a lesser god and so on until a lesser god created the world. It scandalised them that God Almighty would have anything to do directly with humans: a complete contradiction of the Bible, which teaches that Jesus was God incarnate, in the flesh, (Hebrews 2:17). Other times the church practiced a sexual Gnosticism: sex is dirty, maybe necessary, but not good, not godly. We forget that the sin of the garden was to seek to be God; instead we want to reject and blame our humanness with its urges, desires, hurts. **Genesis 2:25** declares that they were both naked and felt no shame. A Biblical marriage of oneness understands sex as a good gift from a good God and that, like all of God's gifts, it can be distorted or rejected. Do not let that distort the truth and goodness of the gift.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 is a key piece of Paul's teaching on marriage; Paul outlines the mutual duties and responsibilities of the marriage partners. While doing your duty does not sound overly romantic, Paul is on to something: marriage is designed as a safe place and the best place to satisfy our sexual nature. Scientific studies of sex and bonding clearly show the genius of God's design. Sexual bonding develops best in an environment of trust and security, of covenant promise, in marriage. A new study, The Ties that Bind, shows that highly religious couples have higher relationship satisfaction and higher sexual satisfaction.

When we live in right relationship with our family of origin; when we commit to our spouse; and are joined by God through a Covenant promise and become one flesh in spirit, mind and body: that's a marriage of Biblical oneness. The good news is: God is glorified, and the world bears witness. A marriage of oneness reflects God: the whole world will know you are my disciples when you have love for one another, beginning with our children. 'Relational apologetics' is sometimes defined as "modeling the message". When others see us and think, "I want what they have", they are seeing the message of God's love. "I want all of them to be one with each other, just as I am one with you and you are one with me. I also want them to be one with us. Then the people of this world will believe that you sent me." (John 17:21) Take note: we are not asked to model perfection (as if we could!); we are asked to model God's love for us, and for our neighbour.