

Marriage To The Glory of God part 1

Romans 11:36

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If you would, take your Bible, turn to Romans chapter 11 this morning. Romans chapter 11.

I know many of you, like myself, enjoy occasionally to get into the outdoors to hunt or fish or hike. And if you're going to go spend some time in the woods, it's probably a good idea to take the most valuable tool you can have, which would be a compass.

I don't know if you've ever been lost in the woods, but I have on many occasions, and it's a disconcerting feeling. There have been many a times that I've gotten myself turned around in the outdoors and for a very long time, walked in exactly the opposite direction of where I thought I was headed.

And what's so unsettling when you get lost is that before you realize you're lost, you're pretty convinced you're headed in exactly the right way. As I've said, I've gone long distances, convinced that any moment I was going to see my destination pop up on the horizon, only to walk and to walk and to walk until suddenly the question comes to mind, something's wrong. A strange, disturbing feeling comes over you. Am I going the right way?

And when you realize that you're lost, it's as if everything stops and begins to momentarily spin around you as your brain rushes to all the terrible things that could happen to you if you don't find your way. That's why a compass, of course, is so useful. If you have a compass, you never lose your bearing because that compass will always point to magnetic north. And because you have that bearing, you can get your bearings and find your way.

But you know, sometimes I find that I can fight with my compass. I can even fight with a GPS. It's a skill passed down in my family. My father has that skill. He's passed it down to me. Something happens in the woods, and even though my GPS says I'm supposed to go that way, everything inside of me says, no, my stand is that way. And I've learned over time, I should trust my GPS and my compass. It's always right. That north-pointing arrow on my compass wins every time. And if I'm going to find my way to my destination, I have to submit to it.

The same thing is true for us in every area of the Christian life. The Word of God is the foundation of our faith. It is the inspired, unchanging standard for life and godliness. The Bible contains objective, divinely verified truth.

Sometimes we go astray because we simply don't know what the Bible says, and we have to study it on a certain issue. But other times, we know exactly what the Bible says, but our flesh is tempting us to disobey. We don't want to submit to the right direction.

And that's certainly true of every area of our lives, but over the next several weeks, I want us to apply this thought specifically to God's gift of marriage. Now, when I introduce a topic like marriage, the temptation immediately for you, if you're single, is to think that, well, this has nothing to offer for me. But the truth is, nothing could be further from the truth.

I trust that as we make our way through this series, what you'll find is that the vast majority of the truth that we will cover apply to every single Christian, regardless of your station in life. And that's because the greatest key to a godly marriage is godliness, personal godliness. And that's beneficial to us in every stage of life, single or married.

And so I trust that you'll find principles, even in those times where we speak directly to husbands and wives, that you can easily apply to your own. Now, to the married, I want to say to you that if you're going to get the most out of this series over the next several weeks, I want to ask you to commit to sit down at least once a week with your spouse and to talk through your notes from the previous lesson.

For certain lessons, I'll actually give you specific assignments that you can work through together. I'll have those at the Connection Center. Today, I just want you to take notes and use your notes to talk through together. But start those conversations with prayer, ask God to give you humility and wisdom, and then discuss these things and work them through together.

Now, obviously, intentionally, our primary diet from a teaching standpoint as a church will always be expository preaching, verse by verse, exposition through books of the Bible. But typically, at least once a year, we'll take a short break from whatever book that we're in and cover a specific topic that the elders find particularly helpful. And for these next several weeks, that topic will be God's gift of marriage.

So we'll be looking at several different passages as we piece together all that God says to us about a biblical and healthy marriage. And I'll confess to you, I've spent a lot of time over the last few months trying to decide exactly how to shape this series. There's so many different ways you could go about teaching a series on marriage.

What I've decided to do is to start from the macro level, the big picture, and then each week we will progressively move into the micro level, the nitty-gritty details of marriage. However, I realize that often what's of most interest to us in our marriages are those nitty-gritty details.

Every biblical marriage is a gift from God, but because of sin, every marriage is also not without times of conflict and difficulty. And often what we're looking for is immediate help. I want you to speak into this specific situation about this specific principle and give me help today. But I assure you, it would be unwise for us to start there.

Let me see if I can illustrate why that is. I want you to imagine for a moment that your car is making a disturbing noise. And so you decide to take it to the mechanic and get it checked out. And you pull in to the mechanic and you turn your car on and there's the sound. And you ask the mechanic, can you please help me get rid of this sound? The mechanic says, of course, I'd be happy to do that. We'll get on it right away.

And you say, great. How much will it cost and how long will it take? And the mechanic will say, well, honestly, I have no idea. What do you mean? You're a mechanic. You do this every day. How is it you can't tell me how long it's going to take and how much it costs? And the mechanic's going to say to you, because of his experience, he knows that

that sound is merely a symptom of a larger problem. And in order to fix the sound, he's got to dig into what the root cause is and fix it at the root issue. And then, of course, the sound will go away.

We're tempted in our marriages to do essentially the same thing. We get stuck on a point of disagreement that we can't seem to work through. Or perhaps there are topics in our marriage that have become landmines and we're constantly trying not to step on those landmines. Maybe the romantic spark that once burned bright has now begun to wane. And we begin to see that our spouse is perhaps selfish or proud or uncaring. And we want it to stop. We want that to change.

So our temptation is to come to a series like this only interested in whatever specific issue or strange sound that the car of our marriage is making and saying, please fix the sound. I want it to go away. But in order to do that, we've got to back up, look at the big picture, and then we'll hone in on the root cause of that particular issue.

An even worse motivation in coming to a series like this than just listening for the issues that you care about the most is to come only hoping that your spouse will hear what they need to hear. Because after all, they're the problem, right?

So before we begin, I want to ask you to make two commitments that will serve you well as we walk through this series. Commitment number one, I'm going to ask you to **Listen to and apply every truth we study**. Don't pick and choose, but listen to and apply every truth from start to finish.

And then commitment number two, I want you to **Listen with an eye to yourself and not your spouse**. Filter these applications through how you personally need to grow in Christ. And as you do that, trust Him to do whatever work He needs to do in your spouse.

Understand that the Bible is clear about roles for husbands and roles for wives, and we'll get into those things, but understand that we have neither the command nor the ability to change our spouse. We're never told to do that. The Bible never says husbands, make sure your wives act in this way or wives, make sure your husbands act in this way.

We are to live unto the Lord and let the Lord do His work in our spouse. And so it is that I want to ask you to focus on your own life. Now here's the theme for this morning that we're going to unpack: **The enjoyment of marriage depends on our submission to the purpose for which God created all things**. Let me say that again. The enjoyment of marriage depends on our submission to the purpose for which God created all things.

If we want to have marriages, if we want to have Christian lives that are what God intends for them to be, we have to first understand why it is He created us and why He created marriage in the first place. In other words, what is the ultimate point of your life? Why are you here? Why are you on this planet? And what's the ultimate point of marriage?

To answer that, God's of course given His word to us graciously to give us the right bearing so that we can understand the direction in which we ought to go. And here's the question.

Why did God create all things? And here's the biblical resounding answer. God has created all things to magnify his own glory. We see this in Romans chapter 11.

If you've turned there, read with me in Romans 11 beginning in verse 33:

“33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

These words come to us at the close of the doctrinal section of the book of Romans, just before he enters into the application section. Earlier in Romans, he's explained the doctrines of justification and sanctification. And in chapters 9 to 11, if you're familiar with Romans, a very famous and important section of Romans, deals with this overarching question of why is it that so many Gentiles are responding to the gospel and so few Jews are responding to the gospel.

And Paul begins to work that out with great detail working through biblical doctrine. And what he explains is that God has sovereignly designed it this way that for a time, He's allowed a partial hardening to come over the Jews for the sake of bringing in many Gentiles to salvation but it will not always be this way. In the end, a massive number of Jews will see Jesus as the Messiah and turn to Him in faith and repentance.

But at the end of this grand discussion, it's as if Paul can't contain himself. And he breaks out into this hymn of praise that we just read. This is his response to all that he's just described. And specifically, for our purposes this morning, I want us to focus on verse 36 which answers the question, why do we exist and for what purpose? Verse 36 says:
“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

Now there's a lot of theology crammed into that one little verse and we could spend weeks just dissecting it but what I want to do is give us an overview that's going to act like the north arrow on the compass that's going to give us our bearing for this entire series and really for our lives as Christians. Because only when we understand and submit to this truth that our lives are to honor the Lord, to bring glory to Him and to enjoy Him will we really live the life He intends.

Now here are three essential truths that this verse highlights. Truth number one, **Every Created Thing Finds Its Origin in God.** He says, for from Him are all things. This is a clear affirmation of the fact that God is the creator of all things in heaven and earth.

The Bible begins this way obviously, Genesis 1.1:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.

There's no explanation as to why God chose to create and notice that God does not create out of some necessity. It's not as if He needs anything.

It's clear that God, the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, the triune God, has had perfect joy and unity and fellowship with Himself from eternity past. He did not create us because He needed us. There was another reason that drove Him.

And the fact that God is the creator of all things means that God is the owner of all things and the ruler of all things. And this is not up for debate. This simply is fact. As creator, He's the head of all and the ruler of all. Therefore, all are accountable to Him. He makes the rules and He has the power to enforce those rules. And in His justice, He will do so.

That means then that all things are either in submission to God or in rebellion to God. There is no neutral. None of us are autonomous from God. All of us have to deal with God. There's no way around the fact that He's creator and he's Lord.

But there's a second truth here. **Every Created Thing Finds Its Continuance in God.** It says: "*and through Him and to Him are all things*". This is another way to say that God sustains the creation. He didn't create the heavens and the earth and then leave creation to its own devices. He proactively, moment by moment, even now as we sit here in this room, sustains every molecule in the universe.

Every ant is sustained by God and so is every angel. Every heartbeat is sustained by God and so is the earth's turning on its axis. Every hidden molecule is sustained by God and every morning sunrise continues day in and day out because He sustains it and causes it to do so.

Paul says the same thing in Colossians. Colossians 1:16-17:
"16 For by Him (that is Christ specifically) *all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."*

That is Christ is the sustaining force that holds creation together. If Christ stopped sustaining the world, it would immediately unravel and cease to exist.

But there's a third truth and this is the truth that's most pertinent to us in our study this morning. Truth number three, **Every Created Thing Finds Its Purpose in God.** "...*and to Him are all things*". To Him are all things. This is the grand finale. Why did God create the world and all it contains? So that it would declare and magnify His own glory. Clearly, this is what he means because he finishes verse 36 by saying to Him be the glory forever. Amen.

All things are to God. That is, they are for God. Every created thing has the glory of God as its ultimate purpose for existence. He's the creator. He's the sustainer and therefore He's the only being truly worthy of glory.

It is the highest good, the only right purpose for which all things could be created, the glory of God. But what is the glory of God? If that's why all things are made, I think it's important we understand the term. The Hebrew word really gives us a word picture that's helpful.

The Hebrew word for glory carries with it the idea of something being heavy or weighty in the sense of being valuable. In that sense then, the glory of God refers to the worthiness of God, the worth, the intricate, essential worth of God.

Another way to say it more clearly is the glory of God is a reference to the sum total of His attributes. It is who God is by nature. It's similar to when the Old Testament says that God is

zealous for His name. That's a reference to the totality of who God is. That is His glory. It's His attributes, His perfections working in harmony and unity forever.

Often the Bible describes a physical manifestation of glory when the glory of God is shown in Scripture. It's often with some sort of bright light. People fall down in response to that bright light. Ultimately, those physical manifestations are just a communication to us as human beings of the value and the worth of God.

The true term itself refers to the sum total of His attributes. What are the attributes of God? What are the perfections of God? Time would fail us to list them all, but just a few we might think of.

God is holy. He is just and righteous. He is good, sovereign, omnipotent, omnipresent, kind, loving, full of grace, mercy, and truth. This is just a representative list, but the glory of God is those and all of His other attributes all at the same time all the time.

If that's what the glory of God means, how is it that created things give glory to God? That's a phrase we say, give glory to God, to God be the glory. First of all, we have to clarify that no created thing ever adds glory to God. That's impossible.

God has all the glory that can be had and He's had it for eternally past and will have it into eternally future. When we say give glory to God, we do not mean add to His glory in any way. What we mean when we say give glory to God is give testimony to God's perfections. Declare that God is who He says He is. That's the way that creation gives glory to God. The beauty and the intricacies of what God has made shine a spotlight on who He is.

This is what Paul describes earlier in Romans chapter one:

"18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because (here's the reason he says they're suppressing the truth) that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. (How did God make it evident?) 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."

God's power, His beauty, His indivisible attributes come shining forth through the testimony of creation. This is what the psalmist means in Psalm 19:1 when he says:

"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."

All created things give glory to God in the sense that they give testimony to God's perfections. When we see creation, it begs the question, what must this God be like to have created all these things with such beauty and such intricacy? What power, what beauty, what perfection, what kindness, what grace and love must define this God? And so it is His perfections put on display, His glory, and in displaying His glory, they give testimony to His glory and in that sense they give glory to God.

But with that brief overview I want us to narrow our focus now and I want us to consider some implications that it should impact our daily lives and ultimately the covenant of marriage specifically.

First of all, since it's true that God has made all things for the purpose of magnifying His glory, that means that we are made for the purpose of magnifying His glory. And it means that the covenant of marriage is made for the magnifying of His glory.

But before we can talk specifically about marriage, we have to understand God's purpose for us. And to do this I want to frame it around the first question given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. **What is the chief end of man?** That is, what is man ultimately made for? What is his purpose? And the answer is this. **To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.** To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. This is your purpose in a nutshell.

As a human being, you were made to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And that's not true because some man-made catechism says so. It's true because in this sense the catechism accurately reflects what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that this is true. And I cannot underscore how much a right understanding of marriage or any other endeavor in life hinges on our understanding and submitting to the purpose for which God has made us. Everything in our lives ties back to us understanding this truth.

So let's examine these two purposes. The first purpose mentioned here **You Were Created to Glorify God.** Obviously, this falls under the heading we just described from Romans 11:36. But I want you to also consider that mankind, human beings, are given by God the gift of bringing glory to Him in a way that goes beyond the other aspects of creation. Genesis 1:26-27 explains this:

26 Then God said, "Let Us (this is God this is a conversation between the Trinity Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

So in giving us this incredible privilege of being image bearers of God He also then gives us the privilege of glorifying Him in a way that the sunrise and the plants and the animals cannot.

Not only are we fearfully and wonderfully made like the rest of creation, but in addition to that, we are given capacity for things like reason and work and obedience and relationship and worship to a degree that the rest of creation is simply incapable of. So that we don't just glorify God passively by being fearfully and wonderfully made but actively as we add our active testimony to the fact that we are made that way and we declare with our mouths, with full cognition, that God is who He says He is. We give active glory to God.

We've been given the privilege to truly worship God, to adore God, to obey God, and understanding that that is our purpose should shape every circumstance and station of life that God places us in. If our purpose in life is first and foremost to glorify God, then that's going to color every interaction we have and every decision we make. But because of our

sin, because we're still locked in this battle our new nature against the flesh, we have to proactively pursue and foster this perspective.

We have to pursue the glory of God in our daily lives and the best way to foster an appreciation for God's glory is to intentionally behold His glory. To look for it. To meditate on it. So how do I do that? Primarily God has given us three ways. Three ways that **God has revealed Himself to us** by which we may know Him and behold His glory. Number one, **In Creation**. Number two, **In His Word**. And number three, **In His Son**. These are the three ways that God has revealed Himself to us.

And so, if we want to behold His glory we need to look at all of these. When you look at creation don't just notice how pretty the sunrise is but cognitively force your mind to think about the implications of that. God made that. He's making it right now in front of my eyes. What does that say about my God? And then begin to worship Him actively.

When you read the word, don't just come to the word as a rote routine, but come to the word that you may know the God of the word. Ask yourself what does this passage teach me about God? What do I see about my Savior here on these pages? And then declare that back to Him in prayer.

And finally, God's revealed Himself in His son so we behold the glory of God as we meditate on the Son. Think on the character of Christ. The work of Christ. The teaching of Christ. The suffering and the resurrection of Christ. And then give glory to God in prayer by expressing your faith in these things and your gratitude.

Now as we marvel at the glory of God, as we fulfill this purpose that God has made us for it starts to result in certain things naturally. The first result of living a life meant to glorify God is **The Fear of God**. If you truly live for the glory of God you will fear God. And the fear of God is essential to living the Christian life and it's certainly essential to having a Christian marriage.

The reason that we're so willing to sin against our spouse is because we do not fear God in the way that we ought. In fact, every single time we sin, in that moment we have not treated God as He is worthy to be treated. We have not feared Him in that moment in the way that we should.

The fear of God is to stand in awe of God. It's to be awestruck by God. The fear of God produces a reverence for God and a submission to God. It produces a hatred for sin and a love for righteousness. And the fear of God, the Scriptures tell us, is the very starting place of knowledge and wisdom. Proverbs 1:7:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."

So when we meditate on the glory of God it cultivates the fear of God. It also results in the **Worship of God**. You can't help it when you meditate on God's glory, worship just starts to flow out. Heartfelt worship. You want to talk to Him and tell Him how great He is. You want to sing to Him and express your appreciation your reverence.

And thirdly meditating on the glory of God produces **Obedience to God**. Just naturally. It begins to flow out of your life. It just seems right because the compass is set on the glory of God. You see trusting God and obeying God is just right. There's no other way I would want to live. I couldn't fathom wanting to live another way. And so we're made to glorify God.

But purpose number two **We Were Created to Enjoy God**. This is so crucial for us to understand. The two must come together. Some of you may hear this idea that we're made for the purpose of giving God glory and that may communicate to you that God has just made us for joyless servitude. We're just kind of robots and life's just going to kind of stink and we're going to have to enjoy it the best we can and just we're here to serve and do nothing else.

But nothing could be further from the truth. From the beginning God has not only made us to give Him glory but to delight in Him. He longs for us to delight in Him. He's given us the capacity of joy and relationship first and foremost so that we can have joy in Him and relate to Him. That's why He made you in His image first and foremost.

Listen to how the Bible speaks of the way that we are to enjoy our God. Psalm 37:4: *"Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart"*. Psalm 16:11: *"You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever"*. Psalm 73:26: *"My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."* It is in God that I hope, He is my treasure. He is my portion, though all else be stripped away from me.

Listen to what John Calvin says about this necessity of enjoying God. He says: "We must therefore constantly recall to our minds this truth, that it can never be well with us except in so far as God is gracious to us, so that the joy we derive from his paternal favor towards us may surpass all the pleasures of the world."

The joy that we derive from the fact that God bestows His fatherly love on us must surpass the pleasure of anything else in the world. Peter says it this way in 1 Peter 1:8: *"8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory..."* Listen to that. You greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible in the Lord.

And then of course that famous verse in Philippians 4:4: *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"* Notice that Rejoice in the Lord. That is the key. And so, it is your purpose in life then is to proactively give glory to God but it's also to proactively enjoy your God.

As we consume ourselves with the glories of who God is, our hearts should burst with joy. Our happiness and joy in life are rooted in God the Father, Christ the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In any and every circumstance in any and every station in life, our joy is to be founded first and foremost in God Himself.

And just as when we meditate on the glories of God it results in certain things in our lives, when we truly meditate on and determine to enjoy God, that results in certain things in our life. The first result of enjoying God rightly is **Affection for God**. Affection for God. It produces love for God.

I was struck this week as I thought about this because you remember Jesus says the greatest law, the first and foremost, is really a quote from the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:

4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall (what?) love the Lord your God..." Notice that he doesn't start with you must obey the Lord your God. Now that obviously obedience is crucial but he begins here you shall love God. Genuine affection for God that overflows into a life of obedience.

Not only does it cause us to have affection for God, it causes us to desire **Fellowship with God**. When we truly enjoy God, we want to talk to God. Our mouths open in prayer. We want to speak to Him. We want to worship in our prayer. We pray loving prayers, longing prayers for our Savior and those prayers ultimately lead us to a third result of enjoying God which is **Thanksgiving towards God**. When our compass is rightly oriented by the glory of God and the enjoyment of God, we begin to behold the manifold blessings of God all over our lives.

You know when we allow sin or trial to disorient us we don't see our circumstances rightly and so we sinfully begin to grumble and complain as if God is against us. But when we ride ourselves with meditations on His glory and enjoy Him in the way He's designed, suddenly we see our lives as we should and we find ourselves overflowing with gratitude. We realize God you've been nothing but good to me every day of my life.

Paul encapsulates all of these ideas in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

"16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

And so if we're to have lives and marriages that reflect the purpose of God, we have to begin by understanding the purpose for which we were made to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Now you may be sitting there this morning thinking that's all right and good, but it seems to me honestly to be a pretty strange way to start a series on marriage. And if you're thinking that it's understandable, but let me explain to you why really this is the best place to start a series on marriage.

It's because nothing the Bible says about marriage will help you if you're living in rebellion to the purpose for which you have been made. We can talk until we're blue in the face about the roles in marriage and about biblical communication and intimacy in marriage, but if you and I don't understand and submit to the truth that we exist first and foremost for the glory of God and the enjoyment of God, we will not see lasting change in our marital relationships.

Now why is that? What's the connection between what we just studied and our marriage? Here's the connection. The greatest enemy of a healthy marriage is the same enemy that's most dangerous to your spiritual life in general, and it is the love of self. There is no idol on this planet that will tempt you more consistently and more craftily than the idolatry of self.

The Bible says, as we just learned, that your chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But from birth our sinful nature screams a different purpose into our ears. Our sinful nature says to us the chief end of man is to honor yourself and to please yourself forever. That is sort of written into us because of the fall.

You will not walk in a manner worthy of your calling in singleness or in marriage if you do not commit yourself to killing the love of self and then clothing yourself in its place with the purpose of glorifying and enjoying God above all else.

And so the reason that we have to begin here is because if you and I don't lay down our idols, we cannot walk in godliness. To live the Christian life you must die to yourself, and the key to a godly marriage is a commitment to personal godliness, and a commitment to godliness begins with a commitment to live your life for the glory of God and to find your joy ultimately in God alone.

In addition, another reason that this is the right place to start a marriage series is because while it's true that God has created all things for the glory of God holistically, that implies also that the primary purpose of marriage as we've said is also the glory of God. If you think about it, almost without fail, the problems we face in marriage come back at least in part to our failure to live for the glory and enjoyment of God. Most often the primary failure is a love for ourselves that supersedes a love for God and for our spouse and what then happens is we can't enjoy marriage as the gift God intended because we're living for ourselves.

In addition to that, one of the greatest sources of discontentment in marriage is rooted in an attempt to find joy in our spouse apart from God. We think to ourselves you know if my spouse would just do this, or if they would just be this way, then I would be happy and we would be happy. But the scripture says rejoice in the Lord always. He is the object of our rejoicing and Paul says I've learned to be content in whatever circumstance I'm in. How? Christ. By Christ who strengthens me. His affection for Christ, the fact that he treasured Christ above all else, gave him the ability then to be content whatever his circumstance.

Understand marriage is indeed one of God's greatest earthly gifts but as with all of God's gifts he gives us marriage primarily as a means of glorifying and enjoying Him. Marriage is to be enjoyed but it's to be enjoyed through God as an extension of our enjoyment of God Himself.

Here's a truth then that we must mark down. **Marriage was created for the glory of God and can only be properly enjoyed as an extension of our enjoyment of God.** Now if that's true of us, it's going to transform the way we view our marriage.

You know the world tells you that marriage is for you. The world declares marry whoever you want and structure your marriage in any way that you want as long as it makes you happy. The world is all in on the idolatry of self.

That's why marriage has been downgraded and denigrated in our culture and around the world. But understand even as Christians we can fall into the sin of idolizing marriage itself, as if marriage the institution in and of itself is what's going to give us purpose and joy in life.

And I'm here to tell you it can never do that. It will not do that for you because God's not designed it to do that.

God is the source of our purpose and our joy. And if we idolize marriage, that idolatry will be a gateway into all sorts of other kinds of sin as it always is, both in singleness and in marriage. You don't have to be married to idolize marriage.

Let's talk about it for a moment from the vantage point of singleness. When a single person idolizes marriage, it produces discontentment bitterness anger and envy. Suddenly, when this person hears of a friend getting engaged, they can't rejoice with that person because all they can see is the fact that they're not the one getting engaged. Suddenly they find themselves gagging at the sight of every happy couple and every bridal magazine at the grocery store as they're waiting to check out. Why? Because at some level they've begun to value the gift more than the giver. They've not learned to find their joy in God alone despite their circumstance.

Listen to me Christian. If you're single this morning and you desire to be married understand that God has not been unkind or ungracious to you. Because while He may have chosen for this time to withhold marriage from you, He has not withheld from you Himself. He has given to you the best gift that He could ever give to you in giving you His Son. And if you can't learn, if we can't learn, to be content in Christ alone, then even once you're married you will not be content and will not have joy because it can never produce that for you.

The same thing is true in marriage. Married people can idolize marriage and when a married person idolizes marriage, they assume their marriage will bring them joy in and of itself. And so they keep trying to find joy in their spouse instead of finding their joy in Christ. And the reality is even the best spouse, on their best day of the week, is a sinner. You're married to a sinner and your spouse is married to a sinner. They cannot fulfill you. They weren't designed to do that. Only God is capable and worthy of being the center of your joy and affection.

The married person who idolizes marriage finds themselves bitter, angry, discontent, and disillusioned. And they'll often work tirelessly to fix their marriage only to dig the hole of disillusionment deeper and deeper because they're trying to conform their marriage to their own desires and own expectations, thinking that that is the key to marital bliss. If I could just get my spouse to be like this, or get us to be like this, or do these things then we would be happy. But there's a better way.

Marriage is a gift. And I can testify that a godly marriage is one of the most enjoyable things in God's creation. But only when we learn to see our marriage as a means to glorify God and to find our ultimate joy in Him. We enjoy our spouse in light of our enjoyment as an aspect of our enjoyment of God.

A healthy biblical marriage takes place when two people commit themselves to live for the glory and enjoyment of God and they both see their marriage as ultimately fulfilling that purpose.

Now we have to stop here for a moment and acknowledge something, that we are not capable in and of ourselves, of living for the glory and enjoyment of God. Not one of us can

do that in our own strength. The Bible says we're all born in sin. We naturally from birth live for ourselves. The only way that we can fulfill the purpose of God is by humbling ourselves and coming to God for reconciliation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Listen, if you've never come to the place where you've repented of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, that is the starting place. The Bible says you are dead in your sins and guilty because of your sins. But God has made a way graciously for you to be forgiven. If you would humble yourself in repentance and faith trusting that Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection is your only hope you will be saved. That is the beginning of starting to live a life that's dedicated to His glory and that's able to enjoy God forever.

As we draw this to a close, I want to leave us with two questions to take and consider this week. They are basic and simple and yet profound for each of our lives. Question number one is this: **Is the glory of God your primary aim in life?** Truly? Is your life consumed with the glory of God? Single or married? Is your goal each day to do only what would most bring glory to His name? Do you filter every decision and every ambition and every goal through whether or not it would bring glory to God?

Secondly, **Is the enjoyment of God the source of your joy in life?** Christian, do you honestly enjoy God? Do you long for fellowship with God? Do you rejoice in God in your circumstance even when your circumstance is painful and difficult? Do you foster gratitude in your heart by proactively thinking on the ways God has been good to you and blessed you?

Regardless of your marital status this morning commit yourself to live proactively and intentionally to magnify the glory of God and enjoy Him forever. And if you're married, I want to leave you with this question to discuss this week with your spouse.

How would it change your marriage if you truly lived every moment with God's glory as your highest aim and God Himself as the source of your joy? Think about that. How would that change your conversations? How would it change the tone of your voice towards your spouse? How would it change your service of your spouse? How would it change the speed with which you forgive your spouse?

As we think on these things, let us glory in the fact that we as human beings have the great privilege to exist, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Let's pray.

Lord God, we are so grateful for Your kindness to us to create us at all, and then when we sinned against You to provide for us Your eternal plan of redemption that in Your Son we might be reconciled to You, that even though imperfectly we can truly seek to live for Your glory and to enjoy You and there's so much to enjoy in You. It is easy to delight in You. When all others fail us, You never fail. You've been nothing but faithful to us every day of our lives and for eternity You'll be faithful to Your people. We confess that we delight in You. Help us to live for the glory of Your name.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.