

“God’s Blueprint for Marriage”

Mark 10:6-9

I heard about an airline pilot who, upon reaching cruising altitude, announces to his passengers that he had both bad news as well as good news. He said, “The bad news is that we have drifted way off course. The good news is that we are making excellent time.” In many ways, as an evangelical Christian, I feel this exactly what we are witnessing happen in the culture around us. We have veered way off course, and we are heading down a destructive path at a breakneck speed.

Francis Schaeffer - *“People drift along from generation to generation, and the morally unthinkable becomes thinkable as the years move on.”*

When I was a child, I had a set of encyclopedias, complete with pictures, that I’d love to peruse through on rainy days. One of those volumes had a brief section on Greek mythology. I can remember reading the fictional tale of “Pandora’s Box” which according to the Greeks, was their explanation for all the world’s evils. Pandora was a young maiden that had been given a box which contained all sorts of evil. She was instructed to keep the box closed. Of course, due to her intense curiosity, Pandora opened the box and the world was suddenly flooded with problems. Now, the phrase “to open Pandora’s box” means to perform an action that may seem small or have no major

implications, but in reality turns out to have far reaching consequences.

As I am sure you have read by now, on Friday of this week, the highest court of the land opened up Pandora’s box, and we have only yet to see what will follow in the days ahead. In a 5-4 ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision making same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states. For those who have been closely keeping up with the process, this was really no surprise. A lot of us have been praying in recent weeks that the outcome would be different.

What can we expect as Christians, and what are we to do?

You can be sure that a world at its worst demands a church at its best. The light never shines brighter than when it is surrounded in darkness.

These are not times for us to panic or to lash out in angry outbursts; these are times for us as the bride of Christ to show the world how beautiful and radiant and glorious our Savior is. The church has an opportunity to show our culture what marriage is a picture of—the relationship that Jesus Christ has with His bride, the church.

This is not to say that the road ahead will not be difficult, for it will, more so than ever before for those who espouse a biblical,

gospel-centered worldview. Christ's followers have always bore His reproach throughout history.

Hebrews 13:13-14 - **“Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the city that is to come.”**

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we bear His reproach in the eyes of a world of unbelievers who do not know Him.

David French - *“Especially among Evangelicals, there is a naive belief that if only we were winsome enough, kind enough, and compassionate enough, the culture would welcome us with open arms. But now our love—expressed in the fullness of a gospel that identifies homosexual conduct as sin but then provides eternal hope through justification and sanctification—is hate. Christians who’ve not suffered for their faith often romanticize persecution. They imagine themselves willing to lose their jobs, their liberty, or even their lives for standing up for the gospel. Yet when the moment comes, at least here in the United States, they often find that they simply can’t abide being called ‘hateful.’ It creates a desperate, panicked response. ‘No, you don’t understand, I’m not like those people—the religious right.’ Thus, at the end of the day, a church that descends from apostles who withstood beatings finds itself unable to withstand tweetings. Social scorn is worse than the lash. This is the era of sexual liberty—the marriage of hedonism to meaning—and*

the establishment of a new civic religion. The black-robed priesthood has spoken. Will the church bow before their new masters?”

Nothing you or I do by way of trying to be cool and in with the culture will ever remove the reproach of Christ from us if we choose to follow His teaching on marriage and sexuality.

Faithfulness to Christ is more important than relevance to culture. It is only when we are the most unlike the culture in our convictions and lifestyle and most like Jesus Christ that we will have the most impact.

There are several key passages in Scripture that clearly show what God intends for marriage to be.

One such passage is found here in Mark 10. Sometimes, advocates for same-sex marriage will often argue that Jesus had nothing to say about homosexuality, so He must be in favor of it. Of course, such an argument from silence has no warrant. Jesus didn’t need to say anything about it. He said everything that was necessary when He simply upheld marriage as being between one man and one woman as originally designed by God.

The context of this passage shows us that it comes as a conversation that Jesus was having with some of the Pharisees who wanted to trip Him up on the issue of divorce. Verse 1 says

that Jesus had completed His ministry in Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. This district was ruled by Herod Antipas, which may explain why the Pharisees tried to trap Him by asking a question about divorce. Just a few chapters earlier, Mark tells us how John the Baptist had been imprisoned and killed because he preached against Herod's adulterous marriage with his brother's wife.

The church needs more prophets who are willing to put their neck on the line and less rock stars who are only interested in cultural popularity.

In response to the Pharisees' questions, Jesus gives a concise and clear statement about marriage. This statement by Jesus encapsulates what is to be the biblical, gospel view of marriage.

1. Jesus upholds the PATTERN for marriage

“But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female.”

Courts don't define marriage; Christ has defined marriage. God has given to humanity the pattern for marriage in His Word.

In many ways as Christians, we have dropped the ball when it comes to showing the culture around us what marriage is. We could denounce false ideas until we are blue in the face, but unless we declare to the world what the truth is, it will be to no avail.

D.L. Moody - *“The best way to show that a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or to spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick alongside it.”*

That's exactly what Jesus does right here in this passage. He lays a straight stick down alongside the Pharisees' crooked stick and shows us what true marriage is.

Jesus takes these Pharisees all the way back to creation and shows them God's original design for man and woman. God's original blueprint for marriage in Genesis 1-2 sets the stage for discovering His intention and plan for humanity.

It is not an accident that the first three chapters of the Bible directly address the subject of marriage and the family, which was God's first ordained institution. It is the most basic building block to human society. It is the foundation upon which everything else is hinged upon.

Jesus is summarizing Genesis 1-2 and upholding it as God's pattern for marriage and family. In those chapters, we are given several key, foundational truths about what marriage is:

It is reflective

Genesis 1:26-27 - “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness...So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

The Genesis record says that God created human beings. Not only did God create human beings, but He created us in His image. He also created us male and female.

Mark Christopher - *“The male and female are distinct and unique, but, when united in a covenant commitment before God and then brought together in physical intimacy, they mirror essential aspects of the triune Godhead in a way the rest of creation never can or will.”*

Gender distinction is a creational reality, not a social construct, contrary to what you've been exposed to recently through the media and the sad ordeal with Bruce Jenner. Those who have no fundamental belief in God's truth have no basis for identity or their existence, and the result is groping around in the dark in an attempt to find meaning and worth.

The ultimate purpose of marriage between a man and a woman is that it reflects God and His image.

It is cooperative

Genesis 2:18 - **“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.”**

As a helper, Eve made up that which was lacking in Adam. She was different, but the same. She was bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Had God made them exactly alike, Eve could not have provide the necessary attributes to complement and

complete Adam. The differences in a man and a woman are necessary for the healthy rearing and upbringing of children.

Glenn Stanton, Bill Maier - *“Marriages don't bring similar things together. They bring different things together and help them work for a common good. Same-sex unions are not marriage because they don't bring the two different parts of humanity together. They bring similar things together, thus the word same...Women complete men, and men complete women...A man can't complete another man, nor can a woman complete another woman...Same-sex families seeking equality with the natural family devalue humanity because they proclaim that one part of humanity is unnecessary.”*

Thus, same-sex marriage is not marriage because it is not complementary.

It is cohesive

Genesis 2:22-25 - **“And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”**

Notice that the two become one flesh. The husband and wife come together in marital oneness, a glue that serves to merge together the distinctiveness of Adam and Eve into one unit.

“One” - same Hebrew word used to describe the unity of God in Deuteronomy 6:4

Such marital cohesion speaks of mutual companionship, determined commitment, and continuance together in life.

It is productive

Genesis 1:28 - “And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...”

God gave Adam and Eve the mission mandate of filling the earth with image bearers. As vicegerents over the created order, they were to procreate life and propagate the glory of God throughout the cosmos.

To espouse any self-made idea of marriage that Jesus rejected is tantamount to accusing Him of not knowing what He was talking about, which is tantamount to blasphemy, since He is God in human flesh.

Those who embrace same-sex marriage reject the Lordship of Jesus Christ and doom themselves to destruction. To do so is to set aside the revealed truth of God in exchange for a lie.

2. Jesus reveals the PICTURE in marriage

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

Marriage is a unique oneness between a husband and wife that points us to the gospel. There is in marriage a beautiful picture of the relationship that Jesus Christ has with His church.

This is what the Apostle Paul says when he writes about the marriage relationship.

Ephesians 5:22-33 - “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because 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. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

Marriage is yet one more way that God desires to communicate, in a visible way, the truth of the gospel. Christian marriage ought to function as a living picture of the relationship that Jesus has with His bride, the church.

3. Jesus teaches the PERMANENCE of marriage

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

No matter what happens in the culture around us, marriage is here to stay. Anyone who messes with it and tries to redefine it according to their own dictates are trying to undue what God Himself has put together. You can't fight against God and win.

Cultural opinion may change like shifting sand on the shore, but God's Word will not change!

Psalm 119:89 - “Forever, O Lord, Your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

Matthew 24:35 - “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

In 303 AD, the Roman emperor Diocletian ordered that copies of Scripture be seized and burned, determining to destroy Christian Scripture altogether. Instead, Diocletian perished, and within 25 years the next emperor commissioned a man named Eusebius to prepare copies of the Bible at the expense of the government.

Centuries later, the French atheist Voltaire declared that God was dead and claimed that within 100 years the Bible would be forgotten and Christianity would be swept from existence. But Voltaire died in 1778, and within 50 years, a Bible society was using his press and his house to print Bibles.

No other book has been so hated, vilified, opposed, attacked, and despised than the Bible.

A.L. Hastings - *“Infidels for 1,800 years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before...If this book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the book still lives.”*

How should we respond to the court's recent ruling? Here are several ways that I believe we are to do so:

Confidence rather than anger

The Bible says that the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. It is easy for us to feel angry and betrayed, but let's not forget where our confidence in this life is to be found. It is in Christ, not in courts!

Compassion rather than malice

The Scripture says that Christ's disciples are known for their love, and they are to speak the truth in love. The witness of the gospel is always damaged when we allow our flesh to get in the way.

Those who are walking over a cliff don't realize that they are one step from destruction. Our hearts must break for the lostness of our nation.

While the world tries to do away with sin through redefinition, only the gospel does away with sin through redemption. That is the only kind of love that wins!

Conviction rather than silence

It is time for us to move from the banks of complacency and wade out into the waters of cultural engagement. We can't reach lost people if we're not engaging lost people.

Carl Trueman - *"We who have been speaking out stand to be undone not so much by the noise of our enemies as by the silence of our friends."*

The silence of some of those who claim to be followers of Christ is deafening to me.

Denominations and pastors have been caving in to the cultural pressure of embracing same-sex marriage. Such a falling away on a biblical issue as clear as this one shows that they are more aligned with the world than they are the Lord of glory. The silence of many of today's leading pastors reveals that they are more interested in gathering crowds than they are in making disciples.

Disciples need to be able to articulate a biblical worldview and give a solid defense of their faith. I'm talking about more than a soundbite on social media with a picture and a sarcastic comment. We must communicate the gospel and biblical logic in the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ-like compassion.

We need to be students of Scripture like never before. We must be students of the culture like never before. We cannot remain in our corner and put our fingers in our ears if we desire to win people to Christ. We have a Savior who is worth dying for, a gospel that is worth declaring, and a mission that is worth due diligence.

Commitment rather than retreat

This is not a time for us to sound the retreat. To the contrary, our commitment to make disciples must be met with laser like

focus. Our God remains the same. Our Bible remains the same. Our mission remains the same. We are to penetrate the dark places of this world and boldly show forth the praises of Him who has called us from darkness into His marvelous light.

So, as Russell Moore said this week, let's seek the kingdom. Let's stand with the gospel. Let's serve Jesus Christ. But let us dare not shrink back from our mission field!

Father, we praise You for the blueprint of marriage that You have designed and preserved in Your Word. In a time where people are confused on such fundamental issues, we pray for gospel clarity. Forgive us for taking the gift of marriage for granted, and may our marriages, our homes, and our lives bring glory to You. We weep over our sin and the sin of our nation. America has lost her way, she is morally adrift, and she is dangerously close to running aground. Jesus Christ is her only hope!