

Genesis 2:18-25 “Learning from the First Marriage”^{**[1]}

Main Idea: In Genesis 2:18-25 God gives us "Marriage 101," and the class material addresses two subjects.

I. The Scriptures give us the account of the first marriage (18-23).

A. God said man had a need (18).

1. It's not good for a man to be alone.
2. He needs a helper.

B. God took action to meet the need (19-23).

1. The solution wasn't work.
2. The solution wasn't the animals.
3. The solution was a special gift from God.

The woman was made *for* man.

The woman was made *from* man.

The woman was brought *to* man.

The woman was named *by* man.

II. The Scriptures give us the implications of the first marriage (24-25).

A. Marriage requires leaving.

1. The parent-child relationship is temporary.
2. The husband-wife relationship is permanent.

B. Marriage requires cleaving.

1. Marriage isn't based on feelings.
2. Marriage is based on commitment.

C. Marriage requires weaving.

1. In marriage two people become one.
2. The challenge is to live like it.

The Bottom Line: When we go back to Genesis we discover yet another reason why we need Jesus.

Introduction of Series

It's important to *keep going back*. It's been well said that those who fail to learn from the mistakes of the past are in great danger of repeating them. God wants us to remember and learn from the past as evidenced by the abundance

of historical accounts in His Word.

“*Haven’t you read?*” Jesus charged the Pharisees when they questioned Him about divorce. And then He proceeded to take them back to Genesis to talk about God’s intent for marriage.

Next week is Mother’s Day. Beginning today and next week we’re going to *go back to Genesis*—to a familiar text that *should* be familiar to us since we ought to ponder often what the Spirit of God recorded there for our edification. I bring us to this text with a simple goal in mind: *to learn from the first family how to honor God in our families*. Would you pray with me that God would use these messages to strengthen our families for His honor? Here is what is in store:

Today: *The First Marriage (Genesis 2:18-25)*

Next week: *The First Parents & Children (Genesis 4:1-12)*

Introduction of Message

July 23, 1983 was a great day in my life. It was a Saturday. The weather was hot, but I wasn't thinking about the weather. My attention was riveted to the person dressed in white coming down the church aisle.

It was the day that God ordained that Sherry and I would pledge our lives together. It was our wedding day.

Today we're going to talk about the first wedding day and the first marriage that ever occurred on the planet. I'm convinced that our world is paying a great price because of a failure to take seriously the record of the first marriage.

You’ve heard the statistics. Approximately half of marriages in America end in divorce. A recent *New York Times* article, “Divorce Rate: It’s Not as High as You Think,” challenged that statistic, asserting that the divorce rate is lower, closer to forty percent.^[2] Okay, let’s assume the *Times* article is right. We’re still talking about four out of ten marriages ending in divorce. Would you enter into a business partnership if you knew the odds of failure were four out of ten?

I've played enough sports in my life to know this. When a team is getting "whipped" game after game, the solution isn't to buy new uniforms, or ask the Pep Band to play different songs. It's time to go back to the basics.

There's a great burden on my heart when I see what's happening to marriages. Many (all?) marriages need help. And help is available!

I recognize that not everyone in this room is married. But everyone in this room knows someone who is married and therefore needs to know what God says about marriage. Yes, God wants us to know which is why He gave us a foundational text like Genesis 2.

Where did marriage come from anyway, and what does it take to have a successful marriage in a day when so many are crumbling? God answers those questions for us in Genesis 2:18-25. So let’s go back to school. The class is Marriage 101. The inspired curriculum involves two subjects.

I. The Scriptures give us the account of the first marriage (18-23).

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It's a book of firsts. In chapters one and two, the *first man*, in chapter three the *first sin* and then the *first excuse*, the *first sacrifice*, in chapter four the *first children*, and so on.

Genesis 1 records how God created the universe in six days. In Genesis 2, the biblical writer, Moses, puts the spotlight on *man* and elaborates on the details of Day 6.

According to verse 7 God created man out of the dust of the ground. In verse 8 God placed the first man in a perfect environment, a garden located in Eden . He gave man a job to do in verse 15, to take care of the garden. He also gave him a command—“Eat from any tree in the garden, but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; if you do you will surely die (16).”

At this point in the narrative God speaks a shocking word...

A. God said man had a need (18). “The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”

Uh oh! Something is *not good*. *Lo tov* in the Hebrew. That's the first time that God said something was not good in the Bible. What did God specify was not good?

1. *It's not good for a man to be alone.* Interestingly, the Hebrew word for alone is *bad*. Being *bad* is *lo tov*. How long was Adam alone before God created Eve? Not long. She would be given life before Day 6 ended.

As we look back to Genesis 1:27 we discover that the male-female relationship is part of what it means for mankind to be God's image-bearer. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” God is one God, yet He exists in plurality as three Persons in perfect relationship.

Here God sees the man by himself and says, “Not good.” Does that mean it's wrong to be single? No. In some cases God grants the gift of singleness (1 Cor 7:7) and God Himself meets the need of the person who is alone. In the case of widows 1 Timothy 5:5 states, “The widow who is really in need and *left alone* puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and ask God for help.”

But here's the norm. God says it's *not good* for the man to be alone.

Many young people these days are fearful of marriage. Why? They've seen the statistics. And many have heard the arguing. And some have felt the pain of divorce. The following account is taken from the book *Always Daddy's Girl*:

“Come into the living room, children. We have something we need to tell you.” That's how our parents told us they were not going to be together anymore. After they told us they were divorcing, I sat under the table and my mind replayed again and again the words my father said. I didn't know then what it all meant, but I soon learned. After Dad left, I looked through the drawers where he kept his clothes and found an old sweat shirt he left behind. I hid it in my room and kept it for years. I would cling to it when I was lonely for him. My father came back to see us a few times, but his visits became less and less frequent. Finally his visits stopped completely. I always wondered where he went. I wondered if he thought about us very much. I hoped that he did. But I guess I'll never know.^[3]

Beloved, in a day when that scenario happens far too often, we need to affirm what God says in Genesis. Marriage isn't in trouble. It's the people who are in trouble. Marriage is good. Why? Because God says it's not good for a man to be alone. We were created to live in relationships. And not just for *our* good, but for the good of others.

When a person says, "Well, I like being alone. I don't want to be around people. I don't need them.", he's forgetting what God said. Being alone is *not good*, whether you feel it or not. You need others, and just as importantly, others need *you*. That's one reason you need to be an active member of a church family, isn't it?

Adam lacked something. Yes, God made him, and what God makes is good. But God created Adam with a need for something. What?

2. *He needs a helper.* And what Adam lacked God said He would make, “I will make him an help meet for him (KJV).”

Now answer this. What kind of helper does man need? About eight years ago the Associated Press reported that two mainline Protestant denominations said they wouldn't take an absolutist stand on homosexual marriage. Committees for the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church said the issue is too complex to rule on authoritatively. "We are not ready, theologically or scientifically, to say a defining word about the life of homosexuals in the church," the Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music said.

If ever we needed a 'defining word,' it is now. And we have it right here in Genesis. What kind of helper did God make for Adam? He said He would make a helper 'suitable' [or 'fit'] for him. So what did God do next?

B. God took action to meet the need (19-23). As you listen to the text that follows, you'll note that the subject seems to change. Verses 19-20—"Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field."

Why does the text all of a sudden switch subjects from Adam's need to Adam's naming of the animals? It's not switching subjects. The *naming* is part of God meeting the *need*, as we'll see momentarily.

By doing the job God gave him to do, Adam learned something that day. As far as his need went...

1. *The solution wasn't work.* Work is good, but it doesn't meet the need God identified in verse 18. Remember, God had already given Adam a job to do back in verse 15, *before* He said, "It is not good." So the solution wasn't work.

Men, it's good to work, but God never intended for your work to fulfill this need.

2. *The solution wasn't the animals.* Right after God says that Adam's aloneness isn't good, God gives Adam this job to name the animals. Again, *why?* Take a closer look.

Verse 19 states that God had formed the animals and birds out of the *ground*—that's interesting, that's the same "stuff" from which He made Adam. Then God brought the animals to Adam to see what he would name them.

That, too, is interesting. Adam did in Genesis 2 what God did in Genesis 1. In the first chapter, God gave names to created objects, such as "day" in verse 5, "sky" in verse 8, and "land" in verse 10. Now Adam, God's imagebearer, gives names.

My friend, Adam was no dummy, contrary to the assumptions of common evolutionary theory, which assert that man is getting smarter and smarter. How does the typical biology textbook portray our human ancestors? The first "man" was some thug who's carrying a huge, animal jawbone in one hand, dragging his wife by the hair in the other, and saying, "Ugh!"

Not so! Adam, the first man, was probably the most intelligent human being to walk on the earth until the arrival of the second Adam. He could talk. How? Apparently God taught him to use speech symbols. And God gave him one of the most amazing assignments ever attempted by a human. To name the animals.

Adam didn't have an *Encyclopedia Britannica* to reference. He undoubtedly examined the various creatures, looked at their characteristics, and gave them appropriate names.

Let me insert a parenthesis here. What will heaven be like? I think most of us have a very distorted picture, like floating on a cloud strumming a harp. "Often we think of going to Heaven as departing from our place into an angelic realm to live with God in his place," writes Randy Alcorn. "But the Bible says that in the ultimate Heaven God will come down from his place to live with us in our place, the New Earth."^[4] If you want a more accurate picture of what God's people will be doing in eternity, look at Genesis 2. Look at the paradise that Adam lost. Look at the jobs he did there as God's representative. That's what the new heaven and earth will be like, only better!

Randy Alcorn explains, “Incredible though it may seem, God has decided that we’re actually going to help him run the universe (Luke 19:11-27). He will give us renewed minds and bodies so that we will be whole people, full of energy and vision, eager to undertake new projects for God’s glory and our enrichment...Our best workdays on Earth—when everything turns out better than we planned, when everything’s done on time, when everyone on the team pulls together and enjoys each other—are just a foretaste of the joy our work will bring us in Heaven.”[\[5\]](#)

So back to the question. What does the naming job have to do with Adam's need for a companion? Think about the scene. What did Adam see when God brought the animals to him? An object lesson. He saw two of every kind of animal, a male and a female. He saw two of every kind of bird, a male and a female. He saw two creatures that were similar, yet different. And they were *together*.

But he was alone. There was only one human being. As verse 20 concludes, “But for Adam no suitable helper was found.” What Adam needed the animals couldn't provide.[\[6\]](#)

3. *The solution was a special gift from God.* Verses 21-22, “So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”

What was God's special gift to the first man? It was a *woman*.

God caused Adam to go into a deep sleep, and performed surgery on him—he's less than twenty-four hours old and undergoing surgery! God took a rib from Adam.[\[7\]](#) From that rib He formed the woman. Does that mean that men have one less rib than women? No, but apparently Adam did.

At that point God brought the woman to the man, like a father bringing the bride to the groom. The moment had come!

Men, do you remember how your wife looked on your wedding day? Adam speaks in verse 23—here are the first recorded words of a human being, “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.’”

One of the common contributors to marriage problems is a confusion of marital roles. God made men and women to be different, not in terms of worth, but in role and function.

What's true of the woman? In a chapter entitled, “Masculinity and Femininity Under God,” Elisabeth Elliot offers these personal words, “There are four aspects which define my position as a woman. I was made for man; I was made from man; I was brought to man; I was named by man. Paul bases his arguments about the roles of women in the church on this created order, not on anything which can possibly be construed to be purely social or cultural.”[\[8\]](#)

We find these four defining aspects right here in Genesis 2.

The woman was made *for* man. God created her to be man's helper. She suits him. She complements him. She is ‘fit for him.’[\[9\]](#)

The woman was made *from* man. She was bone of his bones.[\[10\]](#)

In his classic commentary, Matthew Henry observes that God did not make the woman “out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”

That was God's original intent. But the entrance of sin had a destructive effect on marriage roles. Now some men want to crush their wives in abusive dominance, and some women want to usurp authority over their husbands. Both are violations of God's plan.

The woman was brought *to* man.[\[11\]](#) In biblical times arranged marriages were the norm. Eve was a special

gift from God to Adam, tailor made to fulfill him where he was lacking. God brought her to him.

Men, God designed your wife to be your complement. Do you cherish her? [\[12\]](#)

The woman was named *by* man. Later, after they sinned, Adam gave his wife the name 'Eve' because, as Genesis 3:21 explains, "She would become the mother of all the living." But here Adam called his wife *Isha* (the Hebrew word for 'woman') because she was taken out of *Ish* (the Hebrew for 'man').

An Austrian anthropologist named Weizl who lived for a time among the natives of northern Siberia was frequently accosted by giggling young maidens who showed up at his door and pelted him with freshly killed lice. Eventually Weizl learned that among northern Siberians, lice-throwing was a customary manner for woman to declare her interest in a man and indicate that she was available for marriage.

At this point the critic might object, "Wait a minute! The Genesis account proves nothing. Marriage is just a *cultural* thing—just like lice-throwing in Siberia. Maybe at one time it was one man and one woman, but things have changed. We live in a different culture. So it's okay now to swap partners, or live together before or outside of marriage. And there's nothing wrong with a homosexual marriage. Marriage is cultural anyway."

Is that true? Not if God's Word is your authority. To this point Genesis 2 has told us *what happened*. But notice the transition that begins verse 24, "For this reason [or "Therefore" in the KJV]." We're about to discover that *what happened* is what *should happen*. It's not cultural, but normative.

Which brings us to part two in our Marriage 101 curriculum. We've seen the *account* of the first marriage. Next...

II. The Scriptures give us the implications of the first marriage (24-25).

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

In Genesis 2 we see the ideal marriage. There's harmony and intimacy. The question is, "How can we experience that in our marriages?" We find the answer right here. There are three essential steps involved in a good marriage.

A. Marriage requires leaving. "For this reason a man will *leave* his father and mother." But wait. Adam didn't have any parents, did he? Who's speaking here? Moses is. Moses says that what happened at creation is the basis for what should happen in the present.

You say, "Well just because Moses said it applied in the 15th century B.C. doesn't mean it applies today, does it?" Jesus said it does. In Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus actually quoted this text to support that the permanence of marriage: "Haven't you read?" He asked them and then quoted from Genesis 2.

We're talking about non-negotiable steps, and here's the first one. Marriage requires *leaving*. When you get married, your priorities must change. Before marriage your primary earthly obligation is to your parents. But once married it is to your spouse.

Let that sink in. You're supposed to *leave* your parents. Not abandon. Not disown. Not fail to care for them if they have needs. But nonetheless, you must *leave*.

Please realize that leaving is God-ordained. Children are supposed to leave. In fact, parents are supposed to raise their children with leaving in mind.

Parents, are you doing that? Some don't. They smother their children. They cling to their children. They draw security from their children. They forget the "TP" principle.

1. *The parent-child relationship is temporary. But...*

2. *The husband-wife relationship is permanent.* That's God's design, and it goes all the way back to creation.

Larry Cunningham tells the following story: We were visiting friends when they received a telephone call from their recently married daughter. After several tense minutes on the phone, the mother told the father to pick up the extension. The newlyweds had had their first big fight.

In a few moments, the father rejoined us and tersely explained, "Said she wanted to come home."

"What did you tell her?" I asked.

"I told her she was home."[\[13\]](#)

Marriage requires *leaving*. Essential step #2...

B. Marriage requires cleaving. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and *be united to his wife*." For a marriage to succeed, two people must *cleave*.

Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let not man separate." That's what divorce does. It tears apart a union that God intended to be lifelong. When two people marry, they're supposed to *cleave* to each other. For how long? Until things get tough? Until they don't feel anything for each other anymore? No, a thousand no's!

Dear friend, if marriage requires cleaving, and it does, then we can draw two conclusions.

1. *Marriage isn't based on feelings.* Do you see any mention of feelings in verse 24? Was Adam's marriage to Eve based on feelings? No. He'd never even met her before! Feelings aren't the basis of marriage—that's a lie from Satan...

2. *Marriage is based on commitment.* Henry Ford offered some good advice when asked on his 50th wedding anniversary for his rule for marital bliss and longevity. He replied, "Just the same as in the automobile business, stick to one model."[\[14\]](#)

C. Marriage requires weaving. "And they will become one flesh." Please note that celibacy is not a higher nor holier state. Adam and Eve were now something they weren't prior to marriage. They were *one*. This speaks of physical union, for sure, but that's not all. Becoming one flesh entails emotional, mental, and spiritual intimacy as well. That's part of the problem with premarital sex. You have physical union apart from a covenantal commitment. And when you do that there will be incredible emotional scars, which are the result of guilt before God.

So many marriage problems are due to a breakdown right here—a failure to leave, cleave, and weave. Allow me to speak candidly. According to God's Word...

1. *In marriage two people become one.* That's a fact.

2. *The challenge is to live like it.* This is where we get in trouble.

I'd like to speak pointedly to you who are married. You and your God-given spouse are *one*. Are you living like it? Do you talk over decisions together? Are you on the same page in terms of your goals and ambitions, how you spend your money, what you want for your children and grandchildren?

My friend, the day I got married a change occurred. It was no longer *me*. It was now *us*. And here's where the rubber meets the road—learning to *live out* what we *are*.

May I let you in on a little secret? You can't do this on your own strength. When two people do what comes naturally, it's merely a matter of time before their marriage is in jeopardy. Why? Because we are sinners. We don't have the power to leave, cleave, and weave, or fulfill God's intent for any other biblical command.

I'm so thankful for 'the triangle principle.' Two people moving towards the same point will in turn become closer to each other. Who's the third point? It's Jesus Christ. When two people are growing closer to Christ they will in turn grow closer to each other.

But to grow closer to Christ, you must first *know Him*. Jesus Christ is the Savior. He died for our sins and conquered the grave. Today He offers life to those who will repent and believe in Him. Do you know Him, and are you seeking to grow closer to Him?

Genesis 2 concludes with an interesting comment about Adam and Eve. Verse 25 says they were naked, yet shame-free.^[15] There was not a shade of distrust, greed, or selfishness.^[16] Theirs was a perfect love.

Why is there shame today? Because of what happened in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve disobeyed God. In a sinless world, there's no shame. But where there's sin, there's guilt and shame. Thankfully, because of His amazing grace, God removes guilt through Jesus.

Celie Thomas shares the following: "My husband's uncle thought he had conquered the problem of trying to remember his wife's birthday and their anniversary. He opened an account with a florist, provided him with the dates and instructions to send flowers along with an appropriate note signed, 'Your loving husband.' His wife was thrilled by this new display of attention and all went well until one day when he came home, kissed his wife and said off handedly, 'Nice flowers, honey. Where'd you get them?'"^[17]

Maybe you can relate to this husband. Good intentions, poor performance. We've learned today what it takes to have a God-honoring marriage. Marriage involves leaving, cleaving, and weaving. How are you doing?

Men, take the lead. Don't wait. If things aren't right in your family, *you* do something about it. In all the biblical counseling sessions I've ever had, I have never heard a man say, "I wish I had spent more time at the office." But the world is full of men and women who ignored God's will for their family until it was too late.

I invite you to make a 'Joshua decision' today. What's a *Joshua decision*? It's to affirm what Joshua did more than 3,000 years ago when at the end of his life he made this public announcement (Josh. 24:15), "As for me and my house, we will *serve the Lord*."

Will you resolve today to be God's kind of husband, God's kind of wife, God's kind of *person*? You say, "Things won't change merely by making a resolve, will they?" No. But I can guarantee that things *won't* change if you don't.

God sent His Son Jesus to rescue Adam's descendants from their sin and self-centeredness. Yes, at the cross He paid the necessary ransom to set us free, and by conquering the grave He makes it possible for us to serve Him. So here's the question. Will you resolve today *to serve Him*, that is, to trust Him and always seek to do what pleases Him in your life and family?

I must warn you. Things will need to change if you make that resolve, and you lack the power to make the changes. But if you'll trust Him, He will provide the power!

The Bottom Line: *When we go back to Genesis we discover yet another reason why we need Jesus.*

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

^[1] This message is based on a message preached at WBC on 2/27/2000 in our Genesis series.

^[2] DAN HURLEY, "Divorce Rate: It's Not as High as You Think," The New York Times, April 19, 2005.

^[3] *Always Daddy's Girl* by H. Norman Wright, 1989, Regal Books Page 86

[4] Randy Alcorn, *Heaven: Biblical Answers to Common Questions*, p. 9.

[5] Randy Alcorn, p. 22.

[6] Wenham points out (68), "The word for 'animal' and 'living,' *hayyah*, anticipates 'Eve,' *hawwah*. Though in Hebrew these creatures' names sound so similar to Eve's, they are not what man is looking for."

[7] The Hebrew word usually means "side." Elsewhere it refers to the "side" of the ark (Ex 25:12, 14), the "side" of the tabernacle (Ex. 26:20), and even the "side" of a mountain (2 Sam 16:13).

[8] Taken from chapter 3 (p. 42) in *Our Savior God: Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement*, ed. by James Boice.

[9] Paul explains further in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; See also 1 Tim 2:13.

[10] 1 Corinthians 11:12 reiterates, "For as woman came from the man, so also man is born of woman..."

[11] I'm struck by Adam's passivity in the 'match-making' process.

[12] See Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.

[13] Told by Larry Cunningham (Billings , MT)

[14] *Christian Clippings*, Page 27

[15] Wenham says they were like young children unashamed at their nakedness; p. 71.

[16] Notice that sexuality is not merely what we do, but what we *are*.

[17] Celie Thomas, March 1991 RD