

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Lesson 9

The Institution of Marriage

Genesis 2:18-25

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. One of the most serious social problems in most cultures is the breakdown of the home. Many sociologists agree the home is slowly being eroded and there is little hope for the future.
- B. The real problem is a spiritual one, for most people do not relate God and Christ to marriage, even though most people still want a religious wedding in a beautiful building. According to the Bible, the ideal marriage involves a holy triangle of husband, wife and Jesus Christ, and without this triangle, a marriage can never reach the heights God intended for it.
- C. The breakdown of the home is really a breakdown in one's understanding of the nature of marriage. There are hundreds of books written on how to have a successful marriage, but very few people read the Bible on the subject. It seldom occurs to people that God has planned marriage and told us how to have a successful marriage in His Holy Word.
- D. Millions of families today are on the verge of breaking up. Divorce is on the rise. Even Christians are accepting divorce as a viable solution to a troubled marriage.
- E. Divorce statistics are only a part of the total picture. Thousands of married couples exist in an armed truce or in an almost unbearable agony of heart. They hesitate to file for a divorce because of their children, or because of social or religious pressures, or because they are unable to pay alimony or the court costs. For these folks, "holy wedlock has become "holy deadlock."

Augsburger in Cherishable: Love and Marriage, says, "It is nearness without closeness; familiarity without intimacy; co-habitation without cooperation or communication. Life in common with no love and communion.

II. THE DIVINE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE Genesis 2:18-25

- A. God made man for Himself (2:18a) *"The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'"*
 1. God was perfectly satisfied with Adam and His fellowship with him in the Garden of Eden. But apparently Adam was not satisfied and he was incomplete.
 2. Up to verse 2:18, God many times repeated the words, *"It is good"* in relation to the physical creation, the animal world and the creation of man. But in Genesis 2:18 God says, *"It is not good for the man to be alone."* It was man who was incomplete not God, for God was perfectly satisfied with His creation of man. Man needed something to complete him and adjust him to life on this earth.
- B. God made a woman for the man (1:18b) *"I will make a helper suitable for him."*
 1. God decided to create woman who would be a *"helper suitable for him."* From the Hebrew meaning of "suitable for him" ("as agreeing to him" or "his counterpart"), we see that the woman is a compliment to the man.
 2. God created a woman to be a helper. She is to be complimentary to the man, not competitive. God never created woman to lead, to be the head or to dominate the

man. She was created to be a helper and when a woman realizes this role, she begins to find the real joy of being a woman, wife and mother. The need of the hour is wives who will be helpers not hollers, completers and not competitors, counterparts not counter-revolutionaries.

3. Woman was made to be a man's partner. This verse clearly tells us woman was made for man. He needs her as a helper, and she is suited to his needs as one who compliments him. She is first and foremost his companion and this also includes her sexual responsibilities to her husband and the privilege of bearing his children.
4. A woman as a wife has an extremely important role and can fill a need in a man's life that no other man can fill and also fill a part of man's life that not even God can fill.

J. Adams says, "God created the woman because man needed her help. That is a Bible basic. She was created as a suitable helper to stand with him in life to help in every way. That is another basic. The idea of woman as a helper is a key concept that has been lost in modern marriages. It is a key that has disappeared from *contemporary* thinking. A woman does not conceive of herself as a helper anymore. Many women think rather of themselves as those who ought to be helped. Or the modern woman thinks of herself as somebody who stands in exactly the same place as her husband. She may have many ideas about her role, but among them she probably does not embrace the notion of herself as a helper. Yet that is God's definitive word about her role.

. . . it is precisely by considering herself a helper that a woman is liberated. Women's Lib movements that fail to recognize this thereby unwittingly consign a woman to a life of slavery. In understanding and living according to her correct role before God and before her husband, she will find freedom. In no other way may a woman truly be liberated. But for now this one thought should be fixed indelibly in your mind: The woman was created to help her husband ([Christian Living in the Home](#)).

- C. God made woman distinct from the animals (2:19-20). *"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."*
 1. To name the animals, Adam had to observe them. He undoubtedly named them according to their characteristics. For instance, a zebra was probably called a striped one or a giraffe a long-necked one.
 2. Why in the middle of the first marriage was Adam commanded to name the animals? God wanted Adam to realize when He created Eve for him that woman was no animal. She was not to be treated like a beast or burden. She was not a play thing or a slave, but a woman. Nor was she merely a biological laboratory to bear children. She was a created human being made especially for a man.
 3. Men often abuse animals. They cage, work and beat animals. Adam needed to learn a woman could not be caged in, that if man so dominates her she loses all her individuality and freedom.

4. A woman is not a beast of burden who lives to clean house, run errands, bear children and corral the kids. Nor is a woman to be beaten. Men, never strike a woman. If you do, she may never forgive you and she will never forget.
- D. God made woman from the rib of man (2:21). *“But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 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.”*
 1. This act guarantees the true dignity of womankind. The woman is not of inferior substance. In fact, she is on the same level with man as far as a creature of God.
 2. The fact that woman was taken out of man’s side suggests her equality with him; not out of his feet to imply inferiority, or out of his head to suggest superiority, but out of his side, implying companionship and equality.
 3. God created man for Himself, but woman was created for man (1 Cor. 11:8-9). She was fitted, planned and designed for man. A woman is equal with man in creaturehood and spiritual privilege, but in God’s order of creation she is to be subordinate to the man.
- E. God performed the first wedding (2:22) *“Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of man, and he brought her to the man.”*
 1. Woman is part of man for she was made from him, but she is separate from him. She was designed in such a way to have her own characteristics and personality which compliment a man. God brought the woman to the man, indicating she was a gift from God. The woman is a jewel of great price and she is to be treated by the man as a special gift from God.
 2. Marriage came from God. Society did not invent marriage; it received marriage. God made marriage and bestowed it on mankind. God performed the first marriage ceremony and gave the first bride away. Adam did not take a wife to himself by his own will. He received her as offered by God.
 3. The concept that marriage comes from God ought to keep men from taking marriage lightly. The second greatest gift God ever gives a man is his wife. The greatest gift is salvation which He gives both to the man and the woman who believe in Christ.
- F. God made woman to be in an intimate relationship with the man (2:23) *“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.’”*
 1. The concept of becoming one flesh involves the complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits. To become one flesh is to become one person. Each person, body, soul and spirit is to be joined to the other that they may become one in every area.
 2. The term “one flesh” is used five times in the Bible. (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:3) and it refers primarily to the sexual union of men and women. Through sexual intercourse, man and woman, who are committed to one another, become one flesh.
 3. A sexual relationship, then, is never a passing affair. The sexual unity of a husband and wife belongs to them alone. There are many other ways husbands and wives express love to each other, of course, but none is as private and personal and as sacred as the sexual relationship. This physical union is not lust, but is the giving of one’s whole self to a husband or wife.
 4. This union is not dependent on love, but to the Christian, it is the other way around. Because of this union, a man is to love his wife just as he loves the members of his body because they are part of him. If a husband really understood the truth he is one

flesh with his wife, it would be as normal for him to love his wife as his own body, and as difficult for him to hurt her as to hurt his own flesh. He cannot harm his wife without harming himself.

5. Marriage is also a permanent arrangement. It is leaving family, old friends, old lifestyles and establishing a Christian home by joining to a woman. To be united is to cleave and to cleave is to cling. In an ideal marriage, a husband and wife cling to one another, not in desperation, but in the calm assurance God wants them to face life together. They engage in the exciting business of living jointly.
6. Marriage is the most basic unit in human society. The most basic family relationship is not the parent-child relationship, but the husband-wife relationship.

Adams again says, "The most harmful thing parents can do to their children is to build their lives around them. A wall plaque reads: 'The best way to be a good father to your children is to be a good husband to their mother.' That is exactly right. What children need to see is not indulgent parents who squander all of their love and concern on them. It is wrong (even for the children's sake) for parents to spend the lion's share of their time and interests (even mainly) upon their children. Children need most to see parents who know how to love and live with each other. That is the most precious gift that parents can give to each other. How else will children learn how to build solid marriages for themselves? They need to see parents who know how to live as parents; but even more--as husbands and wives. Every child needs parents who are concerned about each other.

- G. God created sex for marriage (2:25): "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."
 1. The Creator made man and woman for the most important of all physical relationships in marriage - the act of intercourse. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed.
 2. This may also mean man and woman had nothing to hide from each other, enjoying open heart, transparent relationship, fully at ease with each other and with God.
- H. Summary. It is humbling to the woman to know she was created for the man, but it is to her glory to know she alone can complete him. Likewise, it is humbling to the man to know he is incomplete without the woman, but it is to his glory to know that she was created for him.

III. ADAM'S NEEDS MET BY THE WOMAN

- A. Needs Adam was created with:
 1. Need for authority. (Gen. 1:28 "subdue and rule over the earth" and Gen. 2:19 – The one who names is the one who has authority)
 2. Need to work. (Gen. 2:15 "till the soil")
 3. Need to protect. (Gen. 2:15 "guard or keep the garden")
 4. Need for companionship (Gen. 2:18 – "not good to be alone")
 5. Need for sexual activity (Gen. 1:28 – "be fruitful and multiply" and Gen. 2:24 "one flesh")
 6. Need for to leave parents—need for domestic help (Gen. 2:24 – "leave mother and father")

- B. All these needs are met by having a wife:
1. Authority: Eph. 4:22-24 “Wives, be subject to your own husbands . . .”
 2. Work: Providing for a wife – 1 Tim. 5:8
 3. Guard: Protecting the wife – 1 Cor. 13:7 “true love protects”
 4. Companionship – Gen. 2:18 – God created the wife so man who not be alone.
 5. Sexual activity – The wife is the ONLY woman who can meet man’s sexual need without causing him to sin.
 6. Mothering is met by wife caring for husband (Domestic activities—Prov. 31)
- C. Gen. 3:16 – Because of the curse, the authority the man has over the husband is now a source of conflict and warfare. “Your desire shall be for your husband” refers to the “desire” in Gen. 4:7, which is the desire “to master” or lord it over her husband. Gen. 3:16 could read: “. . . yet your desire shall be to master your husband, yet he will continue to have rule over you.”

IV. THE VOWS OF MARRIAGE

- A. For the Christian, the realization that God is the author of marriage sanctifies it and makes it sublime. When two people stand before the Justice of Peace, they are swearing a solemn oath in the presence of human witnesses, but for Christians marriage is much more than a legal contract. It is an act of God.
- B. Two people in a Christian marriage make their promises before God “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” That is serious business! An oath taken before God dare not be taken lightly.
- C. What takes place at a marriage altar is not primarily the doings of the state or church but an action by God Himself. This is why most Christian wedding ceremonies say that marriage is “not to be entered into unadvisedly and in the fear of God.”
- D. Two Christians are taking vows before God and God holds them to these vows. “When a man makes a vow to the LORD . . . he must not break his word, but must do everything he said”; “When you make a vow to God, do not delay fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it”; If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin” (Num. 30:2; Eccl. 5:4-5; Deut. 23:21).
- E. One ought to think through the marriage vows and remember just exactly what he or she has promised to do.
1. “I take this woman (man)”. You promised to take this person and no other to be your mate. This person with all of his or her good points and faults. You took your mate like he or she was not with the idea of making that person into what you want him or her to be.
 2. “I promise before God and these witnesses.” Your promise to take your mate was not primarily to your mate, but to God. You promised God (you made a vow to God) when you married your partner. You also made these vows before witnesses (men). You told other people you were making this marriage covenant before God and you intended to keep it as a testimony to our belief in Christ.
 3. The man said, “I promise to love her, comfort, honor and keep her”. The man promised God and his wife that he would love her as Christ loved the church. He would be a sensitive, understanding husband by comforting her and giving her

security in all situations. He agreed to honor and respect his wife by thinking the best and saying the best he could of her. And he promised to keep her in that he would adequately provide for her the necessities of life.

4. The woman said, "I promise to love him, comfort, obey and reverence him". The woman promised God and her husband that she would submit to her husband as head of the family and to respect him as God's appointed leader.
 5. "In plenty and want." Where there is abundance of money and when there is no money each will honor their commitment to God and their mate.
 6. "In joy and in sorrow." During happy times and sad times each will honor their commitment to God and their mate.
 7. "In sickness and in health." When our mate is well or ill, healthy or sick, each will honor their commitment to God and their mate
 8. "I promise to be a faithful wife (husband)." A promise is made to be sexually faithful to one wife or husband only. There is commitment to God and to the mate that adultery will not occur in this marriage.
 9. "As long as both shall live." This binding relationship is to go on until the death of one of the partners. Marriage is a life-long commitment to one person.
- A. You may be saying, I never made these vows to my mate." If you are now a Christian but you took secular vows in marriage as a non-Christian, you should take Christian marriage vows before God.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Husbands, because a woman gives you her life, her love, herself, all that she is and can be, to be yours and yours alone, until death parts you, that is the finest gift that can come to you as a man, and your responsibility before God is to be the truest and finest man you can be—to be worthy of her life and love.
- B. Wives, because a man gives you his name, his honor, his love, his life, himself, all that he is and can be, to be yours and yours alone - until death parts you -that is the crowning gift fit for the sweetness of your womanhood, and your responsibility is to be for him, the finest partner in the world.