

The First Love Story

The creation account starts with a picture of unity and mutuality. Looking at the first love story we will try to understand together male and female roles through diversity and unity. How can we, through love, mutual service, intimacy, respectful care, and even dependence on one another, become fuller, deeper people, more alive to God and His Word? How can we offer couples in our church hope for their broken marriages, light for their confusion, and simply a new story with a better ending?

Jelena Sivulka was born and raised in Serbia, where she got her master's degree in psychology and in theology. She became a Christian 25 years ago and a few years later got involved in ministry with her husband Greg, planting churches, distributing humanitarian aid, and partnering with Joni and Friends, serving people with disabilities. Jelena has also worked as a counsellor in Serbia's schools and a social worker, and she is currently working as therapist in a medical clinic. She is the founder and director of the non-profit organisation Hana's Hope. She has been blessed with three children: Benjamin, Sara, and Hana, who has autism.

I. Understanding the marriage journey

A. A love story by Hollywood

B. A love story by Bowlby

- i. Becoming attached
- ii. A Primal Panic, when attachment alarm goes off

C. Love story by Holy Word

“It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*

Understanding our story: Genogram

II. The War of the Roses

“There are two dilemmas... that rattle the human skull. How do you hold onto someone who won't stay? And how do you get rid of someone who won't go?”

A. Age, Power, Care

B. Look, Smile, Oscars, Movie genre, Divorce

C. Open, Attuned, and Responsive

“We waste time looking for the perfect lover, instead of creating the perfect love.”

III. Seeing bigger picture

- A. Act of worship
- B. Act of obedience
- C. Love story worth sharing

Faithful Christian marriages serve as living icons of the faithful, Covenant-keeping God happily united with his faithful and adoring Bride (Ephesians 5).

IV. Different kind of love making

- A. The Maker
- B. The Lover
- C. The Keeper

“Nor may we ever cease willing or loving, until we have Him in fullness of joy. And then we may no more will.” Julian of Norwich

Suggested Readings:

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Letters and Papers from Prison*,
, Norfolk, UK: SCM Press, 1953.

Karen, Robert, *Becoming Attached*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Johnson, Sue, *Hold Me Tight*, New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2008.

Norwich, Julian, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, INC., 2006.

Thomas, Gary L., *Sacred Marriage*, Grand Rapid: Zondervan, 2000.