

Wisdom about Marriage

Gen 2; 18-24 Mark 10: 2-16 Pastor Lentz
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When I first looked at these passages and realized that there were messages from God to all of us that are seldom addressed, I was excited. As part of that I believe these passages offer us ways of getting along better inside and outside of marriage.

The Genesis passage invites us to recognize that being alone is not good. It isn't referring to just being married or single it is the state of aloneness. Actually, I was taught that the word used here is more often used to mean loneliness. In other words God was saying that it is not good for people to be lonely. That the state of loneliness is not good for anyone. Part of the reason is that loneliness is a state when we hear criticism in our mind whether anyone is saying it or not. So a person can be lonely whether they have people around them or not. It is a state of disconnect from God where we are not sensing God's love for us, and primarily hearing criticism of ourselves and our actions. It is a state of mind where a person feels judged and criticized no matter what.

The state of loneliness causes illness, dysfunctional behavior, sin and even death. Sounds almost alarmist, but actually it is perhaps not even alarming enough. While I worked in Prison the primary reason that people appeared to sin was because they were lonely. They were afraid they would not be enough, seen as enough, or have enough because they wanted to connect with other people and feel accepted, believed in and liked if not loved. Loneliness told them they were not enough. They didn't realize that loneliness is about hearing internal criticism whether it was actually said, or not. They thought it was a comment about them as people. They believed that a person feeling lonely was

not ok, and the emotions were proof. The emotions are only proof that internal criticism is common.

One Ted Talk proudly proclaims that addiction is because of loneliness. The author makes the case that helping addicts to reconnect heals. He is convincing, but even if he is only partially right the state of loneliness is one that causes us much difficulty. It isn't just being alone it is being lonely, because a person can easily not feel connected and be in all sorts of relationships. A person can easily not feel cared about and yet be loved by many people. It isn't a matter of reality but of fear, bad habit or lack of awareness that causes the problem.

The more important aspect is knowing the emotion of loneliness is just an indication of internal criticism and not anything about who you are. In fact, it may be an indication that you are not getting enough of a sense of acceptance and belonging from God to begin with. That would be an important message. It is one that I hope was being communicated by God in the passage.

Yes, God made for us a helper. The passage has often been narrowly defined as about marriage. To more powerfully understand it speaking to us all whether married or not is a legitimate theological stance. In doing that there are two ways that quickly come to mind. Whether we are married or not this applies. God has and will make for us a helper. A person who we can share with and feel close to. Our culture implies that person should be your partner, and if so that is fine, but that is also unrealistic. No matter how loving and kind your partner is they almost can't be expected to fill all your needs for closeness. We are too complex and no relationship can be expected to fulfill all the areas that we may need to feel fully accepted, loved, cared about and even challenged to do better. It really takes a whole community of people to help us to feel that sense of belonging. God is always making for us helpers who come into our lives. The word neighbor in Hebrew is really

referring to the person who worships with you. It is not the person who happens to live next door, unless your next door neighbor actually goes to church with you. Ideally, we have lots of helpers who help us to feel connected, cared about and even believed in and loved. It is a little easier when it is someone who has similar religious beliefs.

The second part of our accepting a helper made for us is more of an internal one that is made just for us. That would be our taking the attitude of allowing God to help transform a part of us to be more accepting, loving and forgiving of ourselves for our mistakes. That would be truly allowing our relationship with God to be healing to us.

I believe that was absolutely what Jesus was doing when he initiated Communion. I believe he knew how self-critical we can become and he knew that we also needed a way to feel forgiven. While there are ways for a person to feel close to God in the Bible, and there are even ways for us to feel forgiven, but there are not enough ways for us to feel forgiven and close to the community.

Most of the disciples would have been married. It was odd for Jesus to be the age he was and not married. Being married however doesn't do away with the feeling of loneliness. It can help but the deeper truths are what help us to deal with the more devastating sense of loneliness. Just having a partner is not enough.

The problem of forgiving ourselves without the connection to the community is exactly what the second passage is about. Yes I am fully aware that some denominations say that this passage is really against divorce, however if you do any serious Bible study you will see it wasn't about that at all. You see what Jesus was being critical of was the practice of allowing usually a man to divorce his wife for a younger woman just because he found the younger woman attractive. Doing that simply ignored how disruptive, cruel, self-centered and sinful

allowing a person's emotions to guide their actions. There is nothing in Scriptures that place emotions above responsibility. However, the culture often has a way of excusing divorce for any reason. It is common in America for divorce to be no fault. In other words the court doesn't care what the person's reason is for the divorce. However, viewing the two as equal and not acknowledging the greater earning power of one of them, is just as unfair as the divorce's in Jesus day that he was criticizing. There are however reasons that people who get married probably should be divorced. Jesus wasn't disagreeing with that. He was acknowledging that God ideally wants us to not need divorce, even though we clearly do. We all know there are combinations of personalities that probably should not have ever married in the first place. Usually those combinations are prompted by some aspects of loneliness, and fear.

However, one of the reasons the discussion is even being held or is recorded, in the passage for us is that it shows us that on our own we can justify bad behavior. It is actually a part of sin. Sin separates us from each other, from God and even from ourselves, as well as it separates us from wanting to read the scriptures. Most of us don't want to read the Bible when we are intentionally wanting to sin.

Ideally we need to be forgiven in the community so that we are less likely to just excuse bad behavior. It doesn't mean that a person won't but it does mean that they are less likely to.

Sin causes disruptions even in the behavior of others who love us and care for us. Whether you like Hilary Clinton or not, her book, it takes a village, is a perfect example of how sin impacts others. I usually assign my students to read some of the book because opening it anywhere and reading 3 or 4 pages will give you a sense of how a woman becomes who is married to a sex addict. They become critical, and are trying desperately to get their partner to stop his/her behavior. It takes

a toll. They become heavy handed and often have a “ should or ought to “ for everyone. She must have seen a wonderful therapist because she doesn’t seem to react that way today, and perhaps her husband learned his lesson as well. It however also points to two other truths, about loneliness. It can cause a person to get all shoudy, and it can also cause a person to be doing wrong whether they are powerful, and wealthy or not.

One piece of wisdom about marriage is that it isn’t going to avoid loneliness. However, a surface reading of the Genesis passage would think it would, because we often read what we think we would find. Yet, the Bible doesn’t really say that it would. It was an attempt just as the making and creating of all the animals and letting Adam name them. Besides the “ suitable “ helper in Hebrew is better translated as “ Obvious “ . Actually, one of the possibilities is of the word in Hebrew is “ Mentally” . So God is going to create for you a mental partner.

I think that is awesome because that is exactly what it really takes for us to avoid being lonely. The truth is that a mental partner that we allow to be God is what many of the prophets and other wise people did and have done. So by looking below the surface of this passage we get it addressing loneliness. The deeper you look into the Scriptures the more you will have the answer to real issues, even if there are not always the answers that you thought would be there. So looking deeper you see that we are being offered two solutions. One that is on the surface that looks like it is the real one, and encouraged to appreciate that one. However, it is actually offering us another solution that we wouldn’t even know about unless we look deeper.

It is another of the solutions that the Bible actually offers. Because Hebrew words are multifaceted in meaning it is easy to say several things at the same time, without even working hard at it. In fact, you

would have to work to not do that. It is like the Light that is created first, in Genesis, is not the light that comes from the Sun. The sun and moon are not created until the 3rd day. It is so that the “ Light “ will be understood as being created first, and that light is wisdom. Proverbs gets it and assumes that everyone knows that because it says that wisdom was created first.

When you allow God to create for you a mental partner that includes God, loneliness will not only be gone but you will have a partner that allows you to get along even better with others. The more and better you feel about yourself in the presence of God the better you can get along with others where ever they are, because you are drawing from your strength and ability rather than a fear. Amen