Hi,

Today’s updates:

* My noon Tuesday class on Genesis will meet today on [my new Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/Scott-Engle-St-Andrew-UMC-110365790736617/?modal=admin_todo_tour).
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.

***1 Samuel 18:20-21, 27-29 (NRSV)***

**Now Saul’s daughter Michal loved David. Saul was told, and the thing pleased him. Saul thought, “Let me give her to him that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.”**

**[Saul’s trap is to tell David that to marry Michal he must bring back the foreskins of one hundred Philistine warriors, assuming that David would be killed in the effort.]**

**Before the time had expired, David rose and went, along with his men, and killed one hundred of the Philistines; and David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. Saul gave him his daughter Michal as a wife. But when Saul realized that the Lord was with David, and that Saul’s daughter Michal loved him, Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul was David’s enemy from that time forward.**

***1 Samuel 19:11-17(NRSV)***

**[His earlier plan thwarted, Saul hatches yet another plot to get rid of David]**

**Saul sent messengers to David’s house to keep watch over him, planning to kill him in the morning. David’s wife Michal told him, “If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.” So Michal let David down through the window; he fled away and escaped. Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed; she put a net of goats’ hair on its head, and covered it with the clothes. When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, “He is sick.” Then Saul sent the messengers to see David for themselves. He said, “Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.” When the messengers came in, the idol was in the bed, with the covering of goats’ hair on its head. Saul said to Michal, “Why have you deceived me like this, and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?” Michal answered Saul, “He said to me, ‘Let me go; why should I kill you?’ ”**

***2 Samuel 3:14-16 (NRSV)***

**[After escaping from Saul with Michal’s help, David went on the run and never returned to her. Saul eventually gave Michal in marriage to another man, Paltiel. But when David comes into power, he decides that he wants Michal back – but not out of love. It is a political maneuver to strengthen his claim on the house of Saul. Michal is merely a pawn.]**

**Then David sent messengers to Saul’s son Ishbaal, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, to whom I became engaged at the price of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines.” Ishbaal sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish. But her husband went with her, weeping as he walked behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, “Go back home!” So he went back.**

***2 Samuel 6:16-23 (NRSV)***

**As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.**

**[David then leads the people in making burnt offerings to God.]**

**David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, “How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants’ maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!” David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord, that I have danced before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in my own eyes; but by the maids of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.” And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.**

I’m often asked about all the depictions of plural marriage in the Bible. If God wanted marriage to be between one man and one woman, why do the men have so many wives? The answer is simple and as true now as it was then – too often, we simply don’t live as God hopes we would live. Michal’s story drives home the consequences of how such choices lead to tragedy, loss, and bitterness.

If you’ve never heard Michal’s story, you are not alone. Most Christians, I suspect, don’t know the story and probably haven’t even heard of her. Yet, and brace yourself for this, Michal is the *only* woman in the Bible who is said to love a man and thereby marries him! This is her story.

*Bait*

She had heard the stories of this young man, David. Being Saul’s daughter she couldn’t join in the riotous celebrations of David’s victory. But she had seen the ecstatic women racing out to meet the victors, dancing and singing in joy: “Saul has killed his thousands and David his tens of thousands.”

Michal had gotten to know David a bit when he had come to sing for Saul and play his lyre. And now, she loved him, simple as that. She knew David had wanted a way into the royal family and she hadn’t been surprised when Saul offered her sister, Merab, to David. But, and surely God was at work here, that had fallen through! Merab was married off to someone else.

Yes, she had heard the rumors that she had been offered to David in exchange for the foreskins of one hundred Philistine warriors. Deep down, part of her knew that her father was setting a trap for David. She was no more than bait to entice David into undertaking a suicide mission. She even knew that there was no sign David loved her, that she was merely an entrée into the royal family. But she just didn’t a care, not a bit. She loved David and she just knew that somehow, this slayer of Goliath, would come back victorious.

And he had. And she had married David. Oh, what a day, a grand and glorious day. She loved him something awful. Her heart dreamed of a happily-forever-after life, but her mind knew that the dark obsession that had descended on her father would soon fall on her love for her husband.

*Rescuer*

She had hoped it wouldn’t come to it, having to choose between her father and David. But it had. One night, she had gotten word of yet another plot against her husband. She knew whom she loved. She knew which side which side she would choose. So she had told David of the plot and helped him escape out window. She had even fashioned a giant doll under his sheets so it would look like David was in bed when Saul’s men came.

She had told the men that David was sick. But that had been pointless. Saul was insistent that David be killed, sick or not.

Wow . . . her father had been angry with her when he learned she had helped David get away. She had never seen him so consumed by hatred and frustration. When pressed, she had told Saul that David had threatened her. It was a lie; but it had worked. Her father never suspected her . . . or at least he never let on, if he had.

*A new life*

She had hoped David would soon return, that her father would come to his senses. But no -- neither happened. David’s absence stretched from months into years as Saul relentlessly pursued him. And then it had gotten even worse. Her father had given her in marriage to a man named Paltiel. She hadn’t been told why. It didn’t matter, she was a woman, to be given away as her father pleased. She had guessed it was all about alliances and power; but feared it was simply out of spite, just one more way for the king to stick it to David, completing his separation from the family.

But God, the God of mercy and justice, had brought her new life. For Palti, as she called him, loved her . . . really, truly, over-the-top loved her. What a joy his love had been, each day fresh and filled with possibility. And so she had grown to love him.

But . . . and isn’t there always a but . . . it had all been snatched away. Her father and brother had died by each other’s side in battle against the Philistines. And so, David, her once-but-no-longer-beloved David, had set about consolidating his power. He wanted a legal claim on Saul’s throne and that meant, he had to get Michal back as one of his wives.

So, in the way of *realpolitick,* David had demanded her return to him as his wife. It hadn’t mattered that he didn’t love her. It hadn’t mattered that David was ripping her away from Paltiel. David wanted her and he had taken her. That simple. That terrible.

Her beloved Palti had followed them, crying all the way. No one had ever cried like that for her. No one would ever cry for her again.

*Bitterness*

She had tried to get used to being back in the palace, back with all the wives and concubines. But her memories of Palti were too brilliant, too near.

Once, David had come back to the city after recovering the Ark of the Covenant. A big day, yes, but he had made a fool of himself. Dancing and jumping around half-dressed; hardly the behavior expected of a king. She had even confronted him about it. But he had thrown some God-talk at her. He had even thrown in her face the truth that he could no wrong so far as the girls were concerned. So she had stormed back into the palace.

The years had passed. No David. No love. No children . . . only the distant memories of being truly loved, even if only for awhile. And once in awhile, she wondered “what if” she had met David’s joy that day with joy of her own, rather than scorn? What if she had chosen forgiveness? What if . . .

*A bit more -- God Creates Marriage*

The opening chapters of Genesis are foundational to all that follows. In them we learn that God created everything and created humans in his image. We learn that he created the humans in two genders, male and female, so that each might not be alone, but have a partner. And we learn that God created them husband and wife, to be joined in sexual union, to be of one flesh. This is before Jesus, before Moses, before Abraham, before the flood. Even sin had not yet entered the picture. This is the Garden of Eden, a world in which all is right.

The union of one man and one woman, which we call marriage, is part of God’s created order. It is more than a convenience or a means of managing finances. Marriage is God’s gift to us. Marriage is God’s grace at work. It is important to see that marriage is not part of God’s Law brought to the Israelites by Moses. Marriage is a gift bound up with the very creation of humanity. It is a gift even to those who do not know God.

Do we all get married? Of course not. Do we all stay married? Hardly. Yes, Peter was married but Jesus did not marry. And the apostle Paul understood his own singleness to be a gift from God, enabling Paul to devote all his energies to the service of Christ.

Marriage does not complete us as persons, yet all of us have a stake in marriage. Our families marry. Our friends marry. Indeed, most of us get married. Yet, many of us do not take marriage nearly as seriously as God does. I know that for many years, I didn’t . . . but I do now.

‘til tomorrow, grace and peace,

Scott