

## Marriage as it's Meant to Be

Genesis 2:18-25

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I enjoy hearing what kids say about love and marriage.

- When asked why people fall in love, 9-year-old Mae said, *“No one is sure why it happens, but I heard it has something to do with the way you smell...That’s why perfume and deodorant are so popular.”*
- When asked what falling in love is like, 9-year-old Bart commented, *“It’s like an avalanche where you have to run for your life.”*
- Alan, age 10, remarked, *“No person really decides before they grow up who they’re going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you’re stuck with.”*
- Carey, age 7 said, *“Love will find you, even if you’re trying to hide from it. I been trying to hide from it since I was five, but the girls keep finding me.”*
- Another young boy was asked what role good looks play in finding a mate: *“It isn’t always just how you look. Look at me. I’m handsome like anything and I haven’t got anybody to marry me yet.”*
- Lori, age 8, was asked what her mom and dad have in common. She quickly replied, *“Both don’t want no more kids.”*
- And Gavin, age 8, gave his insight into why married couples often hold hands: *“They want to make sure their rings don’t fall off because they paid good money for them.”*

In his Breakpoint Commentary this week, John Stonestreet opened with some good news and some bad news. The good news is divorce is at its lowest rate in 50 years. The bad news is marriage is at its lowest point in 150 years. According to a Pew study, barely half of U.S. adults are married and nearly 4 in 10 believe marriage has become obsolete as an institution.

If you’re married, how do you make sure your rings don’t fall off? Today, we’re going to look at marriage as it’s meant to be because marriage was the very first institution of society. Here’s a one-sentence summary of where we’re headed: *Because marriage matters to God, we must do marriage His way.*

If you have a Bible nearby, please turn to the very first book, the Book of Genesis. Context is always important when we study the Bible. Genesis 1 gives us a complete narration of creation; Genesis 2 retells the account in order to fill in the details concerning the creation of man, the creation of woman, and the construction of marriage. The first chapter portrays God as powerful, using the name Elohim, the God of Creation; while the second chapter pictures God as personal, using the name Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God.

I don't think I'll ever read Genesis 2:18-25 the same way after learning that my future son-in-law Lucas read this passage to our daughter Megan right before proposing to her earlier this month.

Let's give our attention to God's Word: ***"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."***

The teaching of Scripture on human origins and of marriage is foundational to the rest of the Bible. Adam and Eve were real individual human beings from whom all humanity can be traced. In Matthew 19:4-5, Jesus speaks of Adam and Eve as real people and their marital union as the basis for the sanctity of marriage: ***"Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"***

In addition, in Romans 5:12 the Apostle Paul builds his case for the sinfulness of every human being as traced back to Adam as our representative head: ***“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”***

*Because marriage matters to God, we must do marriage His way.* As we unpack our passage, we’ll see first there’s a problem in paradise. Second, we’ll discover God’s provision. Finally, we’ll learn about God’s portrait of the marriage partnership.

**1. The Problem: A Need for Companionship** (18-20). God created Adam, breathed life into him and put him in a garden with a job to do: ***“to work it and keep it”*** (verse 15). In verse 18, God says, ***“It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.”*** This is a remarkably abrupt statement by God. In the Hebrew construction, ***“not good”*** is placed at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis.

This is interesting because six times in Genesis 1, after each major creation event, God looked at what He created and said, ***“It is good.”***

- ***“And God saw that the light was good.”*** (4)
- ***“And God saw that it was good.”*** (10)
- ***“And God saw that it was good.”*** (12)
- ***“And God saw that it was good.”*** (18)
- ***“And God saw that it was good.”*** (21)
- ***“And God saw that it was good.”*** (25)

In verse 31, after surveying everything He made, God declares, ***“Behold, it was very good.”***

In this expanded account of the sixth day of creation in Genesis 2, God suddenly says something is not good: ***“It is not good that the man should be alone.”*** Observe this is God’s conclusion, not Adam’s. God is the one who saw the need and created the solution. Right from the beginning we see marriage is part of God’s plan. This is what God says, not what society or culture or the courts may say.

The word ***“helper”*** refers to ***“a help answering to him; a complement, a completer, a corresponding helper.”*** In Psalms 46:1, this word is used of God

Himself: ***“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”***  
A “helper” is one who supplies what is lacking in another person, one who is *“like but opposite him.”* This helper is a perfect ***“fit”*** for him. She will be his counterpart, like the missing piece of a jigsaw puzzle now completed. God is proactively providing a partner for him.

God created Eve to do what Adam could not do by himself. It’s not that the man is better than the woman, or the woman better than the man, but each need each other. In Song of Solomon 5:16, the bride affectionately refers to her husband with these words: ***“This is my lover, this my friend...”*** 1 Peter 3:7 challenges husbands to be considerate and respectful because wives are ***“joint heirs of the gracious gift of life.”***

Having said that, we might expect the next verse to say something like, *“So God created Eve.”* Instead of immediately matching Adam to a marriage mate, God assigns Adam a huge zoology project. God sees the need for Adam to have a helper, but He delays in order for Adam to see his need. Have you noticed God often makes us wait so we’ll appreciate what it is He wants to give us? While we wait God is doing something wonderful.

In verses 19-20, Adam is told to give names to all the animals God had created. Would you note there is no mention of evolution here? Adam never doubted God as an intelligent designer and benevolent creator: ***“Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast...”*** The word ***“formed”*** means to, *“design, shape and fashion.”* Then God ***“brought”*** each one to Adam so he could name them.

This is God’s way of putting Adam through some premarital preparation. Specifically, he’s urging Adam to be a *leader* since the ability to name is the action of leadership as stated in Genesis 1:28: ***“...and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*** As he named the animals it gave him a sense of order as he put them in different categories.

There was a purpose behind this parade because God was also training Adam to be a *lover*. As Adam surveyed all the animals, he saw Mr. and Mrs. Aardvark and at the end of the day, when he finally named Mr. and Mrs. Zebra, he was no doubt feeling empty and alone. For every animal, there was

both male and female. Everyone had a partner, but where was his? God was creating within Adam a gnawing hunger for a life mate, a need God would soon meet in the creation of Eve. *Adam needed to feel the need in his life for a wife.*

Look at the end of verse 20: “...***But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.***” Adam is forlorn as he discovers for himself in verse 20 what God already knew in verse 18. He is living in paradise with everything his heart could want – a bunch of pet animals, a good job, and a sinless relationship with God. But he felt alone in a crowded garden and wondered if the day would ever end. Do you know why this first day was so long? Because it had no Eve!

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**2. The Provision: A Need for Completion (21-23).** In verses 21-23, God addresses Adam’s need for completion: “***So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’***”

We see again how God takes the initiative, this time giving Adam some divine anesthesia so He can surgically remove a rib. Then, he used this rib to make a woman. The word for “***made***” is “*to build or construct.*” As a sculptor, God carefully shapes her into someone who matches the man. Adam was formed, while Eve was made.

I like how one commentator puts it: “*She was not taken from Adam’s head, that she should rule over him; not from his feet, that she should be trampled on by him; but she was taken from his side, that she might be his equal, from under his arm, that she might be protected by him, near his heart, that he might cherish and love her.*” Eve was fashioned from Adam not to be identical, but to be complementary. They were similar, but not the same. She was made from his rib to show him she was a part of him. We could say it like this: man was only half of God’s plan for human life and the woman was the glory and crown of His creation!

Paul picks up on this in Ephesians 5:28: ***“In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”*** Walter Bruggeman writes: *“The woman was created to ‘help’ the man out of his aloneness so that together they would form a community of oneness.”*

Verse 22 tells us God ***“brought her to the man.”*** As the ultimate matchmaker, God presented Eve to Adam. This is the same word used in verse 19 to describe how God ***“brought”*** the animals to Adam. I wonder if God said something like, *“Hey, Adam, look over here. You forgot to name one creature!”*

This indeed was a marriage made in heaven. As a pastor, it has been my joy for over 30 years to watch as fretting fathers escort their eager daughters down the aisle – I’ve been the fretting father three times so far. In this outdoor garden ceremony, as the Father of the bride, God is walking Eve down the aisle and giving her away to Adam. From this narrative we learn God planned the human heart for love, marriage and companionship. The only thing man brought with him out of the Garden was marriage.

God creates a partner for Adam from his own flesh to meet the needs of his hungry heart. Don’t miss the fact that Adam never put in a work order for how his wife should look or what she would be like. He just slept, leaving it all to God.

The original Hebrew helps us see he was pretty pumped. The phrase, ***“This at last”*** means something like, *“This is it! At last! All right!”* I think he really said: *“Wow! Oh, baby! Where have you been all my life?”* In his exuberance he called out, *“Whoaaaa! Mannnnnn!”* which is where we get the word wo-man.

Now he knows he is not alone. Isolation has given way to relationship and partnership and completion. It’s clear God’s original intention is for one man and one woman to live in a monogamous marriage for life.

The phrase, ***“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man”*** is an expression of ecstatic delight because Adam has found one who perfectly corresponds to him. The word ***“bone”*** means of the same substance and ***“flesh”*** refers to his body. This is the world’s first love song and was the first utterance from a

human being before sin entered the world. Instead of complaining about his wife, he complimented her lavishly.

It's difficult for us to see because this is really a Hebrew pun. The name "Adam" referred to mankind, but Adam is not called a man until there is a female counterpart. In the Hebrew "Adam" changes to "ish" when the woman is brought to him. And she is called "ishsha," (which means "to be tender") because she was taken out of "ish."

Adam is saying something like this, "*This is my counterpart and my companion. She will help me make the world into a garden.*" We could say that "ishsha" has her origins in "ish." Man and woman find themselves in the reflection of the other.

From this passage we see two things about Adam and Eve.

- They have the same substance as each other
- They have the same stature before God

Why wasn't Eve made from dust? I think it was to show Adam she was part of him, equal to him, not a lower creation. Both are made in the image of God. Husbands and wives are the same, and yet different. We can be united, even while not uniformly the same. We have equal value but different roles. More about that next weekend.

I can relate to how Adam felt when I first met Beth. I had surveyed all the girls on campus during my first semester at Moody Bible Institute "***and there was not found a helper fit for me.***" I was in a class on the first day of my second semester when the bell rang for us to begin. About a minute later, I walked Beth and sat right next to me. I broke out into Hebrew poetry and declared, "*Whoaaaa! Mannnnnn!...we've been created for each other...where have you been all my life?*" That's not exactly how it went.

First, the problem of isolation is met with *companionship*. Second, God's provision gives *completion* to Adam. The final verses in chapter two give us a portrait of their *communion* together.

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**3. The Portrait: A Need for Communion (24-25).** These verses give us the best picture of marriage ever presented: ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”*** The word ***“therefore”*** can be translated, *“For this reason”* and ***“shall”*** indicates this matrimonial mandate is for all marriages, in all cultures, for all generations. This verse is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19 and by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5.

There are four key elements to this portrait of communion:

- **Leaving.** The Hebrew word is quite strong and means *“to cut off, separate, and leave behind.”* We’re never to abandon our parents, but we must shift our allegiance, so priority and primacy is given to our spouse. What this means is the emotional umbilical cord needs to be severed because your loyalty now belongs to your spouse. Your marriage created a new family which from now on must take higher priority than your previous family.
- **Cleaving.** In order to cleave, you must first leave and once cleaved, you must not leave. The phrase ***“hold fast”*** is also quite descriptive and means *“to melt two separate entities together to form a permanent bond.”* It has the idea of joining two things so tightly they cannot be separated without hurting both things. This is covenantal language, similar to Deuteronomy 4:4: ***“But you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.”*** The idea is similar to being “welded” or “cemented” together. Note this is to be an exclusive relationship as it says, ***“hold fast to his wife,”*** not ***“wives.”*** Monogamous marriage is part of the Master’s design.
- **Weaving.** To ***“become one flesh”*** is a lifetime process, and according to Paul in Ephesians 5:32, this is a great mystery. Couples go from *“me and you”* to *“we.”* In God’s marital math, 1+1=1. Marriage is not a contract; it’s an unconditional and exclusive covenant.

Someone has said marriage is when a man and woman become one; the trouble starts when you try to decide which one. I picture a continuum with oneness on one side and isolation on the other. Every marriage is moving in one direction or another. If you’re married, are you moving

toward oneness or isolation? Are you living as soul mates or laboring as roommates?

Leaving, cleaving and weaving describe what marriages are to look like. When the marital vow is broken, grieving is sure to follow.

- **Grieving.** Genesis 2:25 tells us they were totally exposed before each other ***“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”*** All that changes in Genesis 3 when sin enters their relationship, resulting in guilt and grief, separation and shame. This foreshadows the shame of sin we hear in the words of Adam in Genesis 3:10: ***“I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”***

Because sin causes shame we like to blame others, especially our spouse. Those who play the *Blame Game* have a motto: *“Don’t blame me, it’s not my fault.”* Victims do not have to accept personal responsibility for wrong behavior or toxic attitudes; they are casualties of what happens to them and should therefore not be saddled with guilt.

The *Blame Game* is really the oldest game on the books. In fact, you can trace it all the way back to Adam and Eve. When they sinned by disobeying God’s clear standards, Adam claimed victim status by blaming Eve in Genesis 3:12: ***“The woman...gave me some fruit of the tree and I ate it.”*** His immediate reaction was to deny personal responsibility. He was just a victim of Eve’s offer.

But, his attempt to shift the blame was even more involved than this. When pressed by God to give an answer as to why he did what he did, Adam said, ***“The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit...”*** Unbelievably, Adam even tried to blame God for what he did. It didn’t take Eve long to learn how to play the blame game as she followed Adam’s example in verse 13: ***“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”***

God’s objective for marriage is a loving relationship of oneness. Jesus said it this way in Mark 10:9: ***“What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”*** I like how the KJV renders this verse: ***“What therefore God***

***hath joined together, let not man put asunder.***” The word for “***joined***” means to be “***yoked***” together. Marriage is meant to be a yoke, not a joke! A yoke was used to maximize the work capacity of two animals.

Marriage is often described as “***getting hitched.***” Think of two animals yoked together and hitched to a heavy wagon. I learned one Belgian draft horse is able to pull 8,000 pounds. However, if two horses are trained to work together in a harness, they can pull 32,000 pounds! Two together can accomplish four times as much when they work as one! That’s the power of synergy. A good relationship has a good reward for its toil because when couples pull together, great things can happen.

If you’re married, be vigilant to guard your vows and determine to keep them, even when your feelings fade...and they will. Brothers and sisters, marriage matters to the Majesty and therefore it must matter to you. See your spouse as your companion, as one who completes you, and as one you are to live in communion with. And make sure that you have done the *leaving* part, you are *cleaving* to each other, and that you are allowing the Holy Spirit to do His work of *weaving* your lives into one so you don’t end up *grieving* God by breaking your vows.

Scripture begins in Genesis with a marriage, Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding, and the Bible ends in Revelation with a wedding supper. The Bible gives us at least six purposes for marriage. I’ll list them quickly.

1. **Procreation.** Genesis 1:28: “***And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.’***” Malachi 2:15 says, “***Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring...***”
2. **Pleasure.** Genesis 2:24: “***And they shall become one flesh.***” Listen to what a husband says about his wife in Song of Solomon 1:15: “***Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.***” And what a wife writes about her husband in Song of Solomon 2:16: “***My beloved is mine, and I am his.***”
3. **Partnership.** Genesis 2:18: “***I will make a helper fit for him.***” Malachi 2:14: “***She is your companion and your wife by covenant.***”
4. **Purity.** I like what Gary Thomas writes about marriage: “***What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?***” 1

Corinthians 7:9: ***“But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”***

5. **Picture of Christ’s love.** God intends for the marriage relationship to reflect the love Christ has for the church. Ephesians 5:25: ***“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”***
6. **Proclamation of God’s glory.** Since marriage is from God, it is for His glory. Marriage is designed by God to display His glory in a way no other event or institution does. Malachi 2:15: ***“Did He not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?”*** Isaiah 43:6-7: ***“Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”***

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On Monday, I made a Facebook post where I simply asked this question, *“What’s the best marriage advice you’ve ever given or received?”* Within one minute, five comments came in. In the first hour, there were 62 bits of advice. As of Wednesday afternoon, over 160 people weighed in. Since I started the sermon with some advice from kids, I thought it would be good to hear from some adults. Here are the top ten (if you want to read all of them, go to my wall).

1. Marriage is not a 50/50 deal. Both must give 100%.
2. Don’t go to sleep angry (Ephesians 4:26-27).
3. Forgive freely – you’ll have lots of chances to practice.
4. Remember love is a verb, not a feeling.
5. If you can’t imagine yourself being in quarantine together for two months, don’t walk down the aisle.
6. Communicate constantly, especially regarding expectations.
7. Pick your battles wisely – don’t sweat the small stuff.
8. Hold hands while having an argument.
9. Accept what you cannot change in your spouse.
10. If you have to fight to be right, you are already wrong.

Here are two pieces of wisdom I would add...

**1. Live out your covenant vows.** I don’t know your particular situation, but I know God can repair anything. Will you determine right now, no matter

what your spouse has done or hasn't done, does or doesn't do, that you will do what you must do to live out your part of the covenant? Staying married is not so much about staying in love. It's about keeping your covenant with God and with your spouse. Numbers 30:2: ***"If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."***

In Old Testament times there was a ceremony between two nomadic tribes to promise a son or daughter in marriage. The fathers would butcher some animals, cut the carcasses in half, and then at sundown walk barefoot through the blood path. This was referred to as "cutting a covenant." The slaughtered animals symbolized what would happen to either party if they violated the terms of the agreement.

There are nearly 300 references to the word "covenant" in the Bible. A covenant was an exclusive, solemn and binding mutual agreement between two parties. In Ezekiel 16:8, God compares His commitment to His people to the covenant vow that a man makes to a woman in marriage: ***"...I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine."***

**2. It takes three to make marriage work.** A young boy was asked what he learned in Sunday School from the story of Jesus turning water into wine. After thinking for a moment, he answered, *"If you're having a wedding, make sure Jesus shows up!"*

Your marriage won't last long if you don't have any outside help. Paul Tripp says, *"If God isn't at the center of your longings, your longings will never be satisfied."* Adam and Eve didn't start to have problems until they moved away from God. Ecclesiastes 4:12: ***"A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."*** Let me say it like this: *Your spouse is not your Savior. Only Jesus is the Savior.*

Among the surest predictors of whether a couple will stay married is how regularly they put Jesus first and how often they gather together for worship. Picture a triangle with Jesus at the top and the husband and wife at the bottom. The closer you get in your relationship with Christ, the closer you will move to your spouse.

Because the first Adam plunged all people into guilt and shame because of sin, we need another representative, a second Adam, to stand in our place. 1 Corinthians 15:47 says, ***“The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.”***

This is fleshed out even more in Romans 5:17-19: ***“For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”***

If you have never repented and received Jesus Christ as your Savior, it’s time to do that right now.

You could pray this prayer with me.

*Jesus, I realize I’m a selfish sinner. I repent of how I’ve been living and want to go in Your direction. Thank You for dying in my place on the cross as my substitute and for rising from the dead on the third day. I believe and now I receive You into my life. As my Lord, enable me to follow Your ways in my marriage or in my singleness. If there’s anything that needs to change in my life, please change it so I can reflect You to the world around me. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

If you trusted Christ today, tell someone about it and then send us an email at [info@edgewoodbaptist.net](mailto:info@edgewoodbaptist.net).

May God be with you until we meet again.