

**"Discovering God in Marriage"
(Genesis 2:19-25)
Pastor Peter Yi
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Introduction:

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NIV Genesis 2:19-25

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."

²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

We often look at marriage as a place to discover each other. They say it takes more than a lifetime to study and learn your partner. There are so many nuances that remain unknown and undiscovered. I'll give you an example from our marriage. Linda and I have been married for over 16 years and before that we dated six years. Last year, we were camping and we were getting ready to turn in. The kids were in their tent. We had our little two-man tent. And she's already snuggled into her sleeping bag and has her eyes closed, while I'm still organizing some stuff. So I look at her face because that's all that's poking out of the sleeping bag and her eyes are shut tight and she's smiling. And I thought that was weird. And so I ask. Why are you smiling? And I thought she would say, oh because of a funny joke or moment that she was recalling from earlier in the day or something like that and she says, because I'm so happy to be going to sleep. I never knew that about her. I never saw her display that kind of odd behavior before, but since then I have seen her now and again smiling moments before she falls asleep. There's a joy in discovering ourselves.

And of course we discover a lot about ourselves. There is nothing like an honest spouse who has front-row-center-stage seats to your life and is able to tell you about all the things that are wrong with you. The close confines of marriage really do highlight all of our flaws and strengths. For example, it wasn't until about half-way through our married life that I realized how much I valued Linda's admiration and approval. Like a little kid who says to his parents, 'look at me, look at me'. I think it was in May of 2004 or 2005, where I was on the annual fishing trip that my brother and I make every year, up in the Muskokas for the chance of catching a trophy-sized pike. We woke up

at 3am. Drove up two and a half hours and began fishing at 530. At 600 after chucking my lure here and there, I saw a swirl on the surface of the water near my lure. I thought it was just a little bass that had come to take a look. I twitched it a couple more times. Then the lure disappeared and the fight was on. Well after a couple of minutes the fish was landed, measured and weighed, photographed and released. 44 inches long and 22 pounds in weight. This was the largest fish I had ever caught. My brother and I are all gleaming, taking pictures, and the only thing on my mind is that I have to tell Linda. So the fish is released, I'm still catching my breath and I call her. "Honey, you would not believe what I just caught!!" Very unexcitedly she answers, "What?" A 44 inch 22 pound pike. And I'll never forget what she said. "That's nice, I gotta go and get the kids ready for school. Bye." I learned something very important that day--that my wife could care less about fishing and thus doesn't love me. No, really. I learned that I really like her approval. I long to be her champion, hero, and accomplisher. And then as I went through the premarital stuff we use at Young Nak and when we got to the chapter on his and her needs. The book said, "He wants to be admired." And it all made sense. I didn't know that about me, and it was marriage that brought that out.

So we learn about each other. And we learn about ourselves. **But marriage is also a place to discover God and that is the loftiest thing about marriage.** If you haven't learned much about God in and through your marriage, then this is my longing for all of you.

How is it that we can discover more about God through marriage? Because He's the creator of marriage.

Think about that for a second. Isn't this generally true with almost everything that's created. You look at a car, the design of a home, how a person has tweaked his computer, arranged his desktop, you look at a person's office space, library, the way they decorate their homes and all that, and if you play a little bit of Sherlock Holmes, you can get an idea of what the designer, architect, and creator is all about. And so because God designed marriage, within the structure, within the relationship, we learn about God.

What you find in the Scriptures when the authors describe life or reality or God is that they use images and examples that are common to all the human race—nature, agriculture, parenting, longing, creation, conflict, as well as marriage. From the beginning to the end of the Scriptures we find this theme. In the first story of the bible—the story of creation—we find marriage. And the final story of the bible—the reunion of Christ with her church is described by the human institution of marriage. And in between we find God being 'married' to his people. And from that relationship we see the deep love God has for us. We see how he so jealously guards his people. We also see an offended lover in God when his bride, his people begin to flirt with other gods. Here are the phrases that the bible uses to describe this. They prostituted themselves. They played the whore. They committed adultery. And then we see the reunion, maybe we can call it the second honeymoon, when Jesus will reclaim her bride when he returns to take her home.

When you and I are single and all we can think of is being married. And when we are married, all we think of is getting through another day of being married, changing diapers, driving kids and so on, we can begin to forget the importance, the height at which God places all marriage. So we have to recapture why marriage is so important to God. And in doing so, I believe our attitudes and commitment toward our marriages will grow and change and deepen.

Marriage is so important to God that it was the first human relationship he ever created. Its preservation is commanded three times in the Ten Commandments. So three of the Ten Commandments have a direct connection to marriage. 1. the prohibition against adultery. 2. the honoring of mother and father commanded to children speaks to the importance of the marriage relationship to God. 3. The command not to covet, to desire something which is not yours—property and relationships, namely the wife. It's terribly important to God. Is it just as important to you?

It may just be the primary biblical motif to describe God's relationship with us. We already alluded to that a little bit, but what I find fascinating is the frequency that Jesus applies marriage themes to the Kingdom. He honored his human parents. His first miracle was at a wedding. He teaches on the sanctity of marriage. He refers over and over, the Kingdom of God to wedding banquets and feasts. He himself assumes the role and position of the husband to his bride, the church. That's how sacred and precious marriage is to Jesus, and he was never even married. That should say something to singles as well.

What else does marriage teach us about God?

God is relational. We really do take that for granted I think. In the creation story, we see a God who exists in relationship within himself as the Trinity. And we see a God who creates a world in which there are an infinite number of relationships between the planet and creatures. And we see a God who creates humankind in His own likeness to be in intimate relationship with Himself and with each other.

And through that we discover that the most intimate human relationship on this side of heaven is marriage. It really is. Everything that God had created, he said was good. Until, he sees Adam all alone, and he looks at him and says, this is not good (Gen 2:18). And so he creates Eve. This intimate marriage is described in leaving mother and father and cleaving/joining with a wife. And it's interesting that of course Adam and Eve had no human parents, but nevertheless this directive is given for all humankind.

For any child there is no greater bond than the bond that exists with his or her mom and dad. No teacher, no mentor, no superstar, no relative, it's mom and dad, or at least that's the way it's supposed to be. And having grown up your whole life knowing just this type of intimacy, this type of loyalty, this type of security—there begins to arouse in all of us a desire to leave that safety and create a different type of relationship and loyalty. It's not as biologists say, the unstoppable sex drive, to procreate and reproduce. We are not animals. We are image bearers of God. So rather, it's the desire to be in intimacy, in relationship with my partner, my helpmate. This is God's blueprint for each of our marriages. Please set that up as one of the primary goals of your marriage. Marriage is not primarily a place to have your sexual tensions released. Or your struggle for loneliness to cease. It's much greater than that. It's intimacy. With each other and with God.

The passage also says that the man and woman will become one flesh. I don't think there is any other place in scripture where this is used to describe any other human relationship. When a man and woman marry, they become one. This is a tremendous mystery. God created us for this unity. However, the word is 'flesh', not one 'spirit.' If it was spirit we might be able to assume that marriage is for eternity. But we know from Jesus' teaching that there will be no marriage in heaven. When we hear something like that, we can get sort-of down and say, "That's a bummer.

Honey, we won't be married in heaven. You and I won't exist as husband and wife any more." And I get that. But the temporality of marriage should make us think something like this. "Yeah, marriage is really great, but it does come with its set of problems. We miscommunicate. We hurt each other. We break promises. We fall in and out of love. We commit adultery in our hearts and with our bodies. There's divorce. There's the pain of the death of a spouse. Yeah, so as great as marriage is, it isn't perfect. And even though marriage is the most intimate human relationship on the planet, it isn't the most intimate relationship in the universe." Marriage and all human relationships exist to create within us a longing for something even deeper.

And so as we do marriage as husband and wife, we celebrate our triumphs and work through our struggles, with a deep longing for the kind of relationships we will have on the other side. Here's how the bible speaks of these realities.

¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (1 Cor 13)

⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil 3)

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has **come**, and his **bride** has made herself ready. (Rev 19:7)

Conclusion:

May our marriages reflect God's design for marriage. And may our marriages be places where we discover the wonder, beauty, majesty, love and holiness of God.