

SS: Marriage, Male & Female, 2023

Lesson 2: Male & Female Leaving, Cleaving, Weaving—Marriage

1. The Unique Significance of Genesis 2:24

This statement about marriage is found at the very beginning of Scripture, a key part of the creation account. It is the Bible's first statement about marriage. It is thus foundational. Also, it is this passage that is quoted by Jesus in his teaching on marriage (in both Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-8). And it is likewise quoted by the Apostle Paul in his most detailed teaching on marriage, in Eph. 5:22-33.

Gen. 2:23-25 *Then the man said,*

*"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."*

²⁴ *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* ²⁵ *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

2. The MEANING of Genesis 2:24—Leaving, Cleaving, Weaving

1) LEAVING

"Therefore, a man shall LEAVE his father and mother...."

In Gen. 2, this statement (v24a) follows Adam's comment upon receiving Eve from the Lord: *"Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man'.*

THEREFORE, a man shall leave his father and mother..."

Q: In what way does the word “Therefore” connect v24 with v23?

A: Just as one become two, bone of bone and flesh of flesh, so thereafter two would become one, one flesh.

For this to happen, there MUST BE a leaving. A mature child departs from the unique one-flesh relationship of his father and mother so as to establish a new, distinct one-flesh relationship with his spouse. He will be joined to his wife in a way that he cannot be joined to his parents or to his siblings. His parents cannot be joined to him in the way they are joined to each other. The UNIQUENESS of the marital bond requires a LEAVING.

Q: What does leaving NOT mean?

A: It does not mean that we honor them or love them less (Ex. 20:12, 5th Comm.). It does not mean that we must move geographically.

What LEAVING does mean is that when one marries, his or her relationship with parents must change in a definitive way. Namely, marriage in its essence involves being tied to your spouse in a way that you cannot and should not be to your parents. Practically, that means:

- You are not dependent upon them, emotionally or financially.
- You purpose to be more concerned about what your spouse thinks than what your parents think (though it should be recognized that the latter may often be wiser, especially when couples are young).

- You purpose to focus more on what your spouse needs than on what your parents need (though there may be a season in which infirmed parents need a great deal of care).
- You purpose to focus on pleasing God through pleasing your spouse more than on pleasing your parents. [It's likewise true that you need to deal with any resentment or bitterness you may bear towards your parents (or your in-laws).]
- In summary, your marital relationship must take precedence over every other human relationship, including that which you have with your parents.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS: 1) **Parents**, your objective is to prepare your children to LEAVE and live as independent adults. Seek to wisely cultivate a healthy independence. 2) **Couples**, don't allow yourselves to be so wrapped up in your children that their leaving is devastating to you. A mother can especially be vulnerable to this. Work at your one-flesh relationship in such a way (and more fundamentally your relationship with Christ) that you are not emotionally dependent on your children.

2) **CLEAVING**

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and **hold fast** (cleave, KJV) to his wife....*

NIV- is united to

NAS; NKJ- and be joined to

i. Note how the words “hold fast” are used elsewhere in the Bible:

Deuteronomy 13:4 You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and **hold fast** to him.

Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still **hold fast** your integrity? Curse God and die."

Proverbs 4:4 ...he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart **hold fast** my words; keep my commandments, and live.

Isaiah 56:4 For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and **hold fast** my covenant,

Luke 8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, **hold it fast** in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

1 Corinthians 15:2 ...and by which you are being saved, if you **hold fast** to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.

Hebrews 3:6 ...but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we **hold fast** our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Revelation 3:11 I am coming soon. **Hold fast** what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

Q: What do all these references to “hold fast” presuppose?

A: At least 3 truths: 1) We face temptation and pressure to “LET GO” of attachments that are of great value. 2) While what God does is finally decisive, what WE do is decisive as well. We will only continue in relationships that are of precious worth as we tenaciously work hard at maintaining and developing them. 3) There are relationships worth doing all that we can to maintain.

ii. Marriage is a COVENANT.

i) **Demonstrated**

Malachi 2:14 But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife **by covenant**.

Proverbs 2:16 So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, ¹⁷ who forsakes the companion of her youth and **forgets the covenant of her God**;

ii) **Defined**

The essential idea of a covenant, in Scripture, is that of **an oath-bound promise**. It is **a vow, a sworn pledge**. Note how this essential idea is seen in the following passage, the first context in which the word "covenant" appears in Scripture. Having been introduced in Gen. 6:18, before the flood, afterward, in Gen. 9, the word "covenant" is used 7x.

Gen. 9:8-17 *Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ "Behold, I establish my **covenant** with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹ I establish my **covenant** with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of **the covenant** that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of **the covenant** between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the*

earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember **my covenant** that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember **the everlasting covenant** between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of **the covenant** that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

The Lord made an oath-bound promise to Noah and all those tied to Noah, not just his family but even the whole earth. God pledged solemnly to never again destroy the earth with a flood of water. God’s covenant was his VOW that water would never again destroy all the earth.

Marriage, likewise, involves an oath-bound promise, a sworn promise, the exchanging and keeping of VOWS. The single most essential feature of a wedding is the exchange of vows.

iii) Described

Q: In what way does the immoral woman “forget the covenant OF HER GOD” (Pr. 2:17)?

A: To marry someone is not only to make sworn promises to him or her, but also to make those pledges to our Maker. He instituted marriage. He grants marriage to a given person. He will judge us as to whether we were characteristically promise-keepers or promise-breakers, true or false. Implicitly, if not explicitly (declaration of intent), marriage involves a solemn commitment to GOD.

Biblical counselor Wayne Mack wrote: “*Marriage means that a husband and wife enter into a relationship for which they accept full responsibility and in which*

they commit themselves to each other regardless of what problems arise. ...God's kind of marriage means that people know that they must face problems, discuss them, seek God's help in them, resolve them rather than run from them, because there is no way out. They are committed to one another for life. They must cleave to one another today and tomorrow, as long as they both shall live" (W Mack, Strengthening Your Marriage, pg. 3-4).

Q: Marriages have faced sin, Satan, and suffering since the fall. How has modern Western culture contributed to the challenges that married couples face?

- There is a huge emphasis on personal fulfillment.
- There is a preoccupation with individual feelings and preferences, being “true” to oneself.
- There is the belief that in romantic/sexual relationships going against one's feelings is hypocritical, unauthentic.
- We are impacted by the “normalcy” of marriages ending. Perhaps we grew up in a broken home.
- Modern media has made sexual immorality (porn, sexting) far more accessible.
- Romantic/sexual fulfillment is one of the leading gods of our age, viewed as indispensable to happiness.

Ps. 15:1-5 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent?
Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

² He who walks blamelessly and does what is right
and speaks truth in his heart;

³ who does not slander with his tongue
and does no evil to his neighbor,
nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

⁴ in whose eyes a vile person is despised,
but who honors those who fear the LORD;

who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

⁵ who does not put out his money at interest
and does not take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things shall never be moved.

3) WEAVING (“and they shall become one flesh”)

In the past, I thought that the most basic expression of this truth is the physical or sexual union between husband and wife. Note, for example, 1Co 6:15-20:

1Co 6:15-20 *Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that **he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.***

Further reflection, however, upon Eph. 5:28f, has brought me to a different perspective.

Eph. 5:28-33 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, **just as Christ does the church,** ³⁰ **because we are members of his body.** ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.** ³³ However, **let each one of you love his wife as himself,** and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Q: Given the teaching of that passage, what is the most foundational or basic meaning of a “ONE-FLESH” relationship?

A: The one-flesh relationship between Christ and his body, his own flesh, is the most basic expression of a one-flesh relationship. Marriage was intended to illustrate this divine/human union. **It is an indissoluble union. It is a spiritual joining of two into one.** In the union between Christ and his church, all that the Head experiences, as Mediator, his body likewise experiences. When he died, they died; when he rose, they rose (Rom. 6). Because he is at the right hand of the Father, we too are seated with him in the heavenly places (Col. 3:1-3). We have been vitally joined to Christ, having become members of his own body.

Marriage was designed to illustrate this higher, eternal union. Mack comments: *“The marriage act is the symbol or culmination of a more complete oneness, of a total giving of yourself to another person. Marriage is a total commitment and a*

total sharing of the total person with another person until death. God's intention is that when two people get married they should share everything—their bodies, their possessions, their insights, their ideas, their abilities, their problems, their successes, their sufferings, their failures, etc.” (p4).

Matt 19:3-9 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?” ⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” ⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” ⁸ He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Q: Why does Jesus assign such weight to “sexual immorality”? That may reflect the passion and declension of a given season, not an overall way of life. Yet, Jesus teaches that such sin provides a warrant (not a mandate) for divorce and remarriage. Why?

A: Our culture insists on treating sex in a very casual way. The Bible's perspective is emphatically different. Sex is a vital expression of the unique one-flesh union of marriage. Failure here is thus a major breach of what God had

joined together. It wrenches asunder, at least for a time, what God had fused together. This wrenching apart is real and may not be restored. The loss of trust may be such that the two cannot again be joined as one.

Likewise, desertion or abandonment wrenches apart what God had joined together.

1Co 7:10-16 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹ (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

¹² To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³ If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵ **But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.** ¹⁶ For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Q: What are some of the main obstacles to total oneness?

- Selfishness
- Pride
- Unwillingness to forgive
- Unwillingness to move forward from past hurts
- Poor communication
- Lack of time and effort given to union
- Unresolved conflicts
- Unwillingness to discuss and work through difficult issues

