

Made for Love

The Power of Love

Love is irresistible and unattainable. Nothing in life delights and torments us like love. Some people long to invent and patent some important machine or software. But if they succeed, the thrill soon wears off – and if they fail, they find other things in life to absorb their interest. Athletes long to win an Olympic gold medal, the Tour-de-France, or the World Cup. But Lance Armstrong’s accomplishment on the Tour will not salve the wounds of love lost, and Michelle Kwan may go on to live a wonderful life without the Olympic gold medal. Those who find love discover that it breaks their heart like nothing else, and those who do not find love never stop seeking it.

Love is the most powerful force on earth. Love turns halting teenage boys into determined men, inspires the greatest feats of heroism, and inspires savage vengeance. Perhaps the most famous example of the power of love is Helen of Troy. When Paris, prince of Troy stole her away from King Menelaus and carried her off to Troy, the Attic Greeks launched a thousand ships, so the story goes, to conquer Troy and bring her home. The war lasted ten years, but love gave the Greeks perseverance. David was madly in love with King Saul’s daughter Michal. The price was no obstacle. Saul required the foreskins of 100 Philistines as a dowry. Love drove David to attack and involuntarily circumcise 200 Philistines to secure Michal’s hand in marriage. Now ask yourself, would you circumcise 200 enemy soldiers for anything less than love?

What makes love so powerful? Why is love totally unlike any other human emotion? Ambition may drive men and women to extraordinary lengths, but why does love overpower all other passions? The answer is within us. Simply, we are made for love.

Man and Woman

Open your Bibles and turn to the first chapter of Genesis. As with most important questions, the answer is found by beginning at the beginning. Let’s read how God made man and what sort of creature he is.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1:26-28

These few verses orient us to the essential nature of man. First, we see that man is made in God’s image. Second, God created man to rule the earth. Third, He made man a sexual creature. And fourth, God instructed man to multiply. Now this is not the time to debate the full meaning of Genesis 1 and how it relates to science. We can do that another time if you wish. Tonight we are going to note that God made man a sexual creature. God did not have to do this. He could have made man as a solitary creature. God could have given him the ability to reproduce by budding, like a hydra – or by dividing, like some worms. But He did not. God chose to make us sexual beings. Furthermore, sexuality was not an option, like a sunroof on your sports car. Sexuality was tied into the command to multiply. Man is supposed to have sex, lots of it, and to produce lots of children to take care of the earth. The important lesson to take from this is that sex is God’s idea. He created us sexual, and He expects us to engage in sexual activity.

After God had made the whole world He looked over everything and was pleased. The last verse of chapter one reads, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Genesis

1:31) Now let's look into the next chapter. If you turn to chapter 2, verse 18, you will find that all is not good in God's new world.

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."¹⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.²³ And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18-25)

God said it was not good for man to be alone. Why is this? We are not told directly, but the answer is in the previous passage we read. God made man in His image. That means that man's essential nature is like God's. We know from later scripture that God is a social being. The Bible teaches that there is only one God, but He is also three. We cannot understand this, so we describe it by saying God is one being in three persons. Especially when you read the New Testament you can see the three persons of God interacting. Jesus speaks to the Father, and the Father and Son send the Spirit into the world. So God is a little community. When He made man, He made him a social creature. This means that man cannot live a healthy life alone.

But the problem of man's aloneness goes deeper than his social nature. Man not only needs other men, He also needs a different sort of creature – someone essentially like him, but different – someone to help him in ways he is unsuited to. The animals were different than Adam, but they were not like him. The Hebrew word translated "comparable" carries the idea of the match to a pair. Your left shoe is comparable to your right shoe. Both are shoes, but each are different. You would be silly to wear a shoe on one foot and a glove on the other. And you would find it painful to wear a right shoe on both feet. You need a pair of shoes. That is what Adam needed – a human being who would match him. So God made the match; He made a woman.

Verse 23 records Adam's delight at God's work. The garden had been pleasant and God was a good companion, but there was something missing. There was that emptiness in Adam's soul that nothing in the world would satisfy. Adam enjoyed the flowers and trees, the rabbits and robins – but when Adam saw this new creature, his heart leapt with joy! This was what he really wanted, needed. It was as if part of him was missing all along. In Adam's case God actually took part of his body to make Eve. This does not happen to other men and women, but the reality of the bond is the same.

Sexual Attraction

This simple story tells us that there is an irresistible attraction between men and women, but it does not tell us what that attraction consists of. We recognize different aspects to sexual attraction. There is the physical aspect. Men cannot avoid longing for a beautiful woman. It is a built-in part of manhood. Women also dream about falling in love with a handsome man. When men and women pursue their physical attraction to one another, the natural conclusion is sex. The physical attraction that sweeps men and women into each other's arms and beds is an enormous force. But there is more to sexual attraction than the desire for sex. Valentine's Day is not all about sex. It is mostly about love and romance. Apart from the desire for a physical bond is a desire for an emotional bond. Even if we are not engaged in sex, we discover ourselves

in an emotional upheaval over someone of the opposite sex. There is something mysteriously wonderful about the delicacy of a woman's voice, or the strength of a man's. For no good reason we would rather spend days and nights in the company of a man or woman than in conquering the world or in the comradeship of dear friends. To state it simply, we fall in love and our emotions go all haywire – just because of someone of the opposite sex. Third, there is a practical bond between men and women. Men are amazing creatures. They are strong. They can do big, heavy things women cannot do. They can turn little boys into handsome men. Women are just as wonderful. They can do important, practical things men stumble at doing. They can comfort little children, and turn little girls into beautiful women. I know it is a cliché, but a woman can turn a building into a home that a man really wants to come back to. Most important, both men and women are necessary for raising a family. I know that some of you here did not have this blessing, but the truth is that it takes both a man and a woman to rear children in the healthiest way.

So far we have been attacking two deadly lies that have ravaged humanity. The first is individualism. This is the idea that each person is an independent individual, with the right to choose and do as he or she pleases. This is false. The Bible teaches that humanity is a race. That means that we are both corporate and individual. Mankind is simultaneously one body and many individuals. Some cultures emphasize man's oneness and suppress his individuality. In these cultures sexual relations are tightly regulated by society. Some cultures practice arranged marriages to ensure that the sexual bond will benefit the whole society. This is an important consideration, since mankind is one body. But man's oneness cannot overpower his individuality. Our culture emphasizes man's individuality and denies his corporate nature. In the west each person pursues his own sexual interest apart from any significant concern for society. This has led to a dating scene in which there is virtually no input from older, wiser people. This rabid individualism has led further to the anything goes attitude about sex. Most westerners take it as axiomatic that you can, and should, engage in any sexual behavior that pleases you. Failing to recognize the bond that sex creates between people, they use sex merely to satisfy immediate desire, and in the process they destroy the possibility of real intimacy.

The second lie we are attacking is materialism. Science is not the enemy, but it has been used as a weapon by those who destroy the truth that man is more than flesh and bones. Biology is my favorite science, and it has uncovered astonishing knowledge about how life works. This new knowledge has played a vital role in advancing medicine, but it has been used to advance the notion that all we can know about man is found in his chemical make-up. Man is more than the sum of his chemicals, and sex is more than an instinct to preserve the species. Perhaps the most damaging aspect of the 20th century feminist movement was the idea that men and women are identical. They are the same – just with different bumps on their bodies. Feminism was motivated by real neglect of women and failure to recognize the equal value of women's contribution to society. But instead of elevating women, it tried to turn women into men. The conviction which gave momentum to this project was the belief that people are essentially material beings.

Scripture squarely denies both individualism and materialism. Man is not only an individual, he is also corporate. Therefore sexual relations cannot be about fulfilling the desires of each person. Sexual relations are about forming a permanent bond between two people – making of two individuals one new entity. Man is not only a material being. He is also a spiritual being. This is part of the image of God. When Jesus gave the greatest commandment, He said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37) Man has a mind, and this is not the same thing as his physical brain. Man has a spirit. You cannot separate man's body from his spirit. They are not two parts, but two aspects – like a coin. A coin has a head and a tail, but you cannot separate them or it will no longer be a coin. It will be a just piece of silver. Therefore sexual relations are not about the sex act. Sex includes the joining of two spirits, and all the depth that is found in the soul of man.

God's Law About Sex

So far we have not touched on the most notorious aspect of the biblical view of sex – the commands. God has reputation for opposing sex, or at least reluctantly permitting it – if you do not enjoy it! I hope by now you can see this is a flagrant misrepresentation of what God really thinks about sex. God created sex, and like all God does, it is good. The goodness of sex consists in the bond it forms between two people, the support they provide each other, and the children that result. The goodness of sex also consists in its pleasure. C. S. Lewis pointed out that pleasure is God’s idea. We never would have thought of designing procreation to be fun. We would have been focused on the effectiveness of the process and the efficiency of the mechanism. But God wanted us to have fun while bonding and making kids. So what about all the prohibitions the Bible places on sex?

Actually, the Bible has only one prohibition – no sex outside of marriage. To hear people howl, you would think that the Bible regulates every detail of your sex life, but nothing could be less true. God made sex to be enjoyed. He wants you to have sex often, with all sorts of variety. You may have sex in the morning, or in the night – upstairs or downstairs, every day or just on weekends. There is only one rule: have sex only with your mate. It is true there are many laws in the Bible regulating sex, but they are all explanations of how this one rule works in different circumstances.

You would think that no one could object to one simple rule regulating something as big a sex, but every society rebels against this law with violent force. Most people at Lehigh – students, faculty, and administration – refuse to recognize this as a valid law. College campuses are notorious for promiscuous behavior, and clearly the administration is willing to permit it. If human beings react so violently to restricting sex to marriage, we must ask, what is the point of such a law? If it fails to guide human behavior, what good is it?

Sex is restricted to marriage because it is so powerful and so delicate. Sex joins two people together. We are not mere bodies. When our bodies copulate, our spirits unite and our emotions become entangled. When that bond is broken, the delicate fabric of humanity is ripped apart. God can heal the wounds of sexual sin, but the scars linger for a lifetime. Sex is like atomic power. Inside a reactor, atomic power can fuel a nation. Outside the controls of the reactor, atomic power destroys civilization. Sex is like an African violet. Inside a warm place it flourishes like no other flower. Outside it soon crumples and dies. Sex is powerful enough to destroy you, and beautiful enough to give you a lifetime of bliss. But only in marriage. I know, sex can be fun outside marriage, but the pleasure is temporary. Sex pursued for fun becomes wearisome, but sex inside marriage becomes more pleasurable each year.

Sin and Sex

If restricting sex to marriage makes so much sense, why then do so many people in every culture break this law? Paul tells us in the book of Romans. This massive work unveils the operations of the human heart and God’s method of dealing with it.

Romans 7:7-25 (13-17)

answer: (7:25-8:3)

Romance

But we have allowed our culture to dominate this discussion too long. Enough about sex. What does God think about romance? Much! Since man is a creature that is both body and spirit, romance must be a vital part of sexual relations. One of the tenderest love stories is found in Genesis 29:1-20.

Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance. ¹⁸ Now Jacob

loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."¹⁹ And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me."²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her. (Genesis 29:16-20)

Isn't that true love? Jacob toiled for seven years to win Rachel, and his love was so great the time flew by. You can read the rest of this story in the following chapters of Genesis. As we said at the beginning, love both delights and torments. Jacob's love for Rachel was tested when he had to marry her sister first, and again when Rachel was unable to bear children. But their love survived, because they made a covenant with each other. Marriage protected the delicate lower of love and allowed it to bloom all their lives.

Tucked into the middle of the Bible is a whole book devoted to love. It is so explicit, many people find it embarrassing. Over the years the church has tended to interpret the Song of Solomon as an allegory of Christ's love for the church, and this is not wrong. But I suspect that much of the motive behind this tendency is a frank embarrassment at the lavish praise this book offers for love. Let's just take a small sample of it.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth -- For your love is better than wine.³ Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.⁴ Draw me away! (Song of Solomon 1:2-4)

Tell me, O you whom I love, Where you feed your flock, Where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself By the flocks of your companions? THE BELOVED⁸ If you do not know, O fairest among women, Follow in the footsteps of the flock, And feed your little goats Beside the shepherds' tents.⁹ I have compared you, my love, To my filly among Pharaoh's chariots.¹⁰ Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with chains of gold. (Song of Solomon 1:7-10)

Some of these lines may seem amusing to us, but you must remember that they were written in an agricultural culture. What makes life good? Kisses, love, perfume, jewelry, playing in the pasture. This is what normal young men and maidens dream of. God says, go for it! Pursue your beloved. Romance her with flowers and chocolate and walks in the park. Bask in the pleasure of love. But get close to her – physically and emotionally – only as you approach marriage.

Application

allow yourself to love; seek marriage
impediments
 focus on career & grad school
 fear
 TV & media

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