

# Origins: Relationships

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, relationships can be confusing. Relationships can be complicated. So much so that our culture has had to come up with a whole new vocabulary to describe the various relationships dynamics that exist today.

So there's ghosting. Heard of ghosting? When somebody in a relationship cuts off all contact with the other person, they just simply disappear like a ghost, vanish without any kind of explanation.

And then there's gaslighting. Gaslighting is a term that's used to describe one person's efforts to undermine another person's sense of reality. And it's really just a form of manipulation.

And then there's love bombing, which is an over-the-top display of affection in a relationship. And I guess it's also manipulative. And then there's situationship.

A situationship is a romantic arrangement without the commitment of a relationship. It's a situation instead of a relationship. And then there's breadcrumbing.

[ 1 : 0 6 ] Ever heard of breadcrumbing? It's a new one to me. Not because I've tried it or I think it's been tried on me. But breadcrumbing is giving someone just enough attention to keep them interested without any intention of being tied down to a relationship with them.

Basically, it seems as if it's just stringing somebody along. And that's just some, of course, but there are plenty other terms that are used to describe relationships today.

That's why I said relationships can be confused. Understand ourselves. Understand our place in the world. Understand how to relate to each other. Then here is where we need to begin in Genesis.

And so Genesis chapter 2, verse 18 to 25, essentially gives us God's blueprint for human relationships. I guess for many people, though, what the Bible teaches about relationships is seen as outdated, it's seen as irrelevant, and it's seen as restrictive.

And it's really because we are children of the revolution. That is the sexual revolution that began in the 1960s and continues today.

[ 2 : 1 5 ] And the revolution promised sexual freedom by severing the link between sex and marriage. And yet the revolution has given us plenty evidence to show that it's failed to deliver on its promise.

And in so many ways. Because the statistics tell us that we aren't happier people, that we don't have more fulfilling relationships. Sexual freedom has given us more sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, broken families, disappointed expectations, pain, hurt, and guilt.

And it's tragic. And so whether you call yourself a Christian or not, we should see that we do pay a high price, as individuals and as a culture, if we ignore God's good pattern for human relationships.

And that's why the Bible's teaching on human relationships, including sex and marriage, is actually good news for us today. Now, before we go any further, it's worth emphasizing that this whole area of relationships, including marriage and sex, is a really sensitive one.

One where we all have our struggles, and we have them for various reasons. And yet, relationships are integral to what it means to be human.

[ 3 : 37 ] And so we would be wise to listen to our maker's instructions. And so this afternoon, we're going to think about three things. First of all, the origins of relationships, verse 18 to 23, the pattern of relationships, verse 24 and 25, and then finally, the destiny of relationships.

So the origins, the pattern, and the destiny of relationships. First, the origins of relationships. So these early chapters of Genesis give the origins of our existence, first of all, and then here in Genesis 2, we get the origins of relationships, where what is said is foundational to our humanity.

The spotlight focuses here on the marriage of the first man and the first woman, and yet it has implications for us all, whatever our status in life, because God made us as human beings to be in relationship.

In fact, the lack of a relationship is the very first thing that God pronounces as not good. So look at verse 18. It says there, the Lord God said, it is not good for the man to be alone.

I will make a helper suitable for him. Now that is a startling announcement. Remember, this is a perfect world that we're speaking about here. And man, Adam, is in a perfect relationship with the God who made him.

[ 5 : 04 ] And yet, God declares that it is not good for the man to be alone. In other words, it is a bad thing for him to be alone. And it's amazing when you think about it, because God has designed this man, he has designed humanity to need other people.

And so Adam here needs somebody else in his life beside himself. And of course, we all need God. God made us to be in relationship with him. But God also made us clearly here to be in relationship with other human beings.

So God created us to need people, to need human love besides his love. And so we're being told here of the fundamental importance of human relationships.

The first man needed a companion, a suitable helper. And that wasn't to be found in the animal kingdom. As we read, verse 19 and 20, Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky.

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. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals.

[ 6 : 26 ] And of course, we know the outcome of this story. And so we probably wonder why God parades all these animals in front of the man for the man to then name each of them.

Seems strange to report afterwards, just at the end of verse 20, but for Adam, no suitable helper was found. Now, why is this?

The commentators suggest that God was preparing Adam for the gift of woman, making Adam aware of his loneliness, making him conscious that he needed a companion, he needed a helper, because as a social being, he was made to live life in relationship with someone on his own level.

And that's why God here would create the perfect companion. And so when we read this word helper, we shouldn't think that it suggests inferiority in any way. Actually, the word helper in the rest of the Hebrew scriptures in the Old Testament, it is most often applied to God himself.

God is described as the helper of his people. And so the expression suitable helper or helper fit for him describes how the woman would compliment the man.

[ 7 : 40 ] He needed her and she needed him. And so we read, 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 then closed up the place with flesh.

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man. So God made the woman from the man's rib or from his side, it can be translated.

And so she was made from him and she was made like him in a way that nothing else in all creation was. And being human, being of the very same stuff as the man, but also different from the man, meant that she was the perfect companion or complement for the man.

God literally made them for each other to belong together. Matthew Henry, who is an old commentator, he captures this well in his commentary when he says this about the woman.

He says, she is not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be beloved.

[ 9 : 00 ] And so this is God setting up the institution of marriage. And this is, in effect, the first recorded wedding in the Bible. And the setting, the venue is in the perfect garden of Eden.

And then God brings the woman to the man as his wife. And I guess that's why in weddings these days it is the father of the bride who walks his daughter down the aisle and presents her to the groom, to the man.

And that's essentially what God is doing here, bringing the woman to the man. And so marriage then is not some kind of man-made institution. It can be redefined to mean whatever the culture thinks it should mean.

Because what God is doing here is establishing a pattern for how men and women should relate to each other for all time. That's what he's doing.

And so what happens with Adam is that he is absolutely delighted with the prospect of this wife that God gives to him. So verse 23 says, the man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

[ 10 : 09 ] She shall be called woman for she was taken out of man. So Adam celebrates the creation of Eve and it's significant because this is the only recorded human speech before the fall of humanity in Genesis chapter 3.

And it's the only thing that Adam says. He didn't say, my, my, this is an interesting specimen. This looks even better than the lovely duck-billed platypus, which is amazing.

No, what he does is he sings a love song. And that's why it's laid out in our Bibles as it is. It's poetic verse. You're asking, what does it mean, poetic verse?

Well, it's Hebrew poetry, so it's using parallelism, assonance, wordplay, chiasmus, and repetition. You're glad you asked.

All those English graduates will be glad they know all about Hebrew poetry. But that's what this is. There's all sorts of beautiful ways that Adam's words, his love song, his poem, are presented.

[ 11 : 16 ] So he knew that woman came from him and so he named her in relation to him. In naming her woman, he then names himself as man.

So he calls her by a name that echoes his own because she is the perfect helper who has been provided by God. Different from the man but made to complement him because they're made to complement each other in every way.

And this all comes from the Hebrew words used in verse 18 and verse 20 for suitable for him. Literally, it says like opposite him, like opposite or we might say corresponds.

And so God created human beings like each other as humans but opposite each other as male and female. And so the woman came from the man and so she is one with the man but she is also different.

Just think of a jigsaw. Here's how it's been described before. The pieces of a jigsaw only fit together if they are like and opposite i.e. they're like because they're the same part of the jigsaw, they're the same kind of jigsaw, they come from the same box so they're like but they're not identical with each other i.e.

[ 12 : 42 ] they have opposites. If they were the same they wouldn't fit together but because they're opposite they do fit together so they're like but they're opposite. they correspond and they complement and so what God does here is he gives Eve to Adam therefore Adam to Eve like and opposite in order that they would complement one another.

So each gender is different and has qualities that the other doesn't have. Hence the complementary nature of marriage. And so that's how God designed human relationships and that's the first thing the origins of relationships.

So secondly let's think about the pattern of relationships in verse 24 and 25. The pattern is laid out there in verse 24 where it says this is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh.

This is God's definition if you like of marriage but it's also the origin for what the rest of the Bible will teach us about sex and relationships.

In other words God's saying here this is how life is supposed to work. God gives us this creation pattern for marriage and therefore sex.

[ 13 : 59 ] And that's why Jesus grounds all of his teaching on human relationships on this foundation in Genesis chapter 2 verse 24 and then as does the apostle Paul in the New Testament.

And so let's just look more closely at this pattern because Adam and Eve's relationship helps us understand what marriage is all about because of course these words don't just apply to the first marriage but to every marriage.

So what does marriage mean? What does it mean to be married? Well here we see it means to leave and it means to cleave. Cleave coming from the word united or in some translations hold fast so leave and cleave.

So first of all we're told that a man leaves his father and mother and you might be saying well just hang on a minute Adam and Eve didn't have a father or a mother.

Well that's why this instruction isn't just for them it's an instruction for everyone who'd come after them like us. And so leaving his father and mother so before marriage of course the main social unit that we are part of is the family of birth that's our social unit but marriage begins a new social unit so it marks a break from the old one because there's now a new one so in marriage a man and a woman are publicly saying saying to the world that their relationship takes priority that it is the most important and of course this doesn't mean cutting ties with parents or anything like that but it means making the marriage the place where our primary needs are met and so there's the leaving a man leaves his father and mother secondly what about the cleaving well the cleaving is he leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh in other words marriage is not just an exclusive relationship it is also supposed to be a permanent relationship where husband and wife are bound together as one in fact the word for united here means to stick and so it's the strongest expression of commitment between a man and a woman where sex is part of the two becoming one flesh so God designed sex to have this profoundly unifying effect on a man and a woman

[ 16 : 34 ] I guess it's like relational super glue where it unites a man and a woman in a way that nothing else possibly can making it the most powerful body language possible and that's why the marriage relationship here is the right setting for sexual intimacy and why sex was never designed to be used outside of a marriage relationship and that's why the phrase one flesh here in verse 24 refers to more than just physical union this one flesh speaks of a deeper union that exists at every level body mind emotion soul and so sex is God's way for a man and a woman to give themselves fully and exclusively and permanently to each other and that's why the teaching of the Bible is very clear to state that the marriage is supposed to be between one man and one woman and that's the only place for sexual intimacy because it's designed by God to express commitment and also to strengthen it and that's why we get this great picture of marital bliss at the end of our reading verse 25

Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame that's the perfect state for human relationships not that it means that we should all get naked that's not what it's saying but their nakedness signifies real intimacy intimacy with each other real openness real genuine trust they were in perfect harmony and there were no barriers between them naked in every way before each other and so they had nothing to hide there was no fear no feelings of guilt no feelings of shame and we've got no idea what that's like have we because this innocence was lost by the fall when this openness and this trust would go and fear and guilt and shame would all come and so can you see how this is God's perfect pattern for relationships for marriage and for sex it's how our loving creator designed life to work best for everyone but our relationships of course like everything else have been affected by the fall and that's why they can be messy why they can be painful and why they can lead to so much guilt and shame and sadness and yet God's pattern for how we should relate to each other hasn't changed what God laid out at the creation is still what God intends for our human flourishing and so when Jesus was questioned about relationships what he did was he reaffirmed

God's design in Genesis where the only place for sex is within marriage which by implication means that all other sexual activity outside of marriage whether premarital sex or extramarital sex or homosexual sex isn't what God intends for us now in saying this I'm aware that this view of relationships is not what people like to hear and it is regarded as being outdated it's even regarded as being deeply offensive and in some cases it's seen as being harmful and dangerous but please see why the only kind of sexual intimacy that God intends and permits is between one man and one woman in the lifelong commitment of marriage please see this because however difficult or how hard this may sound there are good reasons for it and we need to know why especially our young people need to know why why what's being said in Genesis is so important because what's being said here in Genesis is the opposite to the message that is being preached from everywhere else today because when it comes to relationships and especially sex our culture is preaching a message that says sex is really no big deal so you can have sex with whoever you want whenever you can just be careful that's the message that's proclaimed in the movies that's the message that is coming across in reality TV that's the message that is being sung about in songs and spoken about in sex education in school classrooms and so it's easy to think that our culture has somehow got this really high view of sex because it promotes sexual freedom whereas Christianity is seen as having such a low view of sex because it restricts sexual freedom but actually when you think about it the opposite is the case because it's our culture that cheapens sex by treating it only as a physical thing but God values sex because it's far more than just what we do with our bodies it impacts the whole person for example just take the hashtag me too movement it is devastating proof of how much our culture devalues sex compared to how much

God values it because it shows that the misuse of sex goes way beyond the physical it can do such deep emotional and psychological damage that lasts an entire life that's why there's no such thing as casual sex it's a contradiction in terms that's why sex can be dehumanizing and damaging and why the boundaries that God gives are good because they are for our ultimate protection so God has designed sex as a powerful force and like all powerful forces it shouldn't be misused but it should be used not misused just take fire as an example in our home we've got a log burning stove in the lounge and in a few minutes you can start a really powerful fire that heats up the whole room and then warms the whole house but the log burning stove really is the only place in our home to start a fire if our children decide they want to start a fire it can't happen anywhere but the stove because if you start one anywhere else it's not going to give off this enjoyable heat it is going to be dangerous and will cause damage to the whole house and so a fire when it's used in the right setting is delightful but used in the wrong setting it might be good for a moment but it is ultimately destructive and that's how we should understand sex it is a powerful force designed by

God to be both delightful but also it can be destructive if it's misused and so because God cares about us he is our creator he made us then he wants this powerful force to be used in the context of marriage to unite and to deepen love because outside of marriage it can be used to cause great hurt and great pain and so the reality is that Christianity has a much higher much more positive more fulfilling view of sex than our culture does and so living in harmony with God's pattern doesn't restrict our freedom rather it enables us to flourish far better as human beings and so that's our second point the pattern of relationships first the origin of relationships second the pattern of relationships and then thirdly and finally the destiny of relationships okay while Genesis 2 does speak about marriage it actually applies to everybody so God's pattern for our relationships is faithfulness if we're married and it's chastity if we're not married and that's why the

[ 25 : 09 ] Bible's teaching is a challenge for everybody to obey it's just a challenge in different ways for each of us so God designed us to be social human beings we should relate to each other but as a result of the fall we are also sinful human beings and so every part of our humanity has been marred by the fall including our sexuality and that's why we think and we feel and we act in ways that are opposed to God's good design and so we will all struggle in different ways according to our particular situation and so while marriage is a gift from God it's clear here marriage won't be for everybody and that's why in the New Testament it's clear that singleness is also a gift from God and so whatever our current situation God does know what is best for us and he does know what we need and that's why we will need to trust him as our good wise loving kind heavenly father because as the

Bible moves forward from Genesis it's clear that human relationships aren't the ultimate in other words as great as human relationships are they are not what we are made for yes they're good yes they are powerful but they are not what life is all about human relationships aren't what defines us they're not the ultimate the ultimate is a relationship with God that's what we were made for that's what life is all about and that is what defines us so human relationships were never meant to be elevated to such a status that they become idols where the idol can be the perfect partner or the perfect marriage or even sex itself can become an idol and we start to think that our life is incomplete and we'll never be complete unless we have that thing or that person and that's why your relationship status should not define you as a person whether you're single or whether you're married and why your sexuality shouldn't define you as a person whether you feel attracted to the opposite sex or the same sex what should define you is an identity in Jesus

Christ that is the ultimate relationship so what matters in life now and for the life to come isn't being in a relationship what matters is being in Christ because as the bigger picture from the Bible opens out from Genesis chapter 1 and chapter 2 we see how our lives are part of this greater bigger more amazing love story of God and that's why human marriage is a picture of a greater marriage that between God and his people or Christ and his church and that's why Paul in Ephesians chapter 5 he picks up on these words in Genesis chapter 2 verse 24 when he is addressing husbands and wives and he says for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh this is a profound mystery but I am talking about Christ and the church and so

Jesus gave himself sacrificially for his bride the church and his bride yields herself gratefully back to him and so there is no more exclusive no closer or permanent relationship than this between a person and God and so this is truly a marriage made in heaven Christ and his bride Christ and you Christ and me and that's why this marriage metaphor actually finds its ultimate fulfillment in Revelation the final book of the Bible with the wedding supper of the lamb in Revelation chapter 19 and so can you see how the Bible story from the beginning in Genesis right through to the end in Revelation is this fantastic love story the origins are there in Genesis with the marriage of two people and then the destiny is there in Revelation with the marriage of Christ and his bride the church so we weren't created for a temporary marriage in this world we were created for an eternal relationship with God and so to make this happen

Jesus came to us and he literally loved us to death by dying on a cross for us and so his love is the greatest love that we could ever experience which tells us that it's only in Christ that we find the deepest longings of our hearts met nothing else in this life even the best of relationships can give us the joy and satisfaction that we crave only Jesus can and so it's only as his self-sacrificing love changes our hearts will we then go and relate to other people as we should whether it's in a marriage or any other kind of friendship or relationship so God's purpose in relationships goes deeper and further than human relationships it is really about whether we will give our hearts to the God who made us just one quick illustration to finish

[ 31 : 05 ] I've conducted lots of weddings in my time and if you know anything about a wedding service you've all been at them have you ever noticed how it is the man who always the groom he always gives his vows first he makes his promises before the woman does and so the minister at the funeral wrong analogy the minister at the wedding will ask will you take this woman to be your wife that's the question for the man and then there's a whole set of vows promising to love and prosperity and hardship and health and sickness and sorrow and joy or words to that effect so the man is asked will you take this woman and then it's the woman's turn so the man is just declared to the woman in front of all the witnesses and to everyone else he's declared his undying love and his promise he's promised his total commitment to this woman and so the minister then turns to the woman and asks will you take this man to be your husband it's over to her what will she do she's just heard what he has had to say she could

I guess say nah no thanks I'm off best man is quite nice that's never happened to me I hope it never does but she has to respond she has to respond to the love that has already been declared and pronounced and promised to her and so you know when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ Jesus has already declared his love for us at the cross he's done it and he's calling us to respond in effect he is saying to us I am prepared to be your spouse I will love you I will be faithful to you forever and even though we don't deserve it even though he knows that we'll fail him and let him down in every area of our lives even in our relationships he has already declared his love for us and he has already declared his desire to forgive and so if you're here today and you still don't know the God who made you the question is will you take this man will you take Jesus

Christ he has declared his love he has promised his commitment he is a true spouse who will never leave us or forsake us will you take him to focuses on what on what the Impor he has going to ■■■ ■ zumindest ■■■■ move inAw withdraw expand