



Core Essential Truths of Divine Design

MATTHEW 19:3–6

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

⁴ *And he answered and said unto them, **Have ye not read**, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*

⁵ *And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

⁶ *Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

Introduction

How did Jesus handle the complex and difficult questions of his day? When Jesus was asked about divorce He went to the Scripture for authoritative answers and He framed His answer from the divine design revealed in Genesis 1–3. Divine design is significant because it reveals several core, foundational truths that define and describe human identity, relationships, and sexuality as God intended them to function.

I. Sexual Distinctions are Divinely Designed

He which made them at the beginning made them male and female . . .

The recognition and reality of sexual distinctions naturally come through what we observe very early in our life, what we observe through the birth process, and what we experience physically, relationally, and culturally.

The reason we recognize this so early in life is because those differences are in fact real just as Jesus said—*“He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.”*

Question: You live in world that questions the reality of sexual distinctions and increasingly refuses to recognize the validity of these distinctions. What are some ways a Christian can use the arguments listed above from universal human experience effectively as counter truth to those who challenge the reality of sexual distinctions?

So, what are we to make of these differences once we have recognized they are real? The Scripture Jesus quoted teaches us at least three important conclusions about sexual distinctions in God’s divine design.

1. Sexual Distinctions are Good.

Because sexual identity was part of God’s original creation before the Fall, sexual distinctions are actually good—in fact, they are very good. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them...And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*

Discussion: Why do you think some people challenge the idea that sexual distinctions are good? Why do you think that some Christians even challenge these ideas?

2. Sexual Distinctions Reflect both Equality and Plurality.

Distinctions between males and females are never to be understood as one sex being qualitatively better than the other. There is no superiority or inferiority in being either a male or female. Men and women are both **equal** as **divine image bearers** through **creation** and **equal** as **justified sons** and **daughters** of God through **salvation**.

In creation, God said, “Let us make man in our image.” This text reveals a **plurality** in the Godhead—one God; three distinct persons. The plurality we see in the Godhead is reflected in the divine design of original mankind or humanity. Humanity cannot exist without both male and female persons. So, just as there is a plurality in the Trinity (three distinct but equal persons in the Godhead), there is also a plurality in humanity (two distinct but equal kinds of people that make up man) created in God’s image.

Question: How should the nature of the Trinity shape the design of humankind and the nature of the relationship between men and women?

3. Sexual Distinctions Reveal Differences in Roles

While men and women have equal value in the sight of God, they also have divinely designed differences that Scripture applies in three important ways:

- ***Different in their roles in procreation***—Their physical bodies are created with different procreative abilities and responsibilities in the conception and birth of children.
- ***Different in their roles in the family***—God assigned specific familial roles to His image bearers. Specifically, the husband is to serve as the leader and the woman was created to come alongside to be his partner. The husband is designated to be the **head** and the wife to be the **helper** in marriage. This difference reflects a complementary role not a lower status for the wife because the word for **helper** is also used to speak of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The first woman, Eve, was created from man and for the man. She was taken from his side and was made to complete him. Paul says that in marriage the husband is to be the head like Christ and is to love his wife sacrificially and the wife is to be like the Church and is to submit to her husband (Eph. 5:23–33). This pattern in Scripture is clear—equal in value, different in role, complementarian in design.
- ***Different in their roles in the church***—Just as the different roles among the three members of the Trinity are reflected in the family, there are different roles God assigned to His image bearers with regard to His Church. Specifically, God designed the spiritual leadership roles of the local church (roles that are designated as elder, pastor, or bishop) and He assigned those roles to men that meet specific spiritual qualifications clearly spelled out in Scripture (for example, must be the husband of one wife).

Question: How well do you think Christian men and women reflect God’s divine design in their roles in procreation, the family, and the church?

Question: With regard to the roles that are described above, why do you think there is such confusion among believers of all ages, but especially those who are at your stage of life?

The Resistance to Sexual Distinctions

Because of man’s fall into sin, there are constant pressures within contemporary, secular society that work against divine design. This is particularly seen in the three ways in which men and women are different (mentioned above). For example, one of the most obvious tensions today regarding our sexual identity as being good is **transgenderism**. However, when we go back to the beginning and look for answers in divine design, we discover that

sexual distinctions are in fact divinely designed—just as Jesus reminded his hearers, “*He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.*”

Discussion: How might the truth of Divine Design help those who struggle with their gender? What comfort might it bring and what hope does it provide?

II. Sexual Relationships are Divinely Designed

For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.

God’s word gives the basis, defines the meaning, and sets the boundaries for all human sexual relationships.

Sexual Relationships are Based on Imago Dei (God’s Image)

What does it mean to be made in God’s image? The answers to this question fall into two primary views.

1. The Substantive View

Humans are like God in that they share some of the same aspects of God’s nature like the mind, the will, and the emotions. This view is called the substantive view because it stresses the idea that man is substantively like God.

2. The Functional View

In this view, humans are in the image of God because they act like God in their divinely given role to rule the earth. This is seen in God’s original mandate to Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over the earth. This mandate is expressed in a series of five commands that are bolded in the text below.

*“And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be **fruitful and multiply and fill** the earth and **subdue** it, and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen. 1:28)*

One of the essential elements to Adam and Eve’s ruling over the earth was through procreation—to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. That is an important way in which we continue to rule over creation—put simply—to get married, have children, and start families. Think about the immense implications of this statement—we functionally can do what God does—we can create! But, we can’t fulfill this command individually. It takes both a man and a woman to procreate. Humanity came into existence as a plurality (male and female) and it will only survive and thrive through a plurality (males and females).

Sexual Relationships are Defined by God’s Word

*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be **one flesh**? Wherefore they are no more twain, but **one flesh**.*

Jesus’ answer from divine design also defines the nature of sexual relationships in three very clear ways.

- It is clear that the *one flesh* here is referring to sexual union.
- It is clear that Jesus is referring to sexual union between a man and woman only.
- It is clear that this sexual union is in marriage.

God created the sexual relationship for companionship, comfort, and creation and said it is very good. But God also set the boundaries for human sexual relationships.

Sexual Relationships are Prescribed by God’s Law

God is very clear in His word about who we can have sexual relationships with—only with the one to whom we are married (Heb. 13:4).

God is also very clear about who we must not have sexual relationships with—prohibited from sexual relationships of any kind with any person or in any context outside of marriage. This is perhaps most clearly expressed in the Law God gave to His people through Moses (Lev. 18).

God designed human sexuality, defined it as sexual union, and prescribed its boundaries in order for married couples to have healthy and happy sexual relationships.

An Important Personal Application

There is an important application that comes from this design—specifically, there is no place in Scripture where couples are permitted to have sex before marriage. Not even a hint that this is permissible. In fact, Paul specifically states the opposite when he wrote this to the Corinthians: *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (1 Cor. 7:1–2)*

Question: *Why do you think it is hard for people today to embrace the biblical teaching mentioned above when it comes to their personal sexual relationships?*

Question: Do you believe most Christian college students truly believe in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture? Why or why not?

III. The Permanence of Marriage is Divinely Commanded

God commanded the permanence of marriage prior to the Fall. Because of the Fall and the effect of sin on human relationships, specifically the hardness of our hearts, Moses permitted divorce under certain conditions. However, this was not according to God’s original design.

When Christ appeared, He came to restore His people back to a pre-fall condition. That restoration will not be fully realized until the full redemption of the body. However, Christ has renewed the image of God within every believer and we should strive to live in that likeness. Therefore, in marriage permanence is the only ideal. This is exactly what Jesus stated when he said, *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

In other words, If God created it, man shouldn’t mess it up. You and I should take these words very seriously. How can you prepare yourself for a healthy marriage in the future?

1. Marriage should be approached carefully, intentionally, prayerfully, and within the will of God.
2. By having a vibrant, personal relationship with God.
3. By being committed to the will of God for your life. Included in this commitment is a pursuit of divine guidance, a supportive relationship with your parents, and commitment to walk in obedience to God’s Word.
4. By studying foundational Biblical principles of a Christian marriage and family including the purpose of marriage, the roles in marriage, and the relationship of marriages and families to the local church.
5. By understanding some of the basic reasons why marriages can be damaged.

Discussion: What are some practical ways in which Christians who are single should approach dating relationships? What are dangers to avoid? What are some habits to cultivate?

Discussion: What are some practical ways two Christian singles who are establishing a relationship might protect their relationship and cultivate it so that at every stage it reflects God's divine design?

As believers, we are uniquely positioned, enlightened, and empowered to display what God originally intended life to be and what He intends it to be again through the work of Jesus Christ. Since we have experienced the transforming power of the Gospel—we should reflect that power through transformed relationships and roles that reflect His divine design. We will explore these amazing roles and their framework (the family and the Church) in the next two messages of our series.

Reflection: How did this sermon inform your thinking about the reality of sexual distinctions and the roles assigned to men and women by divine design—what were some key truths you learned or had confirmed?

Question: What are some questions that this sermon raised in your mind that you intend to pursue further in your study of what God's Word has to say about divine design?

