

How did God Create Marriage to Function?

Hosea 1,3

Intro: So far in this series we've talked about marriage as a covenant relationship, that marriage was created from the foundation of the world as God's good and perfect design, and that marriage was created for the purpose of displaying the gospel and the deep love that Jesus has for his bride. The reason that it is so vital that we remember all of these things is because each week of this series is really interwoven. They are all connected to one another, that's why you have heard and will continue to some of the same ideas repeated week after week. We are looking at marriage as a whole, but think of it like a diamond, it has many facets and though each week we are looking at the same diamond, we are looking from a different angle. So we will see some of the same characteristics, but hopefully we will see them in a unique way. Today we want to ask the question of how did God create marriage to function? Last week we touched on some of these things as we looked at the distinct roles that God has given to husbands and wives, but the purpose of last week was to really help us to see that marriage as a whole is about the gospel. Today I want to dig into the practical functions of marriage. Yes we have roles to play and our roles are pointing to gospel but today I want to talk about some base level characteristics that we should all seek to display in our marriages.

Last week I mentioned that Jesus is constantly at work for his bride. He is constantly sanctifying her. This is the incredible thing about the love of Christ. It changes us. It sanctifies us. Sanctification is something that you and I need to understand because it is a crucial reality in our walk with Christ. To be sanctified means to be made holy. It comes from two Latin words: *Sanctus* meaning holy and *ficare* meaning to make. Our sanctification is a lifelong process of being conformed into the image of God. Through Christ, we are being made holy. The Lord uses many different vehicles in this process. He uses our suffering. He uses it to refine us and produce perseverance and a more mature faith. He uses our abiding in him, our communion. He uses this to produce a deeper joy in us, and a satisfaction in Him alone. He uses the church for our sanctification. He uses the preaching of the word and the singing of his praises to transform and mold our hearts. He uses relationships with brothers and sisters and Christ for us to learn, correct, encourage, rebuke, love, and grow. And he uses marriage to sanctify us, to help us see the characteristics of his commitment, love, sacrifice, and forgiveness for his people.

Marriage is not always easy, just as our sanctification sometimes takes pain. But God has created marriage to function in a way that molds us into his image, and allows us to reflect the image of God in the way we interact in the marriage relationship. So let's take a look at the story of Hosea and Gomer to see these behaviors on display and how we should seek to make our marriages function in the same manner.

Statement: God designed marriage to function in a way that sanctifies us and unveils His image.

Text: In Hosea 1, that we read earlier you see the instructions that God gives to his prophet Hosea. He tells him to go and marry a prostitute. Marry someone that he knows will be unfaithful, because God is trying to teach the nation of Israel and all of us through this relationship. So Hosea marries Gomer, and by the end of chapter 1 she has already been unfaithful and conceived a child with another man. It is in chapter 3 however, that we see the story of Hosea and Gomer picked back up. Now this story is meant as an analogy for the relationship between God and his people. But it is a real story, Hosea was a real man who really married Gomer. And through their relationship we see some incredible characteristics and behaviors put on display.

Read Hosea 3

- 1. Unconditional Love (v. 1)** - This first thing we see in this chapter is that Hosea's love for Gomer, just like God's love for us is unconditional. The Lord says to Hosea go love her again, go love a woman who has been unfaithful, a woman who has been an adulteress. This is so counterculture. We touched on this in week 1 of the series when we talked about covenant vs. consumer relationships. We live in a "what have you done for me lately" society and we mostly give love with the idea that it will be reciprocated back to us. But that should not be so of the type of love that we show in our marriages. Our love for our spouse will not always be reciprocated. We will do things out of love that seemingly go unnoticed or unappreciated but that does not mean that we are to stop giving love. Hosea had no idea whether Gomer would reciprocate the love that he had shown her, in fact she had a proven record of not reciprocating it. But she was his wife, and he loved her. Are you extending this type of unconditional love to your spouse? Or are your feelings about him/her based on what they've done for you lately. Let's be honest, there are times when that feeling is not there, there are times when our spouses are hard to love, there are things that our spouses do that annoy us to no end, but that is not reason to stop loving them. You are married to a sinner and they are going to disappoint you, love them anyways. Jesus loved you in spite of your sin. Love is more of an action than a feeling, so keeping loving even when you don't feel like your spouse deserves it.

"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

1 Corinthians 13:7

- 2. Unwavering Commitment (v. 1)** - The ideas of love and commitment go hand in hand. They are two sides of the same coin. We love our spouse, therefore we are committed to them. We are committed to our spouse, therefore we love them. However, commitment is a word that has completely lost its meaning in today's world. We don't stay committed to anything. We don't stay committed to a job, we don't stay committed to a church, we don't stay committed to our favorite team, we don't stay committed to a project or a hobby, etc. Some of those things we break our commitment for good reason. If a church teaches false doctrine and refuses to change, break that commitment. If a job is not

allowing you to provide for your family or keeping you from being with your family, you may need to consider breaking that commitment. But marriage is a different type of commitment. It is a covenant, and there is a reason we recite the lines 'til death do us part' on our wedding day. But those are not just vows that we should repeat on our wedding day, but vows that should permeate our hearts on a daily basis. Death in the majority of cases with very few exceptions, should be the only way that a marital covenant is broken. Restoration and reconciliation because of the covenant commitment to one another should always be priority number one. Hosea's marriage displays that beautifully. We would look at Hosea and say that he had every reason to give up, to walk away. He's gone through the epitome of a worst case scenario. His wife has been unfaithful multiple times, she has gone back to being a prostitute and a slave. But God desires to show us his unwavering commitment to us through the gift of marriage and so you and I must fight to keep that commitment even when others would walk away. Fight with all you've got.

"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Mark 10:9

- 3. Unrelenting Sacrifice (v. 2)** - Hosea does not just return to Gomer and bring her back home with ease. He is forced to buy her back, to sacrifice something for her, to give up something in order to gain something. Our marriages should be marked by the continual practice of unrelenting sacrifice. They must not be a competition to see who can get there way all the time, but a competition of two people putting the needs of the other before their own. Remember that in marriage two become one, and in order for that to happen it means that both have to sacrifice some of their desires, ideas, wants, etc. My money is no longer my money, it's our money. My time is no longer my time, it's our time. I don't get to spend our money in every way that I want to. One of the hardest things for me to learn, because I'm stubborn, is that my way is not the only way of doing things, and that just because I had always done something a certain way before getting married, does not necessarily mean it should continue that way after getting married. This obviously works best when each side is willing to sacrifice, when each side is willing to give in and seek compromise.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

Philippians 2:3

- 4. Unending Forgiveness (v. 3)** - Hosea welcomes Gomer back into his home, his actions have displayed that he has forgiven her. Is your marriage marked by forgiveness? I hope that you can say that it is, because forgiveness is something that we will have to practice routinely in all our relationships, but especially in our marriages. I said earlier that we are all sinners, we are all going to make mistakes, and sometimes in the confines of marriage those mistakes are magnified. We must know that this will be the case and we

must be willing to extend forgiveness to our spouses. Refusing to forgive people, especially our spouses, only causes anger and resentment to build up in our hearts. He who forgives little, loves little. We don't forgive because we are good people, we forgive because we are a forgiven people. The same measure of forgiveness that God has extended to us through Jesus is the same measure of forgiveness we are to extend to others, especially our spouses. If you are anything like I am, that means that you should be extending a lot of forgiveness.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. - Ephesians 4:32

- 5. Undeniable Repentance (v. 3)** - However, you will see that though Hosea forgives Gomer, he expects her to live differently. He expects her not to continue in her adulteress behavior. So spouse that has been forgiven, that is not an excuse to continue in the behavior that required forgiveness. In the same way, God's grace is not an excuse for us to continue in sin. So when your spouse shows grace to you, seek to change your heart and your behavior. Just because Megan forgives me when I use a harsh tone with her does not mean that I have permission to continue to do that. I should seek repentance in that area, and work to make the next time different.

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? - Romans 2:4

These are five behaviors that should be exemplified in our marriages. Why is that so? Because as the Lord sanctifies us and molds us into his image through the marriage relationship and through other vehicles as well, we should continually be displaying the same characteristics of God himself. That is why God sanctifies us, that is why we are being conformed into an image that is not just something random but the image of God.

Gospel Response Time

As I mentioned earlier, this story is very real but it also has another purpose. It is meant to show us the extremes that God has gone to love his bride. We are Gomer, we are the unfaithful people who have turned to other gods. Yet God has shown us his unconditional love, by placing all the conditions upon the head of our savior. He has proven his unwavering commitment to his people. Even though we rebel, even though we prostitute ourselves out like Gomer, he is there bidding us to come back and for everyone that does, there is great rejoicing. He has provided the unrelenting sacrifice through the death and resurrection of his son Jesus Christ. A sacrifice, once and for all, that makes unending forgiveness possible for all who undeniably repent of their sins and place their faith in Christ.

So, yes, God wants our marriages to function with those behaviors, because in doing so we are embodying the same type of love that he has shown to us. Rest assured, that He is at work in

all of our lives, to sanctify us, to redeem us, to renew us, and to mold us into His image so that the world can see how great our God is. Let's pray.