

**Series: Love Stories from the Bible**  
**Sermon: Eve and Adam**

**Genesis 2:4-7, 15-25**

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. 5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

18 The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

19 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. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

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 then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib[h] 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 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

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

**Sermon**

It was 20 years ago this year, that Stephanie and I got married. Time flies. And on my wedding day, my father shared a little bit of advice to me. He said, “Son, one of the great mysteries on this earth is in how to be happy in your life. Let me tell you the answer: Happy wife, happy life.” “That’s great, dad, good advice. But how do you keep your wife happy?” He said, “Son, that is a mystery we men have yet to solve.” I haven’t solved it yet.

This February, we are going to explore a few love stories that we find in the Bible, seems fitting for Valentine’s month. They all won’t be sermons about love and couples, there will be plenty of references and nuggets about general relationships - there will be something in these for everyone. I say this because a friend of mine calls Valentine’s Day, Single’s Awareness Day. Because there are reminders out in the culture that something must be wrong with you if you’re single. Not true, not true. Wherever you are on the dating spectrum, that’s fine. Dating, married, single, engaged, splitting up, widowed, whatever. But you can’t walk into Fred Meyers without being reminded that some people are getting flowers. “Every Kiss Begins with K”. Makes me think, “Every Guilt Trip Begins With G”. All that to say, don’t tune these sermons out thinking that they may not pertain to you - there’s something in here for everybody.

Although this first one, it is about the first relationship and two people finding each other.

But first, some sobering stats: Nationally, 40-50% of all marriages end in divorce. Some after a few years, more and more after many years. I couldn't find the exact number, so many different resources out there saying different things. But it is less than half. Not quite a coin flip. However, second marriages, have a little worse track record, a little more than 50% of those don't work out. Thanks Pastor Mike! Don't ask me, I can't predict success. Some couples I think will last forever, and I hear two years later that they've split. Some couples I have severe reservations about, and they're fine decades later. I don't know. I did run across an interesting stat a few years back. I was looking through the County's Vital Stat compilation. And one graph had this: A table that had marriage information, with the number of marriages by the groom and the number of marriages by the bride. It looked like this: (WEDDING TABLE 1). So you see, for the people who got married in this particular year, her first marriage and his first marriage, (WEDDING TABLE 2) there were 2,452 weddings. And his second, her first 839 weddings, and her second, his first, yadda yadda yadda. Just kind of interesting. And as the table goes out, it gets progressively less and less weddings. It's what you'd expect. But I'm not showing you the whole table. This is what it looked like. (WEDDING TABLE 3) Way up in the top right corner. His sixth, her seventh wedding. 1 wedding. This couple has almost a dozen ex's among them. And I thought I had hobbies. Maybe, maybe this is the one!!! I wish them the best, but wow!

You might think the odds of failure are much less for couples heavily involved in church. Not so! Ministries Today, a trade magazine for pastors that I know you all get, reports the divorce rate up 279% in the last 30 years. An ABC broadcast reports that the divorce rate in the "Bible Belt" is 50% higher than in other areas of the country.

The Christian-based Barna Research Group reported that atheists and agnostics have a lower divorce rate than church folk. And the more conservative the church, the higher it goes. It may be that those groups also have a higher degree of pressure to get married sooner and younger than the general population. You're 22 and you're not married yet? You look so old! (Big fat Greek Wedding clip).

It's time to look at Eve and Adam. First, I believe in the truths in the creation stories and the first family. Now, whether or not if they truly existed as written is another sermon altogether, but I believe in the truths they were meant to convey. Look for the deeper meanings beyond concrete fact. Although marriage practiced in the Old Testament was far from the ideal, we can see what God intends marriage to be in these stories. Don't get riled up yet, hear the sermon out. The solution is not the abandonment of the institution of marriage, but the return to God's intention of marriage. Truth be told, I always bristle a little bit when I hear we need to get back to the Biblical notion of marriage. Lets go back to the way it was. I don't want to go back to polygamy - a wide spread practice back in the day. I don't want to go back to the subservient view of women - a wide spread practice back in the day, and still today. I don't want to go back to dowries and paying for your spouse. Or paying someone else to get your kid out of the house. Which of these practices do you want to go back to? The practice of OT marriage was far from the ideal, yet through the patriarchs, we can see what God intends marriage to be. I hear the buzzwords, Traditional Values. Let me give you what I believe are the traditional values we ought to hold near and dear, and I'll use Eve and Adam as a model.

The first marriage was purposeful. It was purposeful. Much thought and attention went into the relationship. God established marriage for the purpose of companionship. The word helper means ally or friend. God knew that His creation would not usually function well on its own. Ladies, I know that men are accused of being thickheaded. Here we might see God agreeing with that notion. Notice how God paraded the animals before Adam, each having its partner. Every animal had a friend. Two possums. Two meadowlarks. The animals aren't in isolation, but they have someone to relate to. Adam realized there was no partner for him. It sounds like God's first choice was just to have Adam hanging around and that's it. "But no suitable partner could be found." As in, God thought maybe the cows were enough company. Or the wombats. Adam, you can't be

lonely, you've got wombats! But in the end, we get the world's first surgery. Now if you remember your bible, Adam was formed from the soil. God made Adam from the clay, and breathed into the breath of life. The name Adam looks a whole lot like the Hebrew name for earth, for soil. So if you know anyone named Adam, their name really means dirt. There you go. So why didn't God just use the same process to make Eve? Why not form Eve from the ground as He did Adam? Doesn't say. But it does show a show of unique closeness. God chose a rib from Adam's side. Not from his head that she would be over him. Not from his foot that she would be under him. But from his side that she would be next to him. I might be projecting my own thoughts into this, but the best relationships are based in mutual equality. We both have veto power, and when we disagree, we've got to figure it out. And it takes practice. And practice. And practice. On purpose. Are there some couples who get divorced too quickly? Yes. But I also believe that some people get married too quickly - not taking the time to truly understand each other, each one has hopes and dreams and aspirations, and pet peeves, and baggage, and relatives, and, you get the idea. It takes time and purposeful dating to see if you're the right companion for the lifelong journey. You might love each other, but you've got to like each other too.

Number Two: The first marriage was exclusive. It was exclusive. Turn to your neighbor and say, "You're the only one for me." Duh! According to the Bible there weren't any other comparisons or options. They were sort of stuck with each other. Did you hear the one about Eve being concerned because Adam came home at 3:00 am. She wondered if there was another woman. So, she waited until he was asleep & counted his ribs just to make sure! I don't know, it happened once . . .

Unlike this first couple, we are surrounded by 100's of comparisons and choices every day. Too many look over their shoulders, wondering if they made the right choice, or if there is someone out there who could make them happier. The grass is always greener . . . A Christian marriage is not based on the idea of finding the top prize. It is based on the premise that this is the person that God has placed in my path, and I will be the best companion I can be to this one person...exclusively. Take measures to close doors of temptation. At work or social events, lift up your wife, husband, your kids. Dilbert, the comic strip, had a series awhile back that made fun of the concept of office spouse. Someone in your office that kinda looks like you're married - or that fulfills that relationship need. I looked it up, and yeah, Business Insider says that around 20% of employees, married or not, have that special someone at work - not that they would say they're dating or even romantic, but that they share conversations and ideas and time that should be reserved for the real significant other. Open marriages rarely work. Don't know from experience, just in doing this for so long. I once had a church employee who believed in open marriages - not too many people knew about it. Kept asking us over for dinner. No thanks. Just a little too weird for us. I know I may be a prude, but I've never been in Barnes and Nobel and saw the self help book "How to help your marriage through jealousy, envy and regret." Adam and Eve were exclusive. Granted, they had no choice, but still.

These are traditional values: Marriage should be purposeful, marriage should be exclusive, which leads me to my next point: The first marriage was transparent. Since there was no sin, there was nothing to hide. Adam and Eve frolicked out in the open and they were not ashamed. Now, I don't recommend that in your daily life, walking around Clackamas Town Center or at the movies. But I love that idea, that line, and they were not ashamed. Nothing to hide. Your spouse is someone with whom you can share your secrets. Do you need to tell your spouse everything? No. That would be crazy. "Hey hon, I stopped at the store today and got a bag of chips." and? No point. We have a relative, whom we love, who would tell us a 15 minute story about their five minute trip to the post office. How is the story longer than the event? There are some things that are inconsequential and don't need to be shared. But marriages are based in trust and honesty - the result of transparency. You can't keep significant secrets and not feel shame. You can't keep significant secrets and not feel guilt. You may remember how the Eve and Adam story has that apple thing. God asked them, where are you, and they were hiding. Then everything was spoiled. Sin makes us self-conscious; it removes trust; it alienates us from God and each other. As our relationships mature spiritually, they should become increasingly

transparent. Truth be told, we will never achieve the total transparency Adam & Eve had in the garden. Everyone needs some privacy. But transparency deals with sharing inner thoughts & feelings as well as being open to each other. We need to strive for authentic relationships rather than sugar coated ones that hide serious areas of concern.

And last, as I look at Eve and Adam, the first marriage was spiritual. It was exclusive, but it was a partnership of three. God was somehow present. What happens when you allow God in your relationship? Commitment to each other is enhanced. A greater sense of right & wrong which deters temptation. Christian friends strengthen & reinforce your values. Your ultimate fulfillment about belonging, and peace and self-worth is provided by Jesus Christ. You may think you get those things from your spouse, but it's really through God. So it can become less demanding of your spouse. As you grow spiritually, you learn to worship & pray together. And when Christ is the center of the home, He brings it together.

Those are my traditional values of what marriage should look like. It was purposeful. It was exclusive. It was transparent. And it was spiritual. There's a lot of different configurations of families that can hold onto these values. And I never even said the word Love! Love is THE traditional value. In the story, Eve and Adam had the ideal marriage, but like us, they sinned and blew it. We don't have perfect relationships, we're not perfect people. That first couple alienated themselves from God and from each other. Ever since then, God has worked on reconciling our relationships, both with Him and with each other. Eve and Adam had to till the earth together, making a life. It's not good for man to be alone. And neither should we. Whether it be with a mate, a friend, a family, wherever. And the family of God said, Amen!