Core Seminars—Marriage

Week 3

**A Biblical Theology of Marriage Part 2**

*The Fall*

**Brief Review**

What did we think about last week? We looked at the creation account as saw that:

* Both men and women are made as image-bearers, which means they reflect God’s character and have equal dignity and value in God’s eyes. Image-bearers are uniquely given the task of being God’s representatives and stewards in the Garden.
* Marriage has a God-designed structure built into it. Both men and women are called to be God’s representatives, but they have different roles to play. Men are given the primary responsibility to work the garden; women are given the role as a suitable helpmate. The wife and husband are complementary to one another. “Complementary” doesn’t mean they say a lot of polite things to each other (though that is a good thing to do!); we defined it as men and women being a wonderful “fit” for each other. Nothing else in creation was meant to go together like a husband and a wife.
* God has created marriage with certain ideal parameters: Image-bearers who are equal in dignity and value; differences in roles; leaving family of origin; holding fast/cleaving; becoming “one flesh”; monogamy & fidelity.
* God is at the center of our marriages. He is the one who brings a husband and wife together, and in the words of Jesus, “What God has joined together, let no man separate” (Mark 10:9).

#### The Fall of Mankind and the Corruption of Christian Marriages

## Our goal for today: to study the impact of sin on marriage by studying Genesis 3.

## *Sin Enters the World*

## Let’s start with Gen 2:25 and 3:1-7. [Read text.]

## 2:25 – Without sin, Adam and Even lived with no shame. It was possible to be naked with each other and not be embarrassed by it. That created, guiltless, non-sinful existence is foreign to us because we live on this side of the Fall.

## vs. 1-2, Satan enters the scene as a snake and asks a question that distorts God’s Words.

## “really say” – Satan is question God’s motives;

## “must *not* eat” and “*any* tree” – Satan makes it look like God is removing *all* of their freedom.

* vs. 2-3, Eve corrects Satan, but adds into the mix her own distortion, making the prohibition more stringent that it really was. She says they were not allowed to *touch* the fruit.
* vs. 4-5, the serpent directly contradicts God again with his own counterclaims: Adam and Eve would not die; their eyes would be opened; they would be like God, knowing good and evil. His goal is to undermine God. And he does so by blatantly contradicting him.
* vs. 6, Adam and Eve are both drawn into Satan’s interpretation of reality. She is *drawn* to the fruit – she understands it is good for food and pleasing to the eye. She also desires wisdom that will come from partaking of the fruit. So she partakes and gives it to her husband.
* vs. 7, remember what the serpent said in 3:5. Just what they were warned would happen turned out to actually happen—their eyes were opened, which is a metaphor for gaining knowledge and “being like God, knowing good and evil.” Adam and Even went beyond the limits that God had set for them, and in so doing, they simultaneously discovered their nakedness and experienced shame. They sewed fig leaves to cover up their nakedness. Their sinless existence was now gone as sin had entered into the world.

Two lessons we can gather so far:

1. ***Competing Voices that Threaten Our Marriages.***

What does serpent do? He enters in and works to distract Adam and Eve. He wants to cast doubt on what they think about God, and alternatively, he wants to pose his own version of reality. And sadly, Adam and Eve get drawn into his interpretation. They choose to believe the serpent rather than God.

Satan would like nothing more than to undermine Christian marriages. Why? Because that accomplishes his goal of destroying God and ruining the kingdom. What better way for him to ruin things than to go after and destroy one of the foundational pillars that sustains the kingdom—strong Christian families.

We don’t have to restrict this to the devil only. The great triumvirate described by the apostle Paul –the world, our own sinful flesh, and the devil—are all working to compete with God’s Words about Christian marriage.

Where do you listen to the competing voices about marriage rather than God’s Word on marriage?

* *The messages that the world gives us*. The world tells you that your needs and happiness are the point of marriage. It says nothing about holiness, servanthood, or anything else that would make you think like God.
* *The lies that we tell ourselves.* Self-justification of sin and rationalizations are common tools of our sinful flesh.
  + Men who look at internet pornography or flirt with female co-workers tell themselves lies like, “If my wife only satisfied me more and care for me more…”
  + Women who control their husbands tell themselves lies things like, “My life would be better if I ran things around here.”
* The List could go on and on about the competing voices.

What are the voices competing and threatening to overshadow God’s Words for your marriage? Whatever they are, get rid of them. They will do you no good. Nothing that stands opposed to God and his word will ever help you with your marriage.

1. ***Our Quest to be Like God. (Reflection vs. Rebellion)***

One of the saddest realities of the Fall is that it marked mankind’s quest to go beyond the role that God has assigned them—to be his representatives in the garden. No longer would they be satisfied as image-bearers and stewards of the garden. No longer would they be content with the parameters that God had set up for their life. The serpent had convinced them to not be satisfied, but to desire more. The pursuit of the forbidden fruit marks the start of Adam and Eve’s trying to dethrone God, attempting to go beyond the parameters God set up in creation, and in the end, trying to become gods themselves. They choose to follow one of God’s creatures rather than listening to the King himself (Rom 1:25). That was rebellion and an act of treason against the King. It was Adam and Eve declaring their independence from their great Creator.

Much of our sin in marriage can be described as rejecting of God’s parameters for our life and an attempt to be god in our own little worlds. In Adam and Eve’s case, they took from God something he had not been given to them—a knowledge of good and evil. In our marriages, there are lots of ways we take from God and replace God with ourselves in the marriage. Remember Judy, the controlling wife? Judy robs God of his sovereignty by acting as the sovereign queen in her marriage. If anyone crosses her or doesn’t follow her game plan, she makes everyone miserable until she gets her own way. Think about your own marriage—in what ways have you reject God’s parameters for your life and chosen to replace God with yourself self or some other thing?

[PAUSE FOR QUESTIONS??]

***Sins Corrupts (Both) Vertical and Horizontal Relationships***

Continuing with **Gen 3:8-15.** [Read the Text.]

* vs. 8-10, Man and his wife heard God coming so they hid in the garden. God calls out rhetorically for Adam and Eve; he has not lost them. “Just as a parent who sees where his children are hiding may shout out, ‘Where are you?’, in effect inciting them to come out, so does God” (Gordan Wenham).
* Why did they hide? Adam confesses that he hid because of his nakedness. Public nakedness in the Bible is a disgrace.
* God asks two more rhetorical questions—he asks about Adam’s shame at being naked and about the transgression of eating from the tree.
* Adam responds by blaming Eve; Eve in turn blames the serpent.

Two more lessons:

1. ***Sin Corrupts Our Relationship with God (Vertical)***

Even though the text does not explicitly state it, we know elsewhere in the Bible (Rom 5:18) that Adam and Eve experienced guilt before God because of their transgression. The knowledge Adam and Eve gained brought guilt and shame into man and woman’s relationship with God. Genuine openness and vulnerability with God was no longer possible, so Adam and Eve hid from him.

Hiding is fundamental to the way sin works. Sin prefers darkness and being away from God rather than being near him and standing in the light (Eph 5; 1 John 1). Are there ways you are hiding sin? Unhealthy secrets can kill a marriage. Think about the way sin often affects your own marriage—many times it causes you to hide, pull away, or withdraw from your spouse, but even worse, it causes you to pull away from God. If God is to be the fountainhead for all of life, this is the ultimate way for Satan to destroy your marriage. Get you away from God; get you to hide from him; and that will ruin everything, including your marriage.

Don’t ever be deceived into thinking that the sin between you and your spouse is only about the two of you. Any sin between the two of you affects your relationship with God. Remember what John says, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20).

1. ***Sin Corrupts Our Relationship with Our Spouse (Horizontal)***

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in a harmony with one another, in complete openness and vulnerability, trusting and loving each other. After the Fall, their marriage was tainted by a self-centeredness and pride. Adam and Eve did not willingly accept responsibility for the situation when God questioned each of them. Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent.

The list of possible sins that could affect your marital relationship is almost ridiculously long -- self-centeredness, pride, anger, control, self-sufficiency, self-exaltation, hopelessness, condescension, self-righteousness, etc., etc. As image-bearers, what we are meant to do is reflect back the character of God, but whenever we sin, we lie about who God is.

The particular sin we see in Genesis 3 is blame-shifting. What is blame-shifting? It is often an avoiding of responsibility by casting blame on the other person. It’s a way to get the spot light off of yourself when you usually should be taking ownership for the sin.

What sins characterize your relationship with your spouse? How are you actively fighting those sins? Do you openly talk with your spouse about those sins? Or is there any sense you are not fighting those sins? Maybe you are lazy about fighting them? Or maybe you tend to indulge the sin? We often indulge the sin because there is some benefit to doing so…we get something out of it or we are able to hurt our spouse by continuing to sin.

Step back and look at what has happened here: There has been a *catastrophic* break down in relationships. Adam and Eve no longer all-loving and all-trusting relationship with God, who they were meant to be with. And the no longer had an all-loving and all-trust relationship with each other. It was now gone!

Do you see the connection? Covenant-keeping with God is the foundation for covenant-keeping in marriage. When the relationship with God breaks down, no surprise, our relationship with our spouse breaks down as well.

## *The Curses*

## Let’s read Gen 3:16-19. The question we want to answer: How does sin change the shape and structure of the marital bond?

3:16. “Your desire (*tesqua*) will be for your husband, and he will rule (*masal*) over you.”

* What we find occurring is a battle of the sexes.
* What do the words “desire” and “rule” mean? Beware of reading modern ideas into the terms desire and rule. Desire does not mean the wife is ***wanting/coveting*** her husband. Rule does not mean the husband is ***imposing dominance*** on his wife. Rather, desire could be better translated as “controlling” and ruling could be better understood as “governance.”
* We come to understand both terms by looking at the same two words in Gen 4:7, “But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it *desires* (tesqua) to have you, but you must *master* (masal) it.” Sin is described as an animal crouching at the door. Sin’s desire is to enslave Cain—to possess and control him, but the Lord urges Cain to overpower sin, to master it. Similarly, the woman desires to overcome her husband and to rule over him. Sin corrupts the creation order by encouraging her to control her husband. (Notice how this is a direct contrast with what is described in Gen 2:18.) In the second half of 3:16 (“and he will rule over you”) the created order is reaffirmed—the husband is called to lead, have authority over, govern the wife. Yet, we know that this is a curse. A part of the battle of the sexes is that the husband is going to have to fight to lead his wife. We expect sin to distort the many ways in which a husband leads.
* How does sin work? We expect sin to turn upside-down God’s ideal marital parameters set out creation. Eve’s role of being a helpmate is reversed by the curse: now she desires to usurp Adam’s leadership; and Adam will have to fight to lead his wife.
* Note the connection between man and woman’s rebellion against God and how that ruins the marriage. “One of the most tragic results of Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God is an ongoing, damaging conflict between the husband and wife within marriage.”

3:17-19. “Cursed is the ground because of you….”

* Again, the ideal parameters for marriage described in Gen 2 are corrupted by sin. Man is called to the task to work and take-care of the garden in Gen 2:15. But now he would have trouble fulfilling his calling to subdue the earth. Work would now be painful and hard.

Two more lessons:

1. ***Sin Corrupts the Good Marital Order God Established***

We see the importance of the gender roles in the mind of God when we see what God cursed. Did you notice the connections between ch 2 and 3? For women: Gen 2:18 and 3:16; For men: Gen 2:15 and 3:17-19. The ideal parameters for marriage set out in Gen 2 are reversed by sin—the woman wants to overthrow her husband, and the husband will struggle to fulfill the task of working and taking care of the garden. The shape and structure of the relationships established in creation have now been turned upside down on its head.

1. ***A Fact of Life: Spouses are Sinful, so They will Fail***

By experience, we know that sin’s corruption of the husband’s “ruling” or “governing” of his wife can take on many forms, including a passivity in leading (abdication) on one end of the spectrum or a tyrannical leadership on the other end. Neither of these forms of leading reflects the benevolent, self-sacrificial governance/ leadership that a husband is called to show his wife. [The spectrum for the wife will be very similar—control on one end; abdication on the other.] *Husbands*: Where have you failed in your leadership in the home? Do either of these temptations described apply to you? And if so, how can you change that starting today? *Wives*: Where have you failed in being a suitable helpmate to your spouse? Have you sought to control the marriage? Have you given in to tyrannical leadership, rolling over like a wall-flower?

***God’s Merciful Plan: The Beginning of the Gospel***

Let’s finish this off: ***Gen 3:21-24***. [Read the Text]

* God did not want the first couple to live forever in their sinful condition, so he denied them access to the tree of life.
* He expels the first couple from the garden. Their sin has consequences.
* He sets a cherubim (3:24) to guard and keep the garden—the role that man and woman was meant to have, but no longer.

One Final Lesson: ***The Great Mercy of God***

Notice what God does right away—he clothes them (3:20). God recognizes the shame that has come about because of their sin, and he shows mercy by doing something about it. In response to their sin, God *immediately* shows mercy to them. But what is the deal? They already had clothes. Adam and Eve attempted to cover up their guilt and shame, and God says, “That’s not good enough. ***I*** will show you mercy.” But that’s not all…look back at the curse of the serpent (3:15), we see God showing *delayed* mercy—he promises one day that the seed of the woman would crush the Satan’s head. One this side of the cross, we know that seed is Christ, and we know Christ defeated death by dying as substitute for sinners like you and me. Right here, in the midst of the very first chapter about sin in the Bible, we see the first hints of the gospel.

When you struggle with sin in your marriage, what do you do? It is a good thing to fight sin, to repent of it, to put it off, so it does not hinder your marriage. But don’t stop there. In spending an hour dealing talking about sin, the most important thing I can tell you—learn to take your marital sin to the cross. That’s where it is meant to go.

When you fight and struggle with sin in your marriage, where do you ultimately turn? What do you ultimately do with it? When Paul describes sanctification in Eph 4:22-24, he describes both putting off the old self and putting on the new self (being renewed in our minds to be like Christ). Most of spend a lot of time and energy focus on getting rid of sin, but are woefully short of bringing Christ into our marriages and deliberately applying the gospel to our marital struggles. If this characterizes you, no better time to change your habits than today. Start today. If God was merciful to Adam and Eve in response to their sin, who are you to do anything less for your spouse?

[PAUSE FOR QUESTIONS]

Your Response to this Lesson:

1. What are the competing voices that are ruining your marriage? Either talk with your spouse or write out a list. What does the Word of God say in contrast to these voices?
2. What lies do you tell yourself that distract you from God and hurt your marital relationship?
3. In what ways do you act like God in your marriage? Confess this to both God and your spouse.
4. What marital sins have hurt your relationship with God?
5. What sins plague your marriage?
6. Do you see the dynamic described in Genesis 3:16 in your marriage? If so, think about how to change/break that dynamic.
7. Take some time with your spouse to reflect on how God has been merciful to you both in response to your sin (both individual sin and sin that effects the marriage).