

Sunday, March 19, 2017

## "The Mission of Marriage" (Part 1)

THE MEANING  
OF MARRIAGE

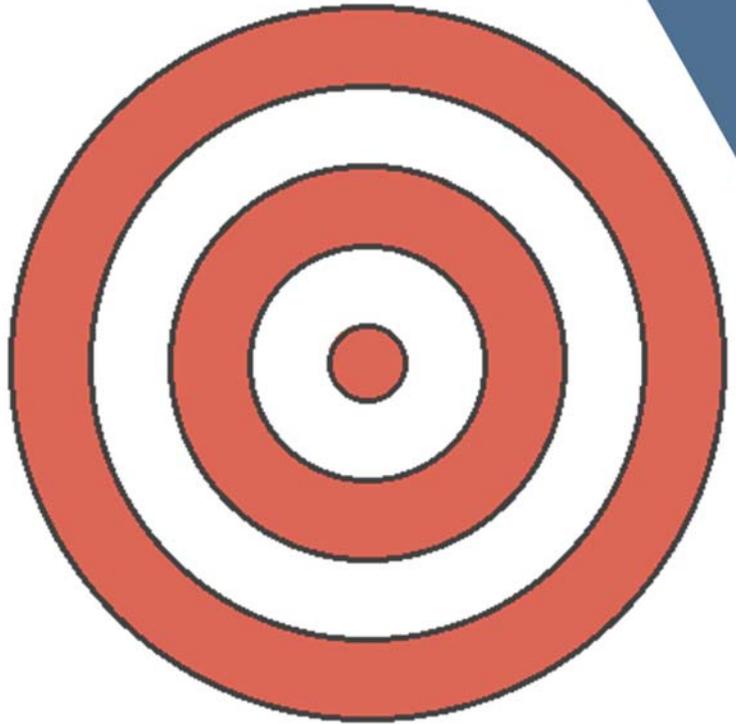
### Loneliness in Paradise

"The Genesis narrative is implying that our intense relational capacity, created and given to us by God, was not fulfilled completely by our 'vertical' relationship with him. God designed us to need 'horizontal' relationships with other human beings. That is why even in paradise, loneliness was a terrible thing."

### The Character of Friendship

#### Group Discussion:

- Looking at your target, who is the closest to you? Who is the most distant from you?
- What makes a friend your friend?
- What experiences BEGAN your best/closest friendships? What experiences GREW those friendships?
- What qualities do many of your friendships have in common?
- What would make you hesitant to be friends with someone?



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"There are two features of real friendship—constancy and transparency. Real friends always let you in, and they never let you down."

"Lewis insisted that the essence of friendship is the exclamation, 'You, too?'... Lewis speaks of a 'secret thread' that runs through the movies, books, art, music, pastimes, ideas, and scenery that most deeply move us. When we meet another person who shares this thread with us, there is the potential for a real friendship, if nurtured with transparency and constancy."



## Christian Friendship

“Christian friendship is not simply about going to concerts together or enjoying the same sporting event. It is the deep oneness that develops as two people journey together toward the same destination, helping one another through the dangers and challenges along the way.”

## THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

**Personal Reflection:** What sets Christian friendships apart? Use the verses printed below as you reflect on these questions:

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

- Have you ever confessed your sins to other trusted believers and received prayer?
- **Transparency:** In what way can these experiences bring forgiveness and healing?
- **Constancy:** How can you be available to your friends or spouse?

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And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Hebrews 3:13)

- How have you been spurred on by a Christian friend?
- **Transparency:** Whose exhortation, example or encouragement meant the most to you?
- **Constancy:** In what specific ways can you spur one another on toward love and good deeds?

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## Your Spouse as Your Best Friend

"When God brought the first man his spouse, He brought him not just lover but the friend his heart had been seeking."

"In his redemptive work, Jesus is both Friend and Lover, and this is to be the model for spouses in marriage. Husband and wife are to be both lovers and friends to one another as Jesus is to us."

"This principle—that your spouse should be capable of becoming your best friend—is a game changer when you address the question of compatibility in a prospective spouse."

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## The Great Horizon

**Group discussion:** What are your favorite things about weddings?

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"Within this Christian vision for marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating, and to say, "I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, "I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!" Each spouse should see the great thing that Jesus is doing in the life of their mate through the Word, the gospel. Each spouse should then give him- or herself to be a vehicle for that work and envision the day that you will stand together before God, seeing each other presented in spotless beauty and glory."

**Closing Reflections:** Ask yourselves these questions during the coming week.

During the next week ask yourself: "Who is God making ME?"

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Who is God making my spouse? (Or: How is God at work in the lives of my close friends?)

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How do I participate in what God is doing?

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