

Part 3. Relationship.

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[0 : 0 0] So for a wee while together this morning, we're going to turn back to the passage that we read. And I want to read again just now from Genesis chapter 2 and verses 23 to 25.

In our morning services just now, we are doing a series called Good Dreams, Better Certainties.

And that title is capturing two crucial truths. The first is that everyone has dreams. And I think we can all relate to that.

There are things that we dream of and long for and aim for in our lives. And one of the big points that we're trying to emphasize is that these dreams are good dreams.

They give us joy and purpose and direction. And often in life these dreams will come true. And that's a wonderful moment when that happens. Now, of course, sometimes these dreams don't come true.

[1 : 1 1] And that can be very difficult. And sometimes the dreams come true, but they don't turn out as we expect. And that's also something that's confusing and hard to deal with. But on the whole, one big point is that everyone has dreams.

And these dreams are good dreams. The second big point that we're emphasizing, though, is that the gospel gives you certainties. And those certainties are even better.

Hopefully's. Our maybes. Possibly's. Hopefully's. Sometimes they come true. Sometimes they don't. The gospel gives us promises that are certain and guaranteed and unlosable.

And not only that, the content of those dreams is bigger and better and beyond even our very best dreams. So everyone has dreams.

Those dreams are good. The gospel gives you certainties. Those certainties are even better. And as we go through this series, each week we're going to be coming back to Genesis 1 and 2, the two chapters that describe how God created this world.

[2 : 1 9] But we're also going to be connecting to other parts of the Bible as we think through some of the dreams that people have. And one of the things that we want to do is to emphasize that all our dreams actually find their origin in the Bible.

So even you go out to society, meet anybody, no matter what they believe, whether they believe in God or not, whether they've read the Bible or not, the dreams that they have find their origin in the Bible.

And what I want us to see in this series is that the gospel actually makes sense of your dreams. And without the gospel, our dreams don't make sense.

And that raises a very, very important point. It tells us, and we'll say this every week, that if you are wondering whether the Bible is real, if you're wondering whether it all makes any sense, if you're wondering whether it has any relevance to your life, you don't need to think about, you know, your religious convictions.

You don't need to think through different philosophical arguments. You need to think about your dreams. And it's only in the gospel that these dreams make sense.

[3 : 27] So we're looking at these dreams together. We started by looking at the dream of a home. Then we looked last week at the dream of a career. We're going through the same three points of a relationship.

And for all of these, we're going through the same three points. These dreams are good dreams. These dreams are broken dreams. The gospel replaces these dreams with better certainties.

Certainties. So in terms of a relationship, that dream is a good dream. In fact, for many people, that dream is the dream. If you look at books, films, music, art, so often the focus of these is on finding that person and experiencing that joy and fulfillment of a relationship together.

And that's the happy ending of so many stories. It's a guy and a girl fall in love and live happily ever after. And so it's the big Hollywood dream, isn't it?

But it's also the dream of just the ordinary guy and girl. And so when we watch, you know, a romantic movie, we think, I want to be just like them.

[4 : 35] And we don't mean, you know, I want to be an actor that gets to go on films. What we mean is that we want to find somebody just like they found somebody. We want to find the person that we will love and who will love us back.

Now, in saying all that, it is important to remember that not everybody has that dream. And there are many people who are perfectly content and fulfilled and complete as single.

And I want to make it very, very clear that it is absolutely okay to feel like that. And the reason it's okay to feel like that, because the greatest example of contented singleness in history is Jesus Christ himself.

So not everybody has that dream. But for many people, and I think it's safe to say for the majority of people, a romantic relationship is a dream. And that dream is a good dream.

And like all the dreams in this series that we're going to be looking at, it finds its origin in the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2. So when God created humanity, he created us male and female, formed Adam and Eve, and established marriage as what we call a creation ordinance.

[5 : 48] Something that's established from the very beginning that's part of the good world that God has made. And in the verses that we read from Genesis, we can see why the dream of a relationship is a good dream.

And so I just want to pick out a few key emphases in this passage. Number one, compatibility. In verse 18, we see that man and woman are made for each other.

The Lord God said, it's not good that man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for him. And so the emphasis there is that man and woman are made for each other. Now that might sound a wee bit soppy, but it's actually just a core theological and scientific fact that there's a compatibility between man and woman.

Now that applies obviously to reproduction, but it applies in lots of other ways as well. And so in verse 18, we have this beautiful description of how God made woman to be a helper for her husband.

And we see then in the following verses that nothing else could be that helper except woman. None of the birds, animals, anything else. Nothing was suitable. Only a woman could be everything that the man needed.

[7 : 01] Now, an interesting thing to say here. Sometimes when we see that word, we see this language here of God making a helper fit for the man.

It can sound a wee bit as though like, is it making women like, you know, secondary? Like the man's more important, the woman is second. Well, some people might read it that way, but one thing that's really, really important to notice is that in all the things that are created, chapter 1 and 2, in all the things that are created, what's the last thing that gets made in terms of the narrative?

The woman. And that's telling us that there is a very strong sense in which the woman is the crowning step of God's creation.

And so Adam and Eve are different. That difference makes them beautifully compatible. And in our dream of a relationship, that's what we dream of, isn't it?

We dream of finding somebody of whom we can say we belong together. So there's compatibility. Secondly, there's a connection. You see that in verse 23.

[8 : 15] Adam rejoices in the woman that God's provided for him. He speaks of the connection. This is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. And so in other words, when he sees his wife, he sees someone who is part of himself.

Now, I think that's one of the most beautiful and accurate descriptions of what it feels like to fall in love with somebody and to be united together as husband and wife. You feel as though that person has become part of you.

And there's that connection, a bond, a togetherness. And it's a very hard thing to describe, but it's impossible to deny. And in our dreams of a relationship, that's what we dream of.

Someone who connects with us so much that they become part of us. Third, we see dependence. There's a wonderful description of that in verse 24.

A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. They shall become one flesh. And so there's lots that we could say here.

[9 : 21] What I want to just highlight here is that the description that's been made of a marriage here is one of beautiful mutual dependence. And again, that's both theologically and scientifically true.

The human race can't survive without the connection of male and female coming together. And in the relationship that God wants a husband and wife to share, there's an emphasis that the help and provision and protection of parents is no longer needed because a man and woman have come together and they now depend on one another as they build their lives together.

So in other words, in a marriage, a man and a woman are both needing and needed. Needing and needed and together they help each other thrive. And in our dreams of a relationship, that's what we dream of.

Someone who will joyfully provide what you need and someone to whom you can lovingly give what they need. So there's compatibility, connection, dependence. There's also intimacy.

And so verse 24 speaks of that. The two shall become one. That applies broadly to the connection that's established in a united married couple.

[10 : 29] It also speaks particularly of the intimacy of the sexual union. And later in the Bible, in 1 Corinthians 6, it makes it very clear that that's part of what this is referring to.

And that intimacy is emphasized by verse 25. The man and his wife are both naked and they're not ashamed. They're both naked before each other. And that word naked, it just speaks of the removal of barriers, the removal of physical barriers between them.

They share the deepest bond of intimacy. And again, that's a good dream. It's maybe a bit of an awkward dream to talk about on a Sunday morning, but it's a good dream. Everybody knows that it's a dream.

And in his creation, God has established and provided this precious intimacy where a man and a woman can be as physically as what we dream of as it is possible to be.

And in our dreams of our relationship, that's what we dream of. Those precious moments where one person is able to come close to you in a way that nobody else ever can. Alongside that intimacy, though, there is security.

[11 : 37] And again, that's emphasized in verse 25, because they're naked, but they're not ashamed. And so that word naked speaks of the most profound vulnerability.

And yet here, it's in the context of complete security. The man and the woman are committed to one another. They're safe with one another. That they are not going to mishandle one another.

And that's highlighting an emphasis that the Bible is going to go on and make again and again and again. The fact that intimacy and security must always go hand in hand.

That's the Bible's sexual ethic. That intimacy and security must go hand in hand. Now, our culture today thinks that that's crazy. And our culture today wants intimacy without having to bother with security.

And most people will think that that's a good thing. But if we go down that road the way our society's gone down that road, at the very least, our nakedness gets cheapened because it just becomes something that's much less precious and much more available, if you like.

[12 : 50] At worst, our nakedness gets abused and exploited. In the Bible, intimacy and security always go hand in hand.

And that's why, according to the Bible's sexual ethic, sexual relations are kept within the boundary of marriage. Now, people today think that that's backwards. They think that it's totally restrictive.

They think it's weird. And maybe confident and content. This is one of the areas where we just, I think we just have to be confident and content that the Bible just thinks differently from the way everybody around us thinks.

And we're going to think differently, and we're not ashamed of that. And so, from our society's point of view, a guy can sleep with whoever he wants to and do whatever he wants as long as they consent.

Now, those of you who have been watching the P. Diddy trial this week or seen the news on that, that's what that trial is all coming down to. He got his ex-girlfriend to do a whole ton of things that, according to her text messages, she said yes to.

[13 : 54] And yet she was saying, I never wanted to do it. And it's all coming down to whether or not she was consenting or whether she was coerced into doing all sorts of things that he was getting her to do. That's the world we're in now.

That's like, well, if it's consented, it's fine. No stings, no commitment, no obligations. A guy can pick up a girl at night and put her down in the morning. From the Bible's point of view, a young woman can say to a man, if you want to sleep with me, you have to love me for the rest of your life.

Now, let me just ask, which one of these has got a higher regard for women? And the interesting thing is this. When we dream of a relationship, do we dream of one night?

Or do we dream of forever? The dream of a relationship is a dream of security. So we've got that connection.

We've got compatibility, connection, dependence, intimacy, security. Last of all, there is delight. And that's emphasized all across the Genesis narrative. There's just this sense of joy and triumph and delight in all that God has made for this man and this woman.

[15 : 12] And that delight is expressed very powerfully in the Song of Solomon that we read a short passage from as well. And that whole book, the Song of Solomon, is a beautiful poem.

And it's giving a majestic description of the delight that's enjoyed between lovers. In other words, it's emphasizing that the dream is a good dream because it can make you so happy.

And in our dreams of a relationship, that's what we dream of. We dream of somebody who's going to make us happy. So, falling in love, being in a relationship, getting married, that dream is a good dream.

And that, of course, is why weddings are brilliant because we're celebrating that moment when Genesis 3, 24 comes through again. It's a good dream. It's also a broken dream.

And there's loads that we could say here, but at the same time, I almost don't need to say anything because all of us know that this is true. And when we say that the relationship is the dream, when that dream does not work out, the heartbreak is massive.

[16 : 20] And that's why, remember we said that this dream, the relationship dream, is the subject of music and literature and drama, and yet the most famous songs and movies and books are almost always stories of heartbreak.

And that's because the good dream of a relationship is also a broken dream. Solomon hints at that. The reason I wanted us to read into chapter 3 is because you just have this moment where the woman is seeking the one whom she loves and she can't find him.

And there's that sense of distress and separation and longing. Now when we say that it's a broken dream, we can just summarise it in three ways that I'm just going to go through briefly.

It's that sometimes what you expected doesn't work out. Sometimes what you long for never comes. Sometimes what you expected doesn't work out. And sometimes what you cherish slips away.

What you long for never comes. What you expected doesn't work out. What you cherish slips away. All of these are too and all too real in our experience.

[17 : 34] All of them find that explanation in the Bible. So for many people, what you long for never comes. As we said at the start, there are some people who are very content being single.

And to feel like that has a very, very clear biblical warrant. If you read 1 Corinthians chapter 7, Paul, one of the early leaders in the Christian church who was single, spoke very positively about his own singleness and about the singleness of others.

And if I think about my old life, I would say, I think the most content person I have ever met in my life was a woman called Sister Claire. She was a nun who lived in Gress.

She died just a couple of years ago. And some of you may have met her at different times. She was the most astonishingly content, cheerful, kind, warm, loving woman.

She would have been single her whole life. So many people are content being single, but not everyone who's single is content. And for some people, the dream of a relationship is a dream that they always have, but which never comes through.

[18 : 44] And it's interesting, you know, when Genesis 2.18 says it's not good for a man to be alone, many men and women can say today, I know exactly how that feels. And so for Christians who are single, sometimes it's a case of not yet, and there's a long period of waiting.

For some, it's not at all. And whilst there are many things in the gospel that will give you comfort and purpose and fulfillment when you are single, at the same time, that the Bible is clear that the dream of finding a husband or a wife is a good dream.

And therefore, if that dream doesn't come through, it is okay to find that hard. It's okay to find that hard.

And if you do find it hard, anyone here or online in that situation, if you find it hard, pour it out before the Lord. Tell him, talk to him, lament before him.

He knows everything. He knows us. He searched us. We can pour out our sorrow before him. And as you do that, never, ever, ever forget that God is utterly devoted to people who are single.

[19 : 54] For some people, what you long for never comes. For others, what you expected doesn't work out. So for many people, a relationship does come, but all too often, it doesn't turn out as you expected.

Now, sometimes relationships blossom for a wee while, but then never go further into the long-term point of commitment and the security that comes through marriage. Relationships, many relationships are short.

Some relationships turn into regrets. But even for those relationships that do go on to marriage and maybe many years together, even then, things so often don't turn out as you dreamt that they would.

And at a very basic level, for everyone who gets married, it is harder than we expect. It takes work, it takes patience, it takes commitment, it takes effort. Now, again, the language of the Bible helps us.

You know, it speaks about Adam and Eve being naked before each other. Now, if we think of that term in the broadest sense, marriage restores nakedness between two people, and in a broad sense, what that means is that our emotions, our insecurities, our bad habits are filled with.

[21 : 03] They see it all. And all of that brings challenges. Life also brings trials and challenges that can strain relationships.

So, money, or work, or debt, or health issues, or big decisions, they can always put a huge strain onto a relationship, bringing fears and anxieties that cause tension.

And so, when you fall in love with somebody, that person, you know, for that initial period you fall in love with, that person becomes the reason why you forget all your troubles. But as you go on in life together, it's impossible to avoid the fact that troubles just come for both of you, and those troubles become a huge burden that weigh you down.

And so, as Genesis describes, sin has brought thorns and thistles and toil that make life hard. And so, sometimes things don't work out, as we hope so, and as it's very challenging.

But most tragically of all, for many people, the dream of a relationship becomes the very opposite of a dream. It becomes the source of desperate, desperate hurt.

[22 : 13] Now, again, if you've seen the P. Diddy trial on the news, you see that, that what started off as the dream, millionaire, rapper, couple, everything, you discover that, actually, it was an awful mess underneath.

And not everything is as extreme as that, but it happens to so many people. And you see that that's part of the effect of sin. So, when you read Genesis 1 and 2, you read about the world created so, so good by God.

You read Genesis 3, it describes how all of that's been spoiled by sin. And part of the effect of sin is bringing tension between Adam and Eve. And you can see that in 3.12, that Adam starts to blame Eve for what's happened.

And those seeds of many people, so there are people who get hurt and who get cheated on and who get abandoned and who get mistreated. And for many people, the happily ever after is actually very, very unhappy.

Sometimes, things just don't work out slowly and gradually as the bonds of love fade. Sometimes, the bonds of love are snapped when promises are broken.

- [23 : 27] Some of you have been through that, either in your own relationships or you've seen it in your family or in your friends. And it's just an incredibly hard thing.
- What starts off as a dream leaves you badly bruised. And so, sometimes what you're waiting for and longing for doesn't come, sometimes what you get doesn't turn out as what you expect.
- But even for those whose dreams really do come through in terms of relationship, we can't escape the fact that what you cherish slips away.
- And again, the Bible explains this. The warning for Adam and Eve that they must not sin. The warning against sin was the fact that sin results in death.
- death. And from the Bible's point of view, death means separation. It's the separation of body and soul. It's the separation of humanity from God. And in terms of relationships, it means being torn away from the person with whom you became one.
- [24 : 37] And that is agony. And many of you go through every day of your life knowing exactly how that feels.
- the dream of falling in love is so good. And that's why when death breaks that dream, it's so difficult. But, the big point that we want to highlight, and we'll just do so very briefly as we finish, the big point we want to highlight is that the gospel, the message of Christianity, is all about undoing the effect of sin.
- it is all about reversing the power of death. And that's why in terms of relationships, the gospel gives us better certainties.
- Now, the big thing I want to say here, very briefly, is that in the Bible, marriage is a big deal. It's right at the very start, it's right at the very end. When you go to the end of the Bible, it speaks of the new heavens and the new earth in the language of a marriage.
- The church being prepared as a bride for her husband. Marriage is a massive theme, a big, big, big deal in Scripture.
- [25 : 52] Why is that? Why is marriage such a big deal in the Bible? Well, the reason it is such a big deal is because the whole reason that God establishes marriage, the whole reason that God establishes marriage between a man and a woman is because it serves as a shadow of the union between Christ and his church.
- That's the whole reason why God establishes marriage. It's a shadow of the union between Christ and his church. Song of Solomon hints at this link. Ephesians chapter 5 makes that link absolutely explicit.
- When it echoes the words of Genesis, the two shall become one flesh, and then says at the end there in verse 32, this mystery is profound, and I'm telling you that it refers to Christ and his church.
- And so when the Bible speaks of being united, when it speaks of a man being united with his wife, when it speaks of a woman being united with her husband, all are united to Jesus forever.
- In other words, if you are a Christian or if you become one, he is the bridegroom and you are the bride. The dream of marriage is a shadow of the certainty of the gospel.
- [27 : 09] And that has some crucial implications that we must never forget. It tells you that your longings for togetherness, for connection, for intimacy and worth, they will find their total and perfect fulfillment in Jesus.
- It's in him that you will feel loved and complete and secure. It tells you that heartbreak and loss now is not the end of the story. It is not the end of the story.
- It tells you that all the way to the deepest points of your vulnerability with Jesus, you are safe and secure and accepted forever. He will never grow cold on you.

Jesus will never go cold on you. He will never abandon you. It tells you that he actually delights in you as a husband delights over his beautiful bride.

husband delighting over his bride is a glimpse of how much Jesus delights over you and over all who trust in him. It tells you that you are utterly loved and cherished by Jesus forever and it tells you that the ultimate plan of God really is happily ever after.

[28 : 22] In the movies, you'll often hear the phrase, it's not over. And that's almost always used in the context of revenge or conflict or betrayal. Someone gets hurt and they say, it's not over and they're going to respond to that in that way.

A very, very common phrase, it's not over, revenge, conflict, betrayal. In the gospel, the phrase, it's not over, is used of love, happiness and the dream of a relationship because death tried to separate you from God and your bridegroom Jesus says, it's not over.

And he goes all the way to the cross to win back his bride. The dream of a relationship finds its fulfillment in knowing Jesus.

And that's a dream that everyone can be part of. That you can go through your whole life knowing that you are loved by him, cherished by him, that he delights in you, that he will never, ever let you go.

And the amazing thing is that for everyone who trusts in Jesus, this isn't actually a dream. it's a certainty.

[29 : 48] Amen. Let's pray.