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4/15/07

Genesis 2:18-25 “Foundational Principles of Marriage”

Intro. This morning I am beginning an 11-part series of messages on the subject of the Christian family. There was a time in our society when the family structure was much stronger than it is now. Divorce was uncommon. Most children grew up in two-parent homes. Few children were born out of wedlock.

But something terrible has happened to the American family. About 1 in 2 marriages are ending in divorce, and the divorce rate has almost doubled since 1965. A *Time* magazine poll reveals that 74 percent of women and 77 percent of men feel it is difficult or very difficult to have a good marriage today. Increasing numbers of couples aren't even getting married at all. As a result, the total number of children born out of wedlock is increasing at dramatic rates. In 2004 there were 1.5 million babies born to unwed mothers, which was a record. Many children & youth are almost raising themselves. They spend much time without the supervision of a parent. Most children on average spend 30 times more of their time watching TV than spending time with a father.

Now what has this change in the American family done? I believe it is a major factor in the rise in such things as juvenile crime, teen suicide, lower test scores, and teen pregnancies. Though TV, movies, and rock & rap music have a role in the rise of such things, one of the more fundamental problems relates to the fact that too many children are not being raised by their parents in a loving & disciplined home. The secular world looks at the problem and says that we need to start some new government programs. Some want government-run daycare & after school programs. But what we really need is to do is to get back to following God's plan for the home. I can't change the whole nation, but I hope to have an impact on the families of our church, and perhaps some others in our community.

Now I believe the starting point for a good family, and a good marriage, is to look at God's original design for marriage found in Genesis 2. In fact, when they asked Jesus about the issue of divorce, He also took them back to the account in Genesis 2 (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12). And so that will be the starting place of my series of messages on the Christian family. Following God's plan for marriage and the family will much more likely produce children that become healthy, productive, and well-adjusted members of church & society.

So let's consider together God's plan for marriage. And as we think of marriage, consider first of all:

I. THE REASONS FOR MARRIAGE

This is rooted in the reasons why God created the woman. But I believe the following reasons apply to both husbands and wives. If you are not married, there are some good reasons to get married. And if you are already married, you need to make sure you are doing your part to fulfill the following reasons for marriage:

A. Companionship – Notice what the LORD God said in v.18, “It is not good that man should be alone....” The Hebrew construction of v.18 accentuates the negative phrase “not good” by placing it at the head of the sentence. Up to now all that God had created He called “good” or

“very good.” But now He sees something that is not good. God has made the man and provided a beautiful environment with honorable work, but God announces that more is to be done to achieve the ideal for the man. Isolation is not the divine norm for human beings. So God created animals, and brought them to Adam so that he could name them, and exercise his dominion over them. We all know that a cat or a dog can provide a degree of companionship for people. But the last part of v.20 says, “But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.” None of the animals were fit companions for Adam. They just aren’t on our level. Have you tried to carry on a conversation with a dog? A dog may try to talk to you, but their vocabulary is rather limited. So God created Eve, and she didn’t have any trouble carrying on a conversation! She met the need expressed in v.18. She would be his companion, and he would no longer be alone.

Furthermore, the fact that Eve was created from the side of Adam symbolizes the truth that Eve was to be a companion for Adam. They were fit for one another as companions.

Is your marriage fulfilling the fundamental purpose of providing companionship? Do you spend time together? Or does your spouse feel alone most of the time, even when you are not working? If so, you need to fulfill your spouse’s need for companionship.

B. Help – We men do not like to admit it, but we need help. So in v.18 God says that she would be “a helper comparable to him.” The words “helper comparable” mean a help that is like him. The Hebrew indicates a correspondence between the man and the woman. I believe this is in contrast to the animals. Some animals can offer some companionship. Some animals can even help by working for us. But a woman is a helper that is much more like unto a man. Man and woman share in the “human” sameness that cannot be found elsewhere in creation among the beasts. She corresponded to Adam; one who would be like him, yet opposite to him in a helpful way.

Now let’s focus on the wife’s function as a “helper” (*ezer*). The term means “help” in the sense of aid and support. Just because the woman is called a “helper” does not at all diminish her role. After all, Moses spoke of God as his “helper.” “Helper” means that the woman will play an integral part in human survival and success. What the man lacks, the woman helps to accomplish.

Now I believe this purpose in marriage should go both ways. Wives should help their husbands, and husbands should help their wives. After all, God created men and women to have different strengths and weakness. Where man is strong, woman is usually weak. Where man is weak, woman is usually strong. So men help their wives with tasks that require strength. For example, how many times have you men been asked to open a jar? Men are better at providing protection; they tend to be stronger and braver. On the other hand, women tend to be much better nurturers and care-givers, and so they can help with those kinds of assignments. Women tend to be better about taking care of the home. They are nest builders. So they are best suited to provide domestic help. In fact, in Titus 2:5 Paul commands the older women in the church to admonish the younger women to be “homemakers.” I have been talking in generalities, but each couple should offer help to the other based on their own unique combination of strengths & abilities.

Husbands, wives, are you fulfilling your purpose in marriage? Are you helping your partner, or hindering your partner? Are you doing your share of the overall responsibilities that need to be taken care of? Are you showing love by helping your partner?

C. Reproduction – Back in chapter 1, v.28 God said to the first couple, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...” God created man and woman to reproduce. And marriage and family are the divine ideal for carrying out this mandate. Of course, in order to reproduce, this requires sexual intimacy. This means that God is the One who introduced the subject of sex. This is

a wonderful, glorious truth. Just think. Through the plan of God we can join with God in creating new life. What a privilege, and what a responsibility! Yet man has made sex into a dirty, filthy thing by practicing it outside of marriage, or by perverting it, or by exploiting it to sell pornography.

In fact, I want you to notice something important. God brought the couple together and blessed their marital union *before* He gave this command to reproduce. Also, look down at 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” It is only when the couple formally leaves their parents, and is joined together in marriage, that they are to become one flesh sexually. This is God’s plan. Yet more and more couples are living together in a sexual relationship apart from marriage. More and more couples are even having children apart from marriage. That is not God’s plan, and you are just asking for trouble when you violate God’s plan.

So we see that we should wait until marriage to have sexual intimacy. And when you get married, I believe that it is generally God’s will for you to produce children, unless you are not able to have children. And Ps. 127:5 says, “Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them....”

Now men, consider all that your wives do for you: they offer companionship, they help in many ways, and they bear & raise your children. And when you consider all that they do, you should express appreciation for them, and do things for them.

Some guys don’t do so well at this. A customer brought an exquisite greeting card to the counter and reached for his wallet. Pushing in the keys on the cash register, the store clerk said, “That will be \$5 please.” “\$5” he bellowed. “Forget it!” He jammed his wallet back into his pocket and stormed out of the shop. When the clerk returned the card to the rack, she noticed that it read, “To My Wife, Because You Mean So Much.”¹

So we need to fulfill the reasons for marriage. Next, we need to consider:

II. THE RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN MARRIAGE

How are husbands and wives to relate to one another in the home? Well let’s start off by looking for clues in the way woman was created. In chapter 2, v.22 it says that God made a woman from Adam’s rib. The Hebrew word usually means the “side,” or it can refer to a portion of the side, such as the rib. The correctness of “rib” as the translation is evident from the words, “God took *one* of his [ribs],” which show that the man had several of them. So the woman was created, not from the dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam, or perhaps from part of a rib. I have read that when surgeons do reconstructive surgery, they often choose to remove part of a rib, for the rib can grow back.² I like to think of Cheryl as my prime rib!

Now Bible scholars for centuries have debated the question, “Why did God choose the rib?” Well, here is one explanation that I found humorous. Supposedly Adam was talking to God in the Garden of Eden and he said, “I’m lonely, I need to have someone around for company.” God said, “Okay, I’m going to give you the perfect woman. She will be beautiful, intelligent, and gracious. She’ll cook for you, clean up after you, and never nag you about anything.” Adam said, “God, that sounds wonderful, but what’s she going to cost?” God said, “An arm and a leg.” Adam thought for a moment and said, “That’s pretty steep. What can I get for just a rib?” Now I want to emphasize that I do not believe for a moment that’s what really happened!

¹ Sherry Barber, *Reader’s Digest*, 12/88 [Illus.#C-31]

² <http://www.answersingenesis.org/radio/pdf/AdamsRib.pdf>

God had His reasons for creating Adam's wife from his rib. I believe it was to convey some important lessons regarding relationships within marriage. First:

A. There Should Be Equality - God creates the man first and derives the woman from the man to demonstrate that she is his equal in substance. Remember, God said in v.18, "I will make him a helper comparable to him." Likewise, Adam said in v.23 of Eve, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..." Also, you have probably heard it said that woman was not created from the head of man, lest she rule over him. Nor was she created from the foot of man, lest he trample upon her and treat her as his slave. But woman was created from the side of man, to be his companion and friend (Aquinas).

Men, I believe this means that you should treat your wife as an equal, not as an inferior. Peter said in 1 Pet. 3:7 that husbands are to give "honor to the wife... as being heirs together of the grace of life...."

Let me try to explain. A dog is not your equal. That means that you should not feel bad about making that dog sleep outside most of the time. You should not feel bad that your dog has to eat dog food. But your wife is your equal. She should be able to sleep where you sleep, and eat what you eat & where you eat. Don't treat your wife like they do in Muslim countries, like a 2nd class citizen!

Another lesson regarding the marital relationship is that:

B. There Should Be Interdependence - It is important that when God created the woman, He did not create her independently of man. He certainly could have created her from a separate pile of dust, similar to the way the man was created. But He didn't. God took woman out of man to reveal the fact that she is part of man. God never intended for the woman to be independent of the man. And man has a very hard time being independent of women! In fact, until you get married, part of you is missing man! And you need a woman for companionship, for help, and to bear your children, and help raise them. Men are very dependent upon women.

I believe this is one reason why married men on average live 7 years longer than unmarried men. Most men are just better off with a good woman by their side, to help keep us straight. In fact, most of the crime in America is perpetrated by single men. Single men are less responsible about their bills, their driving, and other personal conduct. So I want all the married men to recognize how important your wives are to you, and treat them accordingly. And I want all the wives to understand how important you are to your husbands. They are dependent upon you. And you need your husbands as well to fulfill the best life that God has for you.

But for the past 40 years feminism has preached that women need to be more independent. They say you should do your own thing. They say you can't count on a man to take care of you. So more and more women are becoming financially independent and even socially independent. More and more women are no longer insisting upon marriage, but are even rejecting the institution of marriage. Feminism has not helped to produce better families. Overall it has hurt families and children.

Another basic principle of marital relationships is this:

C. There Should Be Unity – This is mainly based on v.24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Instead of marriage being a relationship between 2 independent people, v.24 indicates that the 2 are to become one flesh. Instead of a 50/50 relationship, God calls for a merger of 100% from both. Marriage is not a

federation of two sovereign states. It is a union. Of course God is primarily speaking of the physical union between a husband and wife, but that unity should extend to other areas as well. Marriage should create an emotional bond. Couples should also strive for oneness of mind. Set aside petty differences, and really seek to be unified on what's really important. Couples should strive for spiritual oneness. In fact, marriage is to reflect the very nature of God. Just as God is 3 in 1, in a similar way, 2 persons become 1 in marriage. Even in differences they should complement each other, and not compete with each other. Why should man be strong and ambitious if there were no one for whom his labor could be spent? Why should he need courage if there were no one to protect? Why should he need love if there were no one to cherish? Why should a woman follow if there is no one to lead? Why should a woman spend time and effort to attain the height of loveliness unless there were one to see and enjoy her beauty?

God did not create man and woman to fight as enemies, but to maintain unity, and harmony. And don't let your roles within the home be something that you argue over. I heard about one husband who was complaining to his wife, and he said, "Why can't you cook biscuits like my Mama used to?" She said, "Why don't you bring home the dough like my Daddy used to?"

So is your relationship with your spouse characterized by unity or by conflict? If there are conflicts in your marriage, be sure to come back next Sunday. I will talk about resolving marriage problems.

There is yet another truth about the kind of relationship that should exist in marriage:

D. There Should Be Intimacy – In v.25 we read, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." There is to be an intimacy between a husband and a wife that is not found in any other relationship. Marriage is a relationship where there ought to be no secrets and no shame; where there is to be total acceptance and intimacy. A husband and wife should not only be lovers, they should be best friends. There should be intimate conversation. And where there is better emotional intimacy, there will be better physical intimacy.

Are you achieving and maintaining intimacy in your marriage? Are you tearing down any barriers to intimacy?

III. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MAN

The words which follow in v.24 are not to be regarded as Adam's. They are the words of Moses, written to hold up monogamy before the eyes of the people of Israel as the form of marriage ordained by God. But as the words of Moses, they are the utterance of divine revelation; and Christ could quote them, therefore, as the Word of God (Matt. 19:5). So notice what God inspired Moses to say in v.24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." It is clear that this statement was intended to have lasting significance, for Adam did not have a father & mother to leave.

So what is a man to do when he is ready to get married:

A. Leave Parents - The significance of the language "leave" is that marriage requires a new priority by the marital partners where obligations to one's spouse supersede a person's parental loyalties. When there is a direct conflict between pleasing your spouse and pleasing your parents you should please your spouse. But the leaving of father and mother applies to the woman as well as to the man. The only permanent relationship in the family is the husband/wife relationship, not the parent/child relationship. Some people put so much time and energy into the parent/child

relationship that when the children leave home, there is nothing left of the marriage relationship. And young ladies, don't run home to mama at the first sign of conflict or trouble, unless you are running from abuse. That will not solve the problem; it will probably just make things worse.

When you parents become too old to care for themselves, you should not leave your spouse to care for them for years or for good. Elderly parents should be willing to move close to their children in necessary, or even move in with their children.

And this also tells us that in-laws should not interfere in the affairs of their grown married children! Adam lived in Paradise. One reason is he didn't have any in-laws! So let me offer some advice: The best wedding gift you can give your children is their independence. In order for the new relationship between bride and groom to flourish and their home to begin correctly, the cord must be cut with the parents. Don't try to meddle in the affairs of your grown married children. Don't try to micromanage them. Your daughter-in-law doesn't have to do things the way you did things. Hopefully they will be wise enough to seek your advice, but if they don't, be careful how you offer it. And don't worry if they make some mistakes. That's how they learn.

Now grown children shouldn't take this to the extreme of abandoning the parent/child relationship completely. But some of the emotional bond must be broken, and the new couple must no longer depend upon their parents financially. Furthermore, this means that until you are mature enough to live independently of your parents, you have no business getting married!

B. Cleave to the Wife - When you read this, you should think of being glued to your partner. When something is glued well, you can't separate the two parts without damaging one or the other or both. Too many seem to enter the marriage relationship thinking that if marriage doesn't fulfill their expectations, they can always get out through divorce. But from the very beginning divorce was not the plan of God. God's plan is not divorce but dedication to your husband or wife. That's what the marriage vows are all about. You are to stay joined to your spouse for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Both of you need to have a strong determination to make the marriage work.

C. Lead the Home - This role of the husband as the leader of the home is indicated directly and implicitly. In 1 Cor. 11:3 Paul says that the "head of woman is man" or "the head of [the] wife is [the] husband." This truth is supported by the *purpose* of the woman's creation. Remember, the woman was designated in v.18 as a "helper." Even so, in v.9 of 1 Cor. 11 Paul supports his argument of male headship by saying, "Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man."

Second, the *order* of the man's creation is important for recognizing leadership-followship in the garden. Paul said in 1 Tim. 2:12-13, "I do not permit a woman to ... have authority over a man... For Adam was formed first, then Eve." Man was created first, and he is to take the lead.

Third, this truth is supported by the *source* of the woman's creation. The woman has her source in the man, suggesting that the man is the leader. Even so, Paul adds to his argument in 1 Cor. 11:8 by saying, "For man is not from woman, but woman from man." Paul argues the man's authority from this point. So notice carefully that God made the woman *from* the man and *for* the man; she was then given *to* the man, and named *by* the man. Now that is not coincidental, it is providential because it illustrates the proper relationship between the man and the woman. The man is to be in authority. The feminist and the humanist can scream bloody murder, but this is God's ordained order for the home, and it has not changed and it never will change in this life.

Man, God created you to be the leader in your home. Are you the leader God expects you to be? But remember, Jesus modeled servant-leadership. Your leadership is not to fulfill selfish goals, but you are to lead for the well-being of your family. Be the kind of man that your wife will look up to and respect as the leader of your marriage & home. Lead your children in the right way. Don't send your children to church. Take your children to church.

Conclusion: I encourage you to commit to following God's plan for marriage and the home. Now making a marriage work can be difficult. Being a parent can be difficult. But you can trust in God's enabling grace to help you fulfill God's plan for marriage and the family.

Sources: C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978 reprint); Kenneth Mathews, *New American Commentary: Genesis 1-11* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1981); Dr. James Merritt (notes from his sermon on this text); Dot Patterson, *The Sensuous Woman Reborn* (Dallas: Crescendo Publications, 1976), 82-112; Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Charles R. Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1974), 27-37. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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