

“Marriage: Designed by God”

Genesis 2:18-25

Baxter Exum (#1009)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
March 29, 2009



Introduction:

Hopefully most of us who are married will agree that marriage is a wonderful blessing. Perhaps others, however, will agree with Mae West who said, **“Marriage is a great institution. But I am not ready for an institution yet.”** And yet whatever our personal opinions on marriage might be, I hope that all of us are disturbed by some of what we are hearing in the world around us. On one extreme, many have given up on marriage altogether and are simply moving in with one another, and then on the other extreme, some people are saying that anything and everything that claims to be a marriage should in fact be recognized by the church and the government as a marriage.

On one hand, we have marriages where maybe the husband or wife does not have a Scriptural right to be divorced from a previous spouse, resulting in an adulterous union. And so we have people in their second, third, and fourth marriages...thinking they are faithful to the Lord, when they really need to repent and get out of those relationships. And then on the other hand, we have the latest extreme of gay marriage, where men are demanding the right of marriage to other men, and women are demanding the right of marriage to other women. Several years ago, I remember taking one of our children down to the Capitol to hear some of the testimony on the gay marriage issue—absolutely amazing what some people are arguing—even in the name of religion!

This morning, then, in light of these widely varying opinions, I would like for us to go back and look at a passage of Scripture that gives a description of marriage as God intended it from the beginning. In fact, this is not just any Scripture, but it is a Scripture that is quoted by Jesus in the book of **Matthew**. I am referring, of course, to the closing verses of **Genesis 2**. **▶▶PPT▶▶** In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on **page 3**.

It is significant that Jesus refers back to **Genesis 2**—not as some kind of made-up story, not as a fairy tale, but as actual history—and so even Jesus understood that Adam and Eve were two real people who were really married. They did not evolve to this point over millions of years, they did not make up the idea of being married, but we are about to find from **Genesis 2** that lifelong marriage between one man and one woman is God’s foundation for society itself. Marriage is that important! Marriage was instituted, in fact, long before either government or the church.

If you will, then, please look with me at **Genesis 2:18-25**. The creation is almost finished, Adam has been placed in the Garden of Eden, and it appears that Moses now goes back and gives us some additional information concerning what happens at some point on Day #6. **Genesis 2:18-25**...

- 18** *Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."*
- 19** *Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.*
- 20** *The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.*
- 21** *So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.*
- 22** *The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.*
- 23** *The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."*
- 24** *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*
- 25** *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

As we study this passage of Scripture, I would like for us to focus on **verses 24-25**, because in these two verses Moses gives us the first inspired commentary on everything that has happened up to this point. He starts in **verse 24** by saying, "***For this reason....***" In other words, these verses were not written for Adam and Eve! Moses was writing this hundreds of years after this happened. And so after hundreds of years of marriage, therefore, Moses was giving an inspired reminder of the way things had always been intended...from the beginning! This morning, then, we need to go back and look very carefully at God's original plan for marriage. What did God intend?

I. **We notice, first of all, that MARRIAGE REQUIRES A SEPARATION.**
»PPT»

And as soon as Moses starts talking about a man leaving his father and his mother, we are reminded right away that he was not referring to Adam. Adam, of course, did not have a father and mother—whether Adam had a belly-button, I do not know. This account, then, is not for Adam's benefit. But instead, Moses is telling people like us what this creation account really means, he goes through Days 1-6, and he answers the "**So what?**" question, because as he starts, he says, "***For this reason a man shall leave....***" In other words, Moses refers back to the creation of Eve, and he uses Eve's unique design and Adam's loneliness to prove that men today must

separate from their parents to be joined by God to their wives in marriage. It is interesting to me that Adam's relationship with God was not enough. Adam had a perfect relationship with his Father in heaven, but even that relationship on its own still left Adam feeling lonely. There are ways our wives can help us that God cannot—the importance of the marriage relationship!

We find, then, in **verses 22-23** that the woman was created as a *“helper suitable”* for the man. Certainly this is a concept that has been misunderstood for many, many years. Many people see the word *“helper,”* and perhaps they think of some kind of servant or a slave. In English, we look up the word *“helper”* in the dictionary, and the dictionary tells us that a helper is, **“Someone who helps—a relatively unskilled worker who assists a skilled worker, usually by manual labor.”** Maybe that is what we think about in English, perhaps that is how some men look at their wives, but the Hebrew word that is used here refers more to the idea of a highly valued companion—a beneficial relationship where one person supports another as a friend and an ally. In fact, this Hebrew word is most often used in the Old Testament to refer to God. We find the word in **Psalm 46:1**, where the Bible says that, **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”** God is not our servant, but God is our ally. The word was used to refer to someone who comes in for the rescue—like a police officer who shows up at just the right time or a firefighter who helps us right when we need it. We remember the words of King Solomon in **Ecclesiastes 4:9-11**, where Solomon said that, **“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone?”** Marriage is built on that kind of relationship. Eve was custom-designed to be a helper or rescuer for Adam.

As modern men, I don't know if we can really even try to put ourselves in Adam's place. We think of the excitement of a groom who sees his bride for the first time as she comes down the aisle on the wedding day. Guys, you know what this is like—absolutely beautiful! And yet not only had Adam not seen his wife, but he had never seen any woman. He had seen all of the animals, but he knew that that wasn't going to do it! Something was definitely missing in all of the living creatures that he had seen up to this point. So God puts him to sleep, and when Adam wakes up, he sees the woman that God had made—especially for him.

And so in **verse 23**, we have another first in the Bible—the first statement ever made by a human being. As soon as Adam sees the woman, he realizes that she is like him. She is his other half. He realizes that they were made for one another, and he realizes that they are now a family unit. He is a man (from the Hebrew word *iysh*), and she is a woman (from the Hebrew word *ishshah*—*ish* with the feminine ending). They are two halves that make a whole.

And Moses says, **“For this reason...a man shall leave his father and his mother...,”** because at the point of marriage, a new family unit is created, and a break is made between the parents and the bride and the groom. Loneliness is conquered! I don't know if anyone has noticed this, but I have a tradition of referring to young couples as a **“family”** even if they do not have children. Sometimes when

a child is born, someone will say, **“Oh, I’m so glad you have started a family.”** But in reality, the family started at the wedding! Moses then says that a man must leave his father and his mother.

A number of you here this morning have been with me through the premarital discussions that we have before a wedding. If you have, then you might remember that a good part of our discussion revolves around six of the major causes of divorce in our society. One of those causes is interference from parents and in-laws. **“For this reason,”** then, a newlywed couple must be able to stand together as a couple and determine that parents will not be allowed to interfere—that their relationship with one another must always take priority over the relationship with the parents.

This means not always running back to mom and dad to solve every little problem. It means not allowing mom and dad to work one spouse against the other when it comes to holidays and special events. We think kids are bad at this, but kids have nothing on the in-laws! It means creating new family traditions in the new home. Certainly young couples can go to mom and dad for advice from time to time, but leaving means leaving. God was looking forward to all of the marriages still to come, and so he made sure Moses emphasized the importance of making a break with mom and dad.

As parents, it seems there is a lesson here for us. As parents, we have our children for a very short time. Our own is about to turn twelve next month, and as I was preparing this morning’s lesson I realized that by the time a child is 12 years old, 2/3 of the time we have as parents is already gone! And then, by the time they start making decisions about dating and marriage, our time to directly influence our children is basically over. If we wait until the age of 16 to teach our children God’s design for marriage, we are way too late. As parent, then, let us realize this, and let us use these precious years to teach our children God’s plan and God’s law for marriage.

But the first point here is this: The relationship between a husband and wife must be the most important earthly relationship we have; otherwise, we will never truly enjoy the thrilling closeness that God intended. First of all, then, marriage involves a separation from our parents.

II. As we keep on looking at verse 24, we find another basic idea as Moses describes a PERMANENT UNION. »PPT»

Moses said that the man shall **“...be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”** The word **“joined”** refers to being glued together. In the Bible, the word was used to refer to the scales that were joined to a fish and to leprosy that was joined to the skin. It is a permanent bond. I hate to compare marriage to leprosy or fish scales, but the point is valid—a husband and wife are to be permanently joined together. I remember many years ago when I was very, very small—seeing my dad use Super Glue and accidentally gluing his fingers together. Even today, I am terrified of Super Glue for that reason. Just a split second, and even human skin will be permanently glued together.

As the snow started falling last night, the kids and I started working on a little project. Several of our men have agreed to make sure that everybody here this morning gets one of these. But the project involved spreading glue with our fingers. We took two pieces of paper and glued them together just as a husband and wife are also to be glued together—just as a husband and wife are to be joined in a permanent union. Perhaps you can keep this in your Bible as a reminder that the bond is permanent. I have not tested this long-term or anything, but I would say that these two pieces of paper cannot be separated without doing permanent damage to both pieces. In a similar way, marriage is to be permanent. And again, the Hebrew word for glue is the word translated here as ***“joined”*** in **Genesis 2:24**. This is the picture that Moses is painting for us. In the act of marriage, a man and woman in a sense are gluing themselves to one another. They are pledging to God and to one another that they promise to stay together until they are separated only by death.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus quotes this verse in **Matthew 19**. Not only does He quote it, but He adds some commentary of His own. The Pharisees were pestering Jesus with a question on divorce, and Jesus gave an answer based on what we have already read this morning in **Genesis 2**. In **Matthew 19:4-6**, Jesus gives His answer to their question of whether they could divorce their wives for any reason. He answered and said, ***“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’”*** And then, Jesus went on to add a commentary of His own as He said, ***“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”***


In the Old Testament, God’s prophets also affirmed that marriage involved a permanent vow or a covenant with God—even if they were very young at the time they made the commitment. In **Malachi 2:13-16**, the Lord listed the sins of Israel and He said, ***“...the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.... Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel..., ‘So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.’”*** The book of **Proverbs** also speaks of marriage as a covenant, as a mutual commitment. Solomon condemns the adulteress who ***“...leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.”*** (**Proverbs 2:17**).

And yet for thousands of years, people have continued to disregard the sacred pledge of a life-long marriage. Young couples get in a fight, they disagree over the finances, they get in a disagreement over how they spend their free time, and so we continue to have millions upon millions of people who very painfully walk away from the commitment. I think I agree with a psychologist in San Francisco who said, ***“There are two things which should never be started prematurely. One is divorce, and the other is embalming.”*** I hope we would agree with both of those! Neither

one should be started too soon, because God has created a bond that should not be separated.

God never ordained marriages between those of the same gender. God never intended for a man and a woman to live together in intimacy without being married. And in the same way, God never intended for marriages to dissolve, but God's plan was for a man and a woman to become one in marriage—to be glued (or "**joined**") to one another.

As husbands and wives, it seems that there is a rather obvious application of **Genesis 2:24**, by rededicating ourselves to having the kind of marriage that we promised God on the day we were married. In an argument, let us never use the word "**divorce**" under any circumstances. Let us never use that word as a threat. You know, there is a better way you can threaten your spouse—just remind him or remind her that the two of you are stuck together forever. Remind your spouse that you will never leave, remind them that you are not going anywhere, and remind them that you will be there with them for the rest of your life. Remind them that you made an agreement and that you are sticking with it. Remind them that when you said "**I do**" it was a promise not only to them, not only to the State of Wisconsin, but also to God, that you are not giving up, and that you might as well do the best you can to get along! Talk to a therapist. Talk to a counselor. Talk to a trusted friend. We can reinvest our emotional energy in strengthening the relationship. We can choose to spend our time in a way that makes the marriage stronger instead of weaker. We can choose to listen, we can choose to be patient, we can choose to be open, and we can be determined to keep that bond strong over a lifetime. Moses, then, tells us that marriage involves a permanent union.

III. Not only does marriage involve separating from our parents and forming a permanent union, but we find in verse 25 that THE UNION IS MORE INTIMATE THAN ANY OTHER HUMAN RELATIONSHIP. 

Maybe you can remember something said by the comedian Rodney Dangerfield concerning his own marriage. He said, "**We sleep in separate rooms, we have dinner apart, we take separate vacations—we're doing everything we can to keep our marriage together!**" That might be true sometimes, but it is probably not exactly what God had in mind.

Verse 25 tells us that, "*...the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*" Now, in our society, I am not exactly sure that we can really understand what is being said here. In our day, whenever we hear the word "**naked**," we might think of pornography, of something immoral, of something shameful.

The reason for this shame is what happens in the very next verse. We remember that the Scriptures were not originally divided into chapters, so in the very next verse, in **Genesis 3:1**, the Bible says, "**Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.**" The man and the woman had no shame, but Satan was hard at work, and Satan has made it his life's work to

bring shame into our world. Satan has done an amazing job of corrupting what it means to be naked with no shame.

But through it all, the Bible still holds up marriage as an ideal relationship that can be enjoyed—without shame. The Bible still tells us what it takes. The word Moses uses here literally refers to being exposed, or bare, or open. And so it seems that (beyond the obvious) Adam and Eve did not have any secrets. There was nothing they needed to cover up or hide. There was no shame between them, they were not embarrassed to be with one another, but their relationship was perfect in every way. As we might say today, they were **“transparent”** in their relationship with one another. They were vulnerable and sharing, trusting and open. And yet in the next chapter, when they sinned, the Bible says that they both realized that they were naked, and covered themselves, and hid themselves not only from the Lord but also from each other.

We can safely say that Satan is more than ready to come between not only us and God, but also between every single husband and wife! Satan is ready to step in and cause conflict, and tension, and shame. We are meant to know each other in a marriage as a gift from God, but sin can take away the intimacy that God intended for us to have.

Maybe sin has damaged some relationships represented here this morning. We need to remember that God is the one who joined us together, and God is also the one who can bring us closer together once again. We can restore the intimacy with prayer and forgiveness. If we have lost this relationship, if we have lost the closeness, if we have grown apart, God allows us to turn around.

Conclusion:

This morning, then, we have learned that God’s plan for marriage is for a man and woman to separate from their parents, forming a permanent union between them, and to share together in a loving and open relationship—without shame. I have heard back from two of our members who had suggestions for a brief series on marriage. Some of those ideas have been incorporated into this morning’s lesson, and I am hoping that the rest can be included over the next few weeks. And again, if any of you have any input, I would love to hear about that.

As we close this morning, I am so thankful that God has promised to forgive every sin that we will repent of. If we will humbly turn our hearts back toward God, if we will turn away from sin, if we will confess our belief in Jesus as God’s Son, and if we allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins, God will welcome us into His family.

If you need the prayers of this congregation, we would be honored to hear about your struggle. We can pray about it together. Write it down, bring it to the front, and we can go to God together. If you have any questions about God’s plan, let us know—we can sit down and study God’s word this afternoon. On the other hand, if

you are ready to obey the gospel right now, we hope you will let us know as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org