

Main Idea: In Genesis 2:18-25 we learn that God wants us to know two things regarding the first marriage.

I. God wants us to know the specifics 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. God wants us to know the significance 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.

Make It Personal: Let's affirm the goodness of God and God's plan today.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 19:1-6

Last week we as a congregation voted to amend our statement of faith by adding a paragraph that clarifies what we believe regarding marriage.

“In light of God's creative design, we believe that the Bible teaches that marriage is the joining of one man and one woman and that sexual intimacy is to be expressed only within the bonds of a Biblically defined marriage. Any other form of marriage or sexual intimacy is immoral and a perversion of God's gracious will.”

The first words are critical. *In light of God's creative design.* To understand marriage, we must go back and consider what God the Creator did when He first formed man and marriage. He had a purpose in mind, a design. And we'll experience maximum joy today when we choose to live in light of His creative design.

When Jesus responded to questions about marriage, He took people back to the creation account. “Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female...?”

We need to do what Jesus did. If we are to think rightly about marriage, we need to give careful attention to what the Creator did in the beginning, and why He did it.

So last week we looked at God's intent for man in Genesis 2:4-17. Today we're considering God's intent for marriage in Genesis 2:18-25.

I recognize that not everyone marries. And most people will spend considerable time *single* in their lives, and some for *all* their lives. But God wants everyone, including singles, to know what He has said about marriage, so that we will think rightly about it and encourage others to think rightly about it.

** 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 For an earlier development of this passage, see the Genesis series preached at WBC in 2000.

God wants us to know two things regarding the first marriage which He makes known in Genesis 2:18-25. We might call this "Marriage 101," and the class material involves two parts.

One, God wants us to know the specifics of the first marriage (18-23).

Two, God wants us to know the significance of the first marriage (24-25).

I. God wants us to know the specifics of the first marriage (18-23).

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It's a book of firsts. Last week we saw the *first man*. Today, the *first marriage*. In the passages that follow, the *first sin*, then the *first excuse*, the *first sacrifice*, and the *first children*.

In Genesis 1, God's Word shows how God created the universe, out of nothing, in six days. Light, darkness, sky, water, land, vegetation, stars, fish, birds, animals, and finally the man and the woman, created in His image.

In Genesis 2, the Holy Spirit directed Moses to put the spotlight on Man and tell us the fuller account of what happened when God created Adam and Eve on Day 6.

According to verses 4-17, God placed the first man in a perfect environment, a garden located in Eden. He gave man a job to do—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.

At this point in the narrative we learn the first of two important details connected with the first marriage...

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.* How long was Adam alone before God created Eve? Not long. She would be given life before Day 6 ended.

Genesis 1:27 indicates 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.

Notice something in Genesis 1:26. "Then God said, 'Let *us* make man in *our* image.'" God is one God but He exists as three persons. He is a relational God. God the Father relates to God the Son, and God the Son relates to God the Father. And both the Father and the Son relate to and love God the Holy Spirit. They have existed forever together in perfect unity. Yes, they have distinctions in terms of role and function. But this adds to the joy they experience as they work together for a common end, the expression of their glory.

In creation we see them interacting. The Father designed it, the Son accomplished it, and the Spirit "hovers over" it (a term used of a mother bird with her young).

So the three persons of the Godhead are relational. They enjoy relating to one another, communicating with one another, working together, giving to each other, and expressing their love for each other.

Now this God, the God who says, "Let us make man in our image," also says, "Not good." In Genesis 2 God sees the man by himself and says, "Not good." God does not want this man to be alone.

Does that mean it's wrong to be single? No. In some cases God grants the gift of singleness (1 Cor 7:7), and then He 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."

Nonetheless God does not want His image-bearers to be alone. He loves relationships, and part of what it means to reflect His image is to do life in relationships. It is *not good* for a human being to do life alone. That does not reflect the image of God accurately, which is why we are here.

And here is how He typically purposes for man to reflect this relational aspect of bearing His image. Through the marriage bond.

God designed marriage so that His imagebearers could experience something He loves, and reflect something He wants the world to know about Him.

So marriage is a good gift from God. Which is why we need to talk about a problem, namely, that many young people these days are postponing marriage.

Why? There are many factors. Some want the benefits of marriage without the commitment, so they live together. But for many, it's fear, for the marriages they've seen fell far short of God's good intent.

I heard a sobering illustration last week as I listened to the audiobook, *Hillbilly Elegy*, by J. D. Vance. Vance, who's in his early 30s, gives the world an inside look at life in Appalachia. His grandparents moved from eastern Kentucky to Middletown, Ohio where his grandfather found work in the steel mill. By telling his own family story, Vance details the poverty, addiction, and family challenges that many families face in poor white communities.

The book has become a best-seller. I read several reviews and want you to hear this one by David Lapp, *Angry No More: A Review of Hillbilly Elegy*.²

Mamaw was a fierce hillbilly. Once, when J.D. Vance's mom was a kid, Mamaw told Papaw that if he ever came home drunk again, she'd kill him. When Papaw did come home drunk again and fell asleep on the couch, Mamaw got the gasoline can, poured it over her husband, and lit a match to his chest. Papaw was also a fierce hillbilly: he survived with only a few minor burns. They had moved from "Bloody Breathitt" in the mountains of eastern Kentucky to Middletown, Ohio, partly (it seems) because Mamaw was 13 and pregnant, and partly because Papaw was 16 and in search of a decent job. He found it at Armco Steel, where he worked until retirement. They were pursuing the American Dream—and perhaps running from the wrath of Mamaw's brothers.

In Middletown, Mamaw and Papaw bought a house and made more money than they could ever have made in the mountains. But after Papaw returned home from an honest day's work at the steel mill, he was often drunk. Their marriage deteriorated into bitter fights: like the time Mamaw threw a flower vase and split his forehead or the time on Christmas Eve that Papaw came home drunk, and hurled the family Christmas tree out the window. J.D. Vance's mom was a promising student, but quicker than she could get to college, she was 18 and pregnant—and then onto the marriage carousel. In the next few years, she married and divorced and remarried (and she was just getting started).

That's when J.D. was born. By nine months old, his mom was putting Pepsi in his bottle. By the time he was walking, his parents had separated. In kindergarten, his mom told him that he'd never see his dad again because he was giving him up for adoption to his stepdad. In fourth grade, he learned from his Mamaw that you should

² *Angry No More: A Review of Hillbilly Elegy* by David Lapp | @AmberDavidLapp July 11, 2016

give bullies a hard punch to the gut—and be sure to fight with your hips. By fifth grade, his mom and stepdad fought violently, often over money and despite an income of over \$100,000. Unable to sleep because of shattering glass or rocking furniture, J.D.'s grades suffered, and he gained weight.

When he was 12 years old, J.D.'s mom threatened to crash the car and kill them both after J.D. said something that made her angry.

So...if you grew up in a family like that (and many young people in our own community have, perhaps in this room), would you have second thoughts about getting married?

That's why it's critical for us to see what God says in Genesis. Marriage isn't in trouble. It's the people who are in trouble. Marriage itself is good. God Himself 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, and ultimately, for *His* glory.

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*. We need others, and just as importantly, others need *us*.

Which is one of the reasons God created the church, His forever family, and instructs us not to forsake it but rather to encourage one another in it (Heb 10:25).

So God made the first man, 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)."

So what kind of helper does man need? Many in society are saying that this helper could be a woman, or it could be another man. But what does the Creator say? What kind of helper did God make for Adam?

He announces in verse 18, "I will make a helper *suitable* for him." That's an important word. *Suitable*. In the AV, "an help *meet* for him." In the Schofield, "fit."

Remember marriage is about reflecting the image of God. God is unity, but He exists in plurality, one God, but three distinct persons with three distinct and different roles.

The so called homosexual marriage is fundamentally an attack on the person of God, for the image-bearer is saying, "I don't want to reflect Your image, Almighty God, so I'm not going to marry someone who is different. I want to create my own version of You, so I'm going to marry someone who is like me."

In Genesis God Himself said He would fashion something to complement the man, so he could image God correctly. What did He make? Notice...

B. God took action to meet the need (19-23). Listen to the text, "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. But for Adam no suitable helper was found."

Stop there for a moment. The first man had a need so God took action to meet the need. What was the solution? Notice first that...

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 *before* He said, "It is not good." So the solution for man's need isn'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.* At first glance, verses 19-20 don't seem to fit. Right after God says that Adam's aloneness isn't good, God gives Adam the job to name the animals. Why that assignment, and why then?

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

That's interesting. We see Adam doing 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, will give names.

There's something going on here that stands in contrast to the assumptions of common evolutionary theory which assert that man is getting smarter and smarter. How does the typical evolutionary chart portray our human ancestors? The first "man" was some not too intelligent looking primate, sort of hunched over, who is carrying a huge spear in one hand.

That's not the account the Creator recorded. Adam, the first man, was probably the most intelligent human to walk on the earth until the arrival of the second Adam. He could talk. How? God taught him to use speech symbols. And God gave him one of the most amazing assignments ever attempted by a person. *To name the animals.*

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

The first man did not come from a line of animals. Rather, He named them.

But what does the naming have to do with Adam's need for a companion? Think about it. 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.³

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.⁴ From that rib He formed the woman. Does that mean that men have one less rib than women? No, but Adam did.

At that point God brought the woman to the man, like a father bringing the bride to the groom. The time had come for the couple to meet.

Men, do you remember how your wife looked on your wedding day? Adam speaks in verse 23, and 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.'"

³Wenham 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."

⁴The 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).

One of the common contributors to marriage problems is a confusion of marital roles. Roles are viewed as demeaning. But in Genesis we see God's intent. He made men and women different, not in terms of worth (they are both His image-bearers), 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."⁵

Let's consider these four features one by one.

- 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." Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man."⁶

- The woman was made *from* man. She was bone of his bones. 1 Corinthians 11:12 reiterates, "For as woman came from the man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

Back in the 1600s commentator Matthew Henry made a timeless observation. He said 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. Today 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 good plan.

- The woman was brought *to* man. I'm struck by Adam's passivity in the match-making process. God brought the woman to the man. 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.

So too for you husbands. God designed your wife to complement you. Do you appreciate the unique perspectives and abilities your wife brings to your home? Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 puts it this way, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!"

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

So there are the details of the first marriage. God said man had a need, and then He took action to meet the need.

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

⁵Taken from chapter 3 (p. 42) in *Our Savior God: Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement*, ed. by James Boice.

⁶See also 1 Tim 2:13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

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! Marriage is just a *cultural* thing. Like lice-throwing in Siberia. Maybe at one time it was one man and one women, but we live in a different time now, with different societal values. So it's okay now to marry the opposite sex if you want, or the same sex, or live together without getting married if you want. Marriage is just a cultural man-made institution."

Is that true? Not according to God's Word. Up 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.

II. God wants us to know the significance 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 marriage in a pre-sin world. There's harmony and intimacy. The question is, "How can we experience that in our marriages?"

First of all, in a post-Genesis 3 world, we need the grace of God which is available through Jesus Christ and the gospel. As sinners we lack what's needed. But in Christ God gives us the resources that make marriage (and the rest of a God-pleasing life) possible.

Then specifically, we see right here what it takes to experience marriage as God intended. Three essential steps.

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? No. Who's speaking here? Moses is. Moses says that what happened at creation is the basis for what should happen in his day.

You say, "Well just because Moses said it applied in the 15th century BC 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 replied, that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Thirty years later Paul said the same thing when the Holy Spirit guided him to write to the church in Ephesus. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother." That's Ephesians 5:31 and Paul is doing what Jesus did, quoting Genesis 2:24.

So this is marriage, not just as God *intended*, but as God *intends*.

And here's the first non-negotiable. Marriage requires *leaving*. When you get married, your priorities are supposed to change. Before marriage your first obligations are to your parents. Afterwards they are 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.

That reminds me again of the story Larry Cunningham tells: 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."⁷

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 intends to be lifelong. And why lifelong? Because we are His image-bearers, and two people become one and then function as one they are reflecting what He is like.

So 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, till death do us part.

Let's talk about a couple of implications. If marriage requires cleaving...

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. Thankfully there are feelings involved—that's a gift from God too. But feelings are not the basis of marriage. That's a lie from Satan.

2. *Marriage is based on commitment.* A commitment to God first, and to the person He has given to me for reflecting His image.

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."⁸

C. Marriage requires weaving. "And they will become one flesh."

Now, while singleness can be a good thing and in some cases the preferable thing (see 1 Corinthians 7:8, 25-28), please note that celibacy is not a higher nor holier state. By God's design Adam and Eve were now something they weren't prior to marriage. They were *one*.

This speaks initially of physical intimacy. In 1 Corinthians 6:16 Paul says, "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.'" And then he says in verse 17, "Flee from sexual immorality." And verse 19, "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit."

But becoming one flesh goes much further than sex. It also entails emotional, mental, and spiritual intimacy as well.

⁷ Told by Larry Cunningham (Billings, MT)

⁸ *Christian Clippings*, Page 27

Here's one of the problems 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. He created the good gift of sexual intimacy for the enjoyment of two people who entered the marriage covenant—that means they made a promise to Him and each other before witnesses that they would be husband and wife till death.

Thankfully, this good God has also provided a remedy for the guilt of sexual sin. Put off all sexual sin, says Ephesians 5:3-4, and put on thanksgiving. Give thanks to the One who gave His life to remove your sin and guilt so you can live as He intends, for His glory.

So when we're having marriage problems (and we all have them) it almost always goes right back to this. We're failing to leave, cleave, and weave our lives together as God intended. Simply put...

1. *In marriage two people become one.*

2. *The challenge is to live like it.* So allow me 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? Are you exhibiting oneness in your communication?

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

Again, we can't do this on our own strength. If 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.

But here's the solution. It's called "the triangle principle." Two people who are moving towards the same third point will in turn grow 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 Christ*. 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 personally? And is it your aim in life to grow closer to Him?

Genesis 2 concludes with an interesting comment in verse 25 about Adam and Eve. They were both naked, yet shameless. They were like young children unashamed at their nakedness.⁹ Theirs was a perfect love. There was not a shade of distrust, greed, or selfishness.¹⁰

Why is there shame today? Because of what happened in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve sinned. In a sinless world, there's no shame. But where there's sin, there's guilt and shame. And a need for a Savior.

Make It Personal: Let's affirm the goodness of God and God's plan today.

Let's make some "Joshua decisions" today. What's a "Joshua decision?" It's to affirm the words that Joshua spoke more than 3,000 years ago, when, at the end of his life Joshua made a public commitment recorded in Joshua 24:15, "But as for me and my house, we will *serve the Lord*."

⁹ Wenham, 71

¹⁰Notice that sexuality is not merely what we do, but what we *are*.