

## XX & XY

### Pre-Introduction

*(Hold up a coin for the congregation to see). Heads or tails? Call it in the air.  
(Flip the coin in the air and look at it.)*

Your chance of making the right call is 50/50—the same odds that a marriage will survive in our society. In the USA, 50% of marriages end in divorce. The percentage is MUCH higher for teenage and second marriages. No one can predict which couples will survive. Even marriages seemingly made in heaven don't always last on earth.

This is a critical issue in contemporary culture. Every family in this congregation and community has been affected by divorce. So during the coming weeks, we will participate in a sermon series entitled, ***“Built to Last: Christian Marriages that Endure.”*** The topics will include:

- 1) *XX and XY*
- 2) *Before You Say “I Do”*
- 3) *After You Say “I Do”*
- 4) *When You Don't Know What to Do*
- 5) *He Said/She Said*
- 6) *Weddings are a Day, Marriages are a Lifetime*

1) At the start of this series, I need to make several disclaimers. First, I realize that not everyone in the congregation is married. Our church family includes **single adults** who fall into three categories: single and never married, divorced, and widowed. The Bible is clear that singles are not second class citizens; in fact, the apostle Paul states there are real advantages in Christian service for those who do not marry. We will discuss this further next week. However, I believe this series will be applicable for *all* Christians.

2) Second, I will sometimes speak in **generalities** about dynamics present in MOST marriages. At times you may think, “That isn't true in my life or our relationship.” Each individual and couple is unique. However, the majority of the principles that we explore will apply to most couples.

3) Third, I do not pretend to stand here as a self-proclaimed **expert** on marriage. I am a fellow pilgrim who shares in humanity's challenges and struggles. If at any point during the series my spouse bursts into uncontrollable laughter at my words, understand that she has seen me at my best and worst. I hope to express the aspirations of our hearts and souls even if they are not always expressed in our words and deeds.

4) Finally, the title of the series is ***“Built to Last: Christian Marriages that Endure.”*** The spiritual principles we examine will help us in this pursuit. However, it takes the best efforts of **TWO people** to make a marriage survive and thrive. No ONE person can make a marriage ***“Divorce PROOF.”*** However, couples can work together to make marriages ***“Divorce RESISTANT.”***

**Scripture: Genesis 1: 27-31**

### Introduction

I've done a great deal of reading and study in preparation for this sermon series. After hours of exhaustive research and intense reflection, I have discovered a profound truth: **men and women are . . . DIFFERENT!** Laugh if you like, but this is a critical principle that is foundational to male/female relationships.

In the name of equity and fairness, there has been a movement over the past decades that promotes a belief that boys and girls are exactly alike—except for the more obvious physical differences. To be fair, proponents of this view have the admirable goal of promoting the equality of the sexes.

So toy manufacturers and retailers attempted to create gender-neutral toys. Their efforts were less than successful. After conducting ten thousand customer surveys, *Toys R Us* made the startling discovery that boys and girls play differently with toys.

This was exemplified in Hasbros' attempt to make a “**unisex**” **dollhouse**. Girls played with the small house in the typical way while boys catapulted the baby carriage and furniture off the roof! (from Bringing Up Boys by James Dobson.)

Another scientific study placed 44 male and 44 female **vervet monkeys** in a room filled with toys. The males played with the toy trucks and balls while the females played with the dolls and cooking pots. All the monkeys were equally interested in gender-neutral objects like picture books and stuffed animals.

## I. XX and XY

In 1992, Dr. John Gray published a bestseller entitled Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus. Gray dared to claim that men and women are very DIFFERENT from one another. It turns out that science backs up this commonsense claim.

### A. Genetic

The two sexes are different on the most basic, biological level. Each human being has 23 pairs of chromosomes in every cell. The genetic material carries traits inherited from our parents. 22 of the 23 pairs are alike in males and females. The 23<sup>rd</sup> pair, however, determines gender identity.

Females possess a XX pair of chromosomes in each cell. However, males have one X chromosome paired with a smaller Y chromosome. From conception, the XX or XY chromosomes set into motion the machinery of **sexual differentiation**. On the most basic, cellular level, males and females are different from the moment of conception.

### B. Hormonal

Beginning in the womb, sex hormones also influence the development and behavior of human beings. Males are primarily affected by **testosterone** which is linked to aggression. Females are mainly influenced by **estrogen** which is associated with nurturing. This leads to observable differences even in infants and toddlers. I realize this may sound like sexual stereotyping, but the stereotypes come from universal human experience in every place and time.

Females tend to be more nurturing and relationship oriented. Watch little girls care for baby dolls and keep house. They also engage in cooperative play.

Males tend to be more aggressive. When our son was young, we did not buy him toy guns or let him watch violent TV. Yet I vividly recall sitting at the breakfast table and watching while he gnawed a “Pop-Tart” into a pistol and then “shot” everything in sight.

A familiar poem portrays these hormonal differences:

*What are little boys made of?  
Frogs and snails, and puppy-dogs' tails;  
That's what little boys are made of.  
What are little girls made of?  
Sugar and spice, and all that's nice;  
That's what little girls are made of.*

### **C. Brain**

The structure and use of the brain is organized differently between the two sexes. This results in different thought processes in each gender. Women use both hemispheres of the brain in problem-solving while men normally use only one side. Females have an enhanced awareness of emotional and relational cues; men focus upon physical objects. Girls tend to score higher in reading and vocabulary tests. Boys do better on tests of mathematical skills and spatial abilities.

### **D. Physiology**

The genders differ physically beyond the obvious sexual differences. Women have better fine motor skills but men have better gross motor skills. From infancy, females are more sensitive to touch and sound. Women have 55 to 58% of a man’s upper body strength and are only 80% as strong as a male of the same size. Men build muscles easier, possess tougher skin, and have denser skulls! In other words, we’re thick-headed!

There is a reason why most sports do not have women playing against men. The physical differences are significant enough to make most athletic competitions inequitable for one gender or the other.

The first finger of a woman’s hand is usually longer than the third but with men it is the reverse. Women have a larger stomach, kidneys, liver, and appendix while men have larger lungs. Finally, females experience three physical processes that males never do: menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation.

### **E. Nature and Nurture**

These ARE real differences between the two sexes. Certainly culture also plays its part. Even in contemporary society, there are different sets of expectations and role models for males and females. We could argue the relative influences of nature and nurture, heredity and environment.

Regardless of the debate, however, there are fundamental differences between the genders. Even if men are not from Mars and women from Venus, we are still alien creatures cohabitating the same planet.

We are different; but as the French say, “*Viva la difference!*” These barriers between the sexes can become bridges. Healthy relationships between the two genders both recognize and appreciate the innate differences between men and women. We don’t ignore the distinctions but celebrate and cherish them.

## PP6 ADAM AND EVE

In order to understand the distinctions between the sexes, we must begin at the very beginning. The first two chapters of Genesis describe God's creation of the world. The account culminates in the creation of humanity.

**Genesis 2** provides a wonderful, earthy description of First Man and First Woman. The Lord God Almighty, Creator of the heavens and the earth, kneels in the dirt and shapes a man from the clay. Then the Lord God breathes into **Adam** the breath of life and places him in the Garden of Eden.

But Adam is **lonely**. So God creates a wide assortment of animals and parades them before the man to name. Yet none of them fills the empty place in the man's heart. So God causes the man to fall into a deep sleep and takes a rib from Adam's side. Then God forms First Woman to be Adam's mate. When Adam awakes and sees **Eve's** face, he says, "*You done GOOD, God.*" That's a literal translation from the Hebrew! This creature is "*very much the same as man and yet mysteriously, maddeningly, wonderfully different.*" (Hamilton, p. 19) The two become one flesh as husband and wife.

The creation account in Genesis reveals that we are individuals . . . created for relationship with others. Human relationships are attempts to bridge the gap between ourselves and others. Humanity lives with the tension of individuality and community. To reword John Donne's famous poem, "*Every man is an island*" AND "*No man is an island.*" We spend a lifetime building relational bridges to other people.

In 1970, Howard and Charlotte **Clinebell** published an excellent book entitled The Intimate Marriage. They wrote: "*There is in the heart of every human being, a powerful longing for a meaningful relationship with at least one other person . . . . The inescapable need for relationships produces a striving in humanity which could be described as the **will to relate.***" (p. 12). They described the "**relationship hunger**" prevalent in our society. They concluded by saying "*A good marriage offers the most favorable opportunities in our culture for fulfilling the will to relate.*" (p. 17)

### III. The Christian Marriage

In his book entitled Making Love Last a Lifetime, United Methodist minister, **Adam Hamilton** shows how the Genesis account teaches us four key lessons about the relationship between men and women.

- 1) First, the concept of two genders was GOD'S idea all along. Genesis 1: 27 proclaims: "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*" God designed the differences between men and women. Our sexual identity is a good gift from our loving Creator. We are to claim and cherish our differences as a part of God's plan.
- 2) Secondly, men and women *need* each other. I do NOT mean that we ALL need to be married. Even in singleness, however, we need the opposite sex. We need family and

community relationships between the sexes. Each gender brings a uniqueness and giftedness to the human equation.

3) Thirdly, love, marriage and human sexuality are God’s idea—they are a part of the divine design for humanity. These issues are important to God. They are addressed repeatedly in the Scriptures. Genesis begins with the concept of marriage between a man and woman. The Law of Moses addresses this topic over and over again. The Song of Solomon in the Old Testament is an erotic book devoted to romantic love. The prophets, Psalmist, and author of Proverbs address love, marriage, and sex, on numerous occasions.

Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Christ referred to himself as the groom and the church as his bride. The apostle Paul said that marriage is a “mystery” that portrays the love of Christ for the church. Throughout the Bible, God’s relationship first with Israel and later with the church is compared to the relationship between a husband and wife. (Adams, p. 13)

A Christian understanding of love, marriage, and sex help each of us to grow up to be mature persons of God. What our society euphemistically calls “Adult Material” is not adult at all—it is a childish, shallow, sinful counterfeit of the deep love God truly intends for his people. The Bible is a deeply erotic account of divine and human love actualized when man and woman join together as co-creators in God’s creation.

4) Finally, and perhaps most importantly in this context, marriage is designed by God to be “the solution to a problem.” Lily Tomlin once asked, *“If love is the answer, could you rephrase the question!”* The problem was that the first human was alone and needed companionship, and he was unable to live as God intended without a partner. God designed Adam and Eve to be helpers and companions for each other.

Adam Hamilton writes: *“Marriage is a calling from God. God designed marriage as a way of meeting the basic needs of human beings—needs for companionship and help. The basic orientation of marriage is serving, giving and sacrificing.”* (p. 20)

The best of Christian marriages provide the opportunity for us to become more fully human and grow into the people that God intended. Couples are challenged to consider life in the plural and not the singular. In the best of marriages, they commit themselves to a self-sacrificial love that reflects God’s love in our lives. When marriage vows are taken seriously, we are drawn closer to both our spouse and God.

## **Conclusion**

Making marriages work is a full-time job. We don’t make our vows once. Couples choose on a daily basis whether they will reaffirm their vows to *“love, honor, and cherish”* one another. To borrow a phrase from the Peace Corps, *“It’s the toughest job you’ll ever love.”* But it CAN be extremely challenging on occasion.

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| <p>Once upon a time a man was walking down the beach and found a bottle. When he uncorked it, sure enough, a <b>genie</b> appeared and offered him one wish. The man thought for a moment and then said, “I’ve always wanted to go to Hawaii but I’m afraid to fly and boats makes me seasick. So I would like for you to build me a road to Hawaii.”</p> |
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The genie said, "I'm sorry but that's impossible. Just think of the huge pilings needed for the road and how deep they would have to go. Think of all the concrete needed. Think of storms. Oh, and since it would be such a long distance, think of all the gas stations and rest stops you would need along the way."

The fellow thoughtfully said, "You're right, that isn't a very practical wish." He thought for a while and then exclaimed, "I know what I want! I've always wished that I could understand women—what makes them laugh and cry, what makes them happy and sad. THEN I could keep my wife happy. I wish I understood women."

The genie thought for a moment before asking, "Do you want two or four lanes on that road to Hawaii?"

There ARE real, God given differences between males and females; but the differences are good gifts from our loving Creator. We need one another, and together we can become more fully human. Christian marriage is one of the primary relationships that enable us to do this. In the next weeks, we will prayerfully explore the wonderful gifts of love, marriage, and sexuality together.