

What's Wrong With The World?

"Why love hurts"

Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25, 3:16

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on March 13, 2016

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** Please open your Bibles to Genesis 3.
- Tyler's question captures it perfectly. He is only 9-years-old but he gets it. He asked his question while we were listening to the radio in the car. After hearing a few songs, Tyler said in exasperation, *"Why is every single song about being in love or breaking up?"* Good question.
 - On the one hand, we celebrate the joy of love when Whitney Houston sings, *"I will always love you"*, or Elvis croons, *"love me tender, love me sweet"* or John Legend sings, *"Cause all of me, loves all of you."*
 - On the other hand we can also resonate with the pain of love in the songs that are about breaking up. Elvis might have sung, *"love me tender"* but he also sung about living *"at the end of the lonely street at Heartbreak Hotel."* Contemporary artists like Adele and Taylor Swift have built their careers on writing songs about the pain of their break ups.
 - Taylor Swift sings about how *"we are never ever getting back together"* and Adele's song *"Hello"* laments all the pain and regret of a past breakup while hoping for some sort of reconciliation.
- Our passage today is so helpful because it tells you why love is something you want so badly and yet why it hurts so much.
 - It tells you why breakups are so common in dating and marriage.
 - Ladies, it tells you why your man can either be so passive that it drives you crazy or why he can be so domineering that it makes you afraid.
 - Men, this passage tells you why she can be so controlling and why you often feel disrespected by her.
 - This passage is going to hit us hard but I am praying it will also bring lasting change in your life.
- We are going to see how, through Jesus Christ, we can find healing in our relationships, how men can truly love and lead their wives, and how wives can respect and honour their husbands.
 - If you are single and want to get married listen in order to prepare yourself. If you are dating, engaged, or married, listen in order to effectively deal with your problems. If you're divorced, this can be so helpful in learning from your past and preparing for the future. Even if your spouse has passed away you can listen to discover how to help your kids and grandkids in their relationships.
 - So let's develop this passage in three parts. Part 1: the joy of human love. Part 2: the pain of human love. Part 3: the hope for human love.

THE JOY OF HUMAN LOVE

- So let's begin by talking about **(SHOW SLIDE 2)** the joy of human love.

- Genesis chapters 1-2 show God’s plan for human love. It begins with the foundational truth that **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** men and women are equal. Turn back with me to Genesis 1. **READ 27** - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*
 - **(SHOW SLIDE 4)** Men and women both bear the image of God and are therefore *equal* in value, dignity, and worth. This single verse, therefore, opposes any claim that men are superior to women. It opposes all forms of violence and abuse against women. The joy of human love begins with equality.
- While Genesis 1 emphasizes the equality of the sexes, Genesis 2 goes to develop the concept that **(SHOW SLIDE 5)** men and women are equal but different.
 - These differences are meant to complement each other.
- For instance, Genesis 2 shows that **(SHOW SLIDE 6)** Men and women are different, but complementary, in their sexuality.
 - Their bodies are different but complementary. In the sexual union of marriage, they perfectly fit together to enjoy oneness with each other.
- Genesis 2 also goes on to show that while equal in value, dignity, and worth, **(SHOW SLIDE 7)** men and the women are to function in different, but complementary, roles within marriage.
 - Let me summarize Genesis 2 like this: **(SHOW SLIDE 8)** In the marriage partnership of two equal beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction and the woman is responsible to use her God-given gifts to help this become a reality.
- We will have more to say about men later on but since our passage today is directed primarily at women, let’s pause to deal with a difficulty. Some people really react to this saying that for God to call a woman to be a ‘helper’ makes her inferior to the man. But what kind of twisted culture says those who help are inferior to those who lead?
 - In her book *Radical Womanhood*, Carolyn McCulley rightly points out that this word ‘helper’ is most often used to refer to God acting as our helper. Psalm 33:20 for instance says, **“We wait in hope for our LORD; He is our help.”**¹ She then writes, **“If God who is obviously and infinitely superior to us, unblushingly refers to Himself as our helper, we should be proud to use the same term.”**²
 - A helper can have superior rank as God is to us. A helper can have inferior rank as a slave is to a master. Or a helper can be equal in rank. A woman is not superior to her husband like God and neither is she inferior like a slave. No, she is her husband’s equal *and* she is his helper.

¹ See also Ex 18:4; Ps 20:2; Ps 54:4; Ps 70:5; Ps 86:17; Ps 146:15.

² Carolyn McCulley, *Radical Womanhood*, 80.

- In 1157 A.D., Peter Lombard wrote that, “*Eve was not taken from the feet of Adam to be his slave, nor from his head to be his lord, but from his side to be his partner.*”³
 - So you see, marital roles are different but they are meant to complement each other. It is like a dance. The man leads the dance. This does not make him better than the woman and he would be an idiot to think so. It just means he bears primary responsibility to lead her in such a way that together they achieve the synergy that leads to the beauty of dance.
- Genesis 1-2, therefore, emphasizes the joy and perfection of human love. Adam and Eve are naked and unashamed before each other. They know each other in every way and they love each other.
 - Can you imagine such a thing? No arguments about money. No arguments about sex. No arguments about household duties. No cold shoulders. No fear of being abandoned. No anger. No slammed doors. No walking out. No divorce.
- The picture of human love then is one where the husband is always looking to lead his wife in a way that seeks her best interests. He is laying down his life to serve her and lead the two of them toward God.
 - In turn, she is honouring and respecting her husband. She uses all her magnificent gifts to help the two of them use their lives to God’s glory.
 - In God’s plan their love was to produce many children and fill the earth with worshippers of God. This, then, is the joy of human love.

THE PAIN OF HUMAN LOVE

- But clearly this is not the way things are anymore. We move then from the joy of human love to **(SHOW SLIDE 9)** the pain of human love.
 - As soon as Adam and Eve sin it results in marital problems. They are ashamed before each other. Adam blames Eve. Eve blames the serpent.
 - Once again we see that Genesis 3 is teaching us that at the root of all our problems is that fact that we have rejected our Creator. When we reject God’s rule and try to rule ourselves it only leads to pain.
- Our passage specifically shows what happens to human love when we try to rule ourselves.⁴ Notice, God tells Eve that, because of what she has done, human love will experience pain in two areas.

PAIN IN CHILDBIRTH

- **(SHOW SLIDE 10)** First, there will be pain in childbirth. Look at verse 16. **READ 16a - *I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.***

³ Cited in John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (4th ed.), 334.

⁴ C.S. Lewis writes that Adam and Eve wanted “To call their souls their own. But that means to live a lie, for our souls are not, in fact, our own. They wanted some corner in the universe of which they could say to God, ‘This is our business, not yours.’ But there is no such corner.” C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 71.

- This pain in childbearing is a new feature in Eve’s life. She was always going to give birth but without pain. We have no idea what that would have been like but we do know that there is a shift from what was intended to what will now be. The Hebrew word for “pain” is actually a pun on the word “tree.” The closest thing in English would be to say, “the tree brought trauma.”
 - This trauma includes all the pain associated with childbirth including throwing up in pregnancy, labour itself, and post partum depression. Human sin has twisted the very basic way life begins.
- Let’s make some practical applications here. I’ve met some couples that reject the medical system in favour of natural birthing methods. They say we don’t need doctors and such because God made women to have babies and therefore we just need to “trust the birth process.”
 - Now I am not arguing against natural birth methods. That is your decision. However, I am arguing against this kind of reasoning because it is theologically incorrect and potentially dangerous. This text says, ***“Yes, God made women to have babies and before sin you could trust the birth process. But since sin came into the world we cannot trust the birth process. We must expect complications and prepare accordingly because the birth process does not work as it is supposed to.”***
 - So whatever birthing methods you choose, prepare yourself for complications.
- Other people argue that this verse teaches that women should not use an epidural or any form of pain relief because women are supposed to feel the pain of childbirth. Again, if you don’t want to use pain relievers then no problems. But that is not what this verse is saying.
 - We will have to say this over and over today but in this passage God is *not* saying, ***“This is how I desire things to be.”*** No, God is describing how sin will effect human love.
- Although we will never be able to conquer the curse we are free to fight against it. Just as we use machines to help us farm the soil that is cursed so we don’t have to sweat so much, so also a pregnant woman should feel free to use all the medical help at her disposal.
 - This verse then is the theological basis for all obstetricians, gynecologists, midwives, doulas, anesthesiologists, and maternity nurses.
 - So the first thing sin affects in the realm of human love is childbirth. There will be pain in childbirth.

PAIN BETWEEN THE GENDERS WITHIN MARRIAGE

- In the second place (**SHOW SLIDE 11**) there will be pain between the genders. Look at the second half of verse 16. **READ 16b** - ***Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.***
 - Now again, you must listen carefully: this is *not* a description of what marriage *should* be look like. It is, rather, a description of how sin has distorted marriage. God is not saying this is how he wants marriage to be; he is, rather, describing how sin will bring pain to marriage.

- To understand this distortion look at the two verbs. The woman will “desire” and the man will “rule.” These verbs only appear together like this in one other place in the Bible. Ironically it is in the very next chapter. It is like the author of Genesis is saying, **“If you don’t know what this means in Genesis 3:16 then keep reading. It becomes clear in the next chapter.”** So let’s turn there.
 - Here God is warning Cain that his anger against his younger brother Abel is about to destroy him. Look at verse 7. **READ 4:7 - If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.**
 - Do you see the almost exact parallel to 3:16? In Hebrew both verses have the *exact same* six words in the *exact same* order. In 3:16 Eve will greatly “desire” her husband but he will “rule” over her. In 4:7 sin is like a wild animal that greatly “desires” to have Cain but he must rule over it.
- So 3:16 is telling us how sin will distort our gender differences within marriage.

HOW SIN CORRUPTS WOMEN

- Let’s deal with women first and then the men. Ladies, buckle up. We are about to hit some turbulence but I am praying this will shake you up in a good way. What we see here is that **(SHOW SLIDE 12)** because of sin, women will tend to make an idol out of relationships.
 - She greatly “desires” the man. It is a good desire for a woman to want a man but this good desire is corrupted so in her. Because of sin women will tend to feel that they are not a full person unless they have a man. Isn’t this every Disney movie where a girl is no one unless she has a prince to love her?
 - But then notice that when she gets him, this desire seeks to control him. In chapter 4, the wild of animal of sin desired Cain in the sense that it had to have him in order to control him.
- So this is saying that sin corrupts a woman in that she will always be competing with her husband for control of the relationship.
 - Old Testament scholar T. Desmond Alexander puts it like this: **(SHOW SLIDE 13)** Eve will have the sinful “desire” to oppose Adam and to assert leadership over him, reversing God’s plan for Adam’s leadership in marriage.⁵
- Ladies, can you see this in your relationship? Can you see areas where you are trying to control him?
 - You can see this when women are always putting their husbands down or talking to him like he is a Neanderthal.
 - Ladies, I know you often get frustrated at the passivity of your husbands. But could it be that he is passive because he knows that if he tries to lead he will only face endless criticism.
 - Let me put this question to you: is your husband more aware of your loving respect for him or is he more aware of your criticism of him?

⁵ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 56.

- Do you want to increase the joy of your marriage? I have a suggestion for you. It will require great humility but it may just transform your relationship. Go to him and say, ***“I have two questions for you.” (SHOW SLIDE 14) “First, what is one area where you feel I am causing you pain by trying to control you? Second, how can I give greater help to your leadership in our family?”***
 - Now let me give a warning: if you do this, he will be so dumbfounded that at first he will just sit and stare at you. Then, he will think about answering, but he won’t because he fears that if he says what he really thinks, you will make him pay for it.
 - So you need to assure him by saying, ***“I promise that I won’t get angry and I won’t make you pay for what you say. I will simply listen and take it to prayer.”***
- Gentlemen, if she does this, make sure you give only one area. Be gentle with her. Be gracious with her. Don’t launch into a 30-minute lecture. Make your answer brief and give her time to digest it.

HOW SIN CORRUPTS MEN

- Gentlemen, it’s your turn. I hope you have your big boy pants on because it’s time to man up. We also see in our passage that **(SHOW SLIDE 15)** because of sin men will tend to make an idol out of power.
 - Look at the passage again. **READ 16b** - ***Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.***
 - When the woman tries to control the man, he will not allow it. He will use his greater strength to overpower her like Cain was supposed overpower his anger. This word “rule” does not refer to the good rule of a good leader. It refers to a leader who abuses his power in a domineering way.
- Now lest I be misunderstood let me repeat what I said earlier. This passage is emphatically *not* saying that this is God’s model for marriage. No. God’s model for marriage is given in Genesis 1-2. This passage is describing the horrific way sin has distorted our gender differences within marriage.
 - How does sin corrupt men? To cite T. Desmond Alexander again: **(SHOW SLIDE 16)** Adam will also abandon his God-given, pre-fall role of leading, guarding, and caring for his wife, replacing this with his own sinful, distorted desire to “rule” over Eve.⁶
- This should greatly appeal to modern people and particularly to feminists for we see that at the beginning God identifies the pain between the genders and the male domination of women, and we see that he is deeply opposed to it.⁷
 - How many tears have women shed because men have crushed their spirits and their bodies? Who can add up the pain that results from men oppressing, assaulting, abusing, raping, and even murdering women?

⁶ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 56.

⁷ “‘To love and to cherish’ becomes ‘To desire and to dominate.’” Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 76.

- This abuse of power can also be seen in male passivity. Adam stood silently and passively by as the serpent deceived his wife. Passivity is actually a form of power because it demands that the woman do the work. How many women have had to raise children on their own because the father has abandoned the family? How many women do all the work while their man sits on the couch, plays video games, or goes out with the guys?
- I was preaching in a church on Genesis 3 and afterward an older woman and her husband came up to talk to me. She said, ***“Why is it that we always get the blame?”*** I said, ***“What do you mean?”*** She said, ***“Why do women always get blamed for sin coming into the world?”***
 - I said, ***“Where did you get that idea?”*** She looked at her husband and said he is always telling her that. She said, ***“Isn’t Eve the one who sinned first? And didn’t Eve use her sexuality to manipulate Adam into disobeying?”***
 - By this time I could see what was going on and it was making me mad. This husband was using these ideas to push her down. I kept my cool and ask them three questions.
- ***“First,”*** I said, ***“Where was Adam when Eve was deceived by the serpent?”*** ***“I don’t know,”*** she said.
 - I pointed her to Genesis 3:6, which says Adam was with Eve the entire time. Adam, therefore, stood passively by as his wife was deceived.
- Then I asked, ***“Eve sinned first but who did God call to give an account for what happened?”***
 - Did he says, ***“Eve, where are you?”*** No. Did he say, ***“Adam and Eve, where are you?”*** No. God said, ***“Adam, where are you?”***
- And then I played my trump card. I said, ***“Who bears the primary responsibility for the fall?”***
 - Oh yes, both Adam and Eve are guilty. But it is Adam, not Eve, who bears primary responsibility. This is why the apostle Paul writes in Romans 5 that ***“Sin came into the world through one man.”*** He does not say through the man and woman. This is why Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, ***“As in Adam all die.”*** He does not say, ***“As in Adam and Eve all die.”***
 - So even though Eve sinned first, it is Adam who is called to account and Adam who bears primary responsibility for the fall. This is the clearest evidence that within marriage it is the man who bears primary responsibility for the leadership of the family.
 - With each question I asked her eyes grew wider and with each question the man shrank back in embarrassment. She turned and punched him on the shoulder.
- Dr. James Dobson writes this: ***“A Christian man is obligated to lead his family to the best of his ability . . . If his family has purchased too many items on credit, then the financial crunch is ultimately his fault. If the family never reads the Bible or seldom goes to church on Sunday, God holds the man to blame. If the***

*children are disrespectful and disobedient, the primary responsibility lies with the father . . . not his wife . . .*⁸

- When there is a problem in my house, God does not knock at the door and says, *“Barton and Heather, can I see you outside for a moment please.”* He says, *“Barton, can I see you outside for a moment please.”*
 - I can never understand why a woman would get upset to hear that God calls men to lead when most of the pressure falls on the man.
- So gentlemen, I have a suggestion for you as well. Before your wife can initiate a conversation with you, take the lead and initiate with her.
 - Humble yourself and say, *“I want to ask you two questions and I promise I won’t get angry when you respond. (SHOW SLIDE 17) First, what is one area where I am causing you pain by being too passive or domineering? Second, what is one area you think I should focus on in order to more effectively lead our relationship/family?”*
 - Ladies, if your man humbles himself like this be careful to speak to him in a way that shows him honour and respect.

THE HEALING OF HUMAN LOVE

- Now if you are anything like me, you are probably feeling a little overwhelmed. This is why the message cannot end here. Practical tips are important but we need our hearts changed. We need to hear good news. So in our last two minutes let’s turn to talk about **(SHOW SLIDE 18)** the hope for human love.
 - The good news is that Jesus came to restore God’s original design for joyous human love.
- Men, how do you find hope, despite your failures as a husband? How do you get a heart that truly leads your wife and family? By looking to what Jesus did for his bride, the church.
 - Ephesians 5 says, *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”* Jesus did not use his power to crush you for your sin. He did not stand passively by as you were lost in your sin. No, he gave up sitting on the comfortable throne of heaven to become a man. He used his power to serve you. Where you deserved death he gave up his own life so you could live.
 - Oh let Jesus’ self-sacrificing love fill your heart. Look to him and learn how to lead your wife.
- Ladies, how do you find the heart to support and honour your husband as the head of your family? You also look to Christ who loved you and died for your sins. You are his bride. He has loved you. Ephesians 5 say that you look to how the church relates to Jesus as its head. You honour and respect your husband.
 - So when Jesus breaks in, wives will not try to usurp their husbands but will joyfully receive and nurture his leadership with all their marvelous gifts. And when Jesus breaks in, husbands quit being passive wimps and harsh tyrants and lay down their lives like Jesus did in selfless leadership.
 - Jesus came to reverse the affects of sin. Jesus came to restore what was lost. Look to him and find hope for your relationship.

⁸ James Dobson, *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives*, 64.