

The First Marriage in Eden

Text: Genesis 2:18-24

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The text we consider today is Genesis 2:18-24. Two words come to mind when we read Genesis: *origins* and *covenant*. In this passage, in the first paradise before sin, Adam meets Eve, the wife God made for him. The idea of companionship in marriage stands out. All of us, single or married, must remember the purpose of marriage. Ever since the fall, sin has caused a spiritual pandemic of loneliness. Sin isolates, separating men from God and from each other. Have you felt that? Do you feel it now? Loneliness in the world, in school, even in marriage? A man dresses well on Sunday, but drowns in pornography during the week. A wife secretly yearns for romantic escape. God calls us back to Eden to learn what marriage is, why He gave it, how to live it, and where it all points. It is here, in this foundational text, that we are taught not only about human companionship but also about the mystery of divine love. Marriage is a gift of divine grace. It is not born of human innovation, nor shaped by cultural tides, but established by God's own hand as a covenantal relationship.

What?

To understand what marriage is, we begin with the one who made it: the Lord God, Jehovah. *Jehovah* speaks of sovereign power and covenant love. He made all living things and brought the animals to Adam to name them (v. 19), asserting His sovereignty and establishing Adam's rule under Him. Then He reminds Adam he is alone. Jehovah God, in His triune fellowship, was never alone. To teach man covenant love, God makes him feel his solitude. Adam names the animals, but finds no help meet for him. This silence and absence was God's intentional pedagogy – Adam would learn by contrast what he lacked.

So God creates woman. Not from dust, but from Adam's rib (v. 21), teaching us that marriage is a creation ordinance. One rib, one woman – not two or three. Marriage is between one man and one woman. God could have made Eve differently, but He did this to set a pattern. Adam understood. The first violation of this comes from the seed of the serpent: Lamech and his two wives (4:19ff). This wasn't an incidental deviation; it was rebellion against God's pattern.

Marriage is for all mankind, embedded in creation, not just a Christian or Jewish idea. Some argue different cultures have different marriage patterns, and therefore it's man-made. But sin has only twisted the original pattern. God defines marriage. He not only defines it but sanctifies it as a holy institution designed for human flourishing and divine reflection. Marriage is not a private arrangement, but a public testimony to the created order and a shadow of the eternal covenant.

God unites man and woman into "one flesh" (v. 24). This doesn't mean carnal flesh, but their *whole life on earth*. They are braided together, like a threefold cord. This union is real and objective, and not just feelings. It is permanent and unbreakable. Eve never stopped being Adam's rib. It is comprehensive—in worship, childrearing, work, and even chores. It is deep—not a skin graft, but a rib. Bone of bone, flesh of flesh. The only relationship with such physical and emotional intimacy. In this one-flesh union, two lives are so knit that neither can be understood apart from the other.

Husbands must see their wives this way. When they do, they share even their besetting sins, and fight together. This is one flesh: real, permanent, comprehensive, deep. This vision of unity demands that every part of a man's life is shared, treasured, and bonded with his wife. To hide, to separate, or to live in isolation within marriage is a denial of this creational reality.

Why?

Two reasons: companionship and a help meet. Companionship: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (v. 18). Not sin, but incompleteness. Adam had no human companion. Marriage is God's answer. Companionship means walking through life with an equal counterpart close to your heart. Equal in worth before God, though not in role.

Eve is not from Adam's foot to be trampled, nor his head to rule, but from his rib to cradle the heart. A husband must listen to his wife. Not gifts, but shared sorrows and joys. Not more meat, as Elkanah thought with Hannah (I Sam. 1:8), but shared tears. A true companion is one who rejoices and weeps with you; one who walks side-by-side through both sunshine and storm. In this companionship, we see a mirror of Christ's own presence with His bride: tender, present, enduring.

Second, a "help meet" (v. 20). That means a fitting, complementing, necessary aid. Adam is the head. Eve submits, but not as inferior. She supports him

cheerfully. God made Adam first. He named the animals. Eve was made from Adam. She is given to strengthen what Adam cannot fulfill alone.

She is a helper, and this role is precious. Not optional, but necessary—like reinforcements in war. “Help meet” means Adam is inadequate without her. She’s fitted to him—like puzzle pieces. Animals couldn’t be this, but Eve could. The word “made” in verse 22 means “built,” with care and wisdom. She’s different—emotional, compassionate. God made her that way to complement. It is in their differences that their unity is best displayed. Eve was not a replica but a reflection.

She’s not a clone; she doesn’t replace Adam, but she enables him to serve God. Husbands are accountable. Will we husbands be self-sacrificial or tyrannical? A good leader leads in love, apologizes first, and gives wise instruction. God holds men accountable. God demands that headship be exercised in the likeness of Christ’s own loving headship over His Church—a headship that stoops to wash feet and suffers to redeem. The strength of a man’s leadership is measured in his likeness to Jesus.

How?

“Leave” and “cleave” (v. 24). Leave father and mother, then cleave to spouse. Not just physically, but emotionally and relationally. The wife calls her husband first, not her mother. The husband seeks counsel in his wife, not his parents. This leaving is purposeful—not to abandon, but to glorify God. It promotes cleaving. If you do not leave, you cannot cleave. If other relationships interfere, cleaving fails. It is a decisive turning away from all other allegiances that would threaten the priority of the marriage bond. Old ties are not destroyed, but they are *reordered*.

Cleaving is adherence no matter what—in the best or worst days, in sickness or health. Cleaving is activity—Psalm 63:8, “My soul followeth hard after thee.” Not just living together, but pursuing oneness with intensity. The dating, wooing, and loving never stop. The covenantal cleaving means persevering love in the face of trials.

Cleaving is exclusive. In all chastity. The Song of Solomon shows us how Solomon praises his bride. Even if age, sickness, or trials come, husbands must see their wives as beautiful in Christ, with that meek and quiet spirit. Chastity isn’t a limit on intimacy, but the deepening of it with one woman alone. This cleaving is God’s gracious gift to build stability, joy, and sanctity in a fallen world. It is the fertile soil where trust flourishes.

Ultimately

All of this points to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5 concludes: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Jesus calls Himself the Bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20). We are the bride. Yet we were harlots; sin cut us off from God and from each other; we were alone, wretched, isolated. We chased the world for companionship and were left lonelier. But He chose us. He loved us eternally, and called us His beloved. He cleaved to us, took our flesh, and vowed never to forsake us.

He died on the cross, where loneliness was at its height. Betrayed, abandoned, forsaken by God, He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He bore our loneliness, our sin, and paid the price. In that place of absolute forsakenness, He became our eternal Husband.

Then He rose, ascended, and poured out blessings. He is in us, and we in Him. This is the true one flesh union. In Him we are never alone. Young people, you are never alone in school or university. Married people, your marriage is not in hell or in heaven. It is at the cross. Two sinners cleaving to Christ. Two sinners crying together for grace. Two sinners showing Christ's forgiveness, to each other and to their children. This is not just a model—it is the very heart of Christian living. This mystery of marriage, lived out in the daily struggles and victories of God's people, points beyond itself to the eternal covenant love between Christ and His redeemed.

And one day, that marriage between Christ and the Church will be consummated in glory. The heavenly wedding feast will be set. The Bride will be without spot or wrinkle. Every earthly marriage that clung to Christ will find its fulfilment there. Let us live today in light of that day.

We give Thee thanks, Father, for saving us wretched sinners and bringing us into Thy marvellous covenant of love and friendship. By Thy grace, Father, we ask that our marriages may be a picture of that true marriage. And we pray, Father, that those of us who are single, those of us who are struggling with loneliness, will see that marriages are but a dim picture of our true companionship in Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen