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**Series: Marriage God's Way**  
**Message: Marriage as a Covenant, Pt. 2**

**Transcribed Message**  
**July 3, 2022**  
**Genesis 2:24-25**

Well, I guess you could say it's one of the lessons you learn as you get older, or as we like to say more mature. But there was a time when I took on a particular project and the project required the assembly of something, and the box said "assembly required". You would open the box and right on the top would be an instructional booklet that said in bold letters "read this before proceeding". It was the instruction manual for how to put together whatever that project was. There was a time when I would pick that up and with a sense of contempt just throw it aside and say I don't need those instructions. Then sometime later Bonnie would walk in and pick up the instruction manual and hand it to me and I would get back on track. There would be some frustrations that come with that. It's true in life and it's true in marriage that having an instruction manual, having directions is not just a matter of wisdom and appreciation. It's of great value. I believe that as we have seen in the Genesis account that this is literally God's instruction manual to us about marriage. It is God saying here read this – and that's in bold print – before proceeding any further.

We go back to Genesis 2 again this morning and as we do that we want to pick up and finish where we started last Sunday, which is to say marriage is the commitment of two people, a man and a woman, in a lifelong, covenant relationship. Our review reminds us of these three things. Marriage is God's idea. It's not something that a society, that a culture handed down that evolved over the generations and millennia. No, it was God's idea from the beginning. Whatever sociologists might tell us, God tells us that He's the author. He's the one that came up with this idea. It is God's answer, as we have seen, to this matter of something not being good. We're startled as we're reading in Genesis and all of a sudden out of all of the blessings and all of the good things of God's creative work, we came across those words that declared something was not good. God's answer to that not good is of course marriage. Marriage is to be

celebrated. Marriage is God's answer to not good, and it's not only just good, it's very good. That's the declaration that God makes.

We have been looking at this question of what then is a biblical marriage. How is it that we define marriage? When we look at it from God's perspective, what does He look for with regard to seeing a couple and what is it that defines marriage in His eyes? That's what we want to see. We begin again by reminding ourselves of the importance of this passage, the importance of Genesis 2 and especially verses 24 and 25. It's hard to overstate how important these verses are. It just is because they are laying the foundation. They're giving us everything that we need to know from God's vantage point with regard to what He envisions in marriage. We said last week not only do we have it here in Genesis 2 but it appears four more times. When you get into the New Testament, this is going to be referenced by Jesus and Paul four different times. It reminds us of how significant it is. It literally is. You get this package and it's called marriage and right on the box it says assembly required. You open the box and right there in big bold print it says read the instructions. These are in that sense the instructions that God has given to us. Ignore them at your own peril, because here is God's manual.

In these verses we have been learning four things that constitute a biblical marriage. How is it that God defines it? We looked last week at the fact that marriage is to be the primary relationship. Marriage is to be the primary relationship. That's why verse 24 begins with the word "therefore" or it begins with the phrase "for this reason". A man shall leave his father and his mother. Interesting, isn't it, that God did not create a father and mother for Adam. It would have made sense as we're reading this text for God to have created a father and mother, then created Adam and said, Ok, Adam, now leave your father and mother. He didn't do that. He did not create for Adam a child. He created for Adam a wife. It just reminds us that the parent-child relationship is not the primary relationship. It's an important relationship. It's a formative relationship. Think of all the positive and good things that you can think of to say about it. Those are all true. But it's not in God's economy the primary relationship. That's the husband-wife relationship. That's why He says leave your father and your mother.

I read the story this week about three guys who were in a group counseling session. They were coming to the end of the session and the counselor said I have a question I want you guys to think about. Suppose you have only four weeks to live. What are you going to do? How are you going to spend those four weeks of your life? One guy thought for a moment and then he said I'm going to take all my money and get out my bucket list. I'm just going to check off everything I can. I have to leave my money behind so I may as well spend it. So I'm going to get through everything I can and to do all that I wanted to do. The guys all nodded, thinking it was a good idea. The other guy took a totally different approach and said I'm going to go the humanitarian way. I'm going to take my money because I can't take it with me. I understand that. I'm going to take my money and I'm going to try to do as much good as I possibly can for as many people as I can. The guys all nodded, again thinking it was a good idea. Then they looked at the last guy. The last guy said I'm going to spend the last four weeks with my mother-in-law. The others commented that was interesting and then said you're going to spend the last four weeks every day, 24 hours a day with your mother-in-law. Why would you do that? Because it will be the longest four weeks of my life. Well, I guess that's one possible approach. Apologies to all of the mother-in-laws. We know we're in the presence of wonderful mother-in-laws so that doesn't apply to anybody here. But it's not the parent-child relationship that is primary. It is the husband-wife relationship that is primary.

Here is the second thing that the text tells us. Marriage is to be a permanent relationship. It is to be a permanent relationship. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife." So if leaving envisions severance, cleaving has in mind permanence. If leaving is negative then cleaving is obviously something positive. If we are to see the balance between these two – one of them you're letting go of something and the other you're grabbing onto, you're holding on to something. So what does it mean to cleave? Well again, we've got a great word here. A picturesque word. A word that when we define it and look at it, it tells us everything we know. It means to cling to. It means to hold fast to. It means to bond together. In fact, it is used in Isaiah 41:7 to talk about soldering together two pieces of metal. It's clearly a word that if we were to paraphrase it would say you are now glued together. For this cause a man

shall leave his father and mother and he will be glued to his wife. In effect God says you're stuck with each other. You're stuck together. That's the intent behind this word.

Everybody in this room has probably had some experience at one time or another with superglue. Just in the last week I had two of my granddaughters bring me something broken and say Papa, can you fix this. And you know, what they bring you is always really small. You get to going with this superglue and you realize you've glued your finger to the object that you're trying to fix. And then you realize as well that you've glued your fingers together in the process of this supergluing. You get in to some serious stickiness, don't you? that's this word. you are super glued together. You're bonded together. You're stuck with each other. That's the idea of this word.

We might ask this question at this point: Is there any biblical support for a public recitation of vows? We talked last week about this covenant relationship, that we are married. Part of what it means to be married is we're making this public declaration of vows to each other. We might rightly step back and say is there any biblical basis for saying something like that? I mean we don't have any passage in the Bible we can go to where they repeated vows to each other. In a sense, we know that God brought Eve to Adam, but is there really a sense in which they made that kind of declaration? I think there is because God did bring Eve to Adam. There is this kind of public ceremony if you will. Adam's declaration in verse 23 after he had named all the animals and found nothing corresponded to him, and finally Eve comes in to the picture and he says that 23<sup>rd</sup> verse: "This is at last now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." He is literally making a public declaration of his commitment to her. You say how do you know that? Because this language of being bonded together is language of covenant relationship in the Old Testament. It is the language for instance that in Deuteronomy 4:4 God reminds His people that they need to hold fast to Him. It is the same word. You need to bond yourself in this covenant relationship that he had entered into. He says the same thing in Deuteronomy 10:20 that they need to hold fast. Within this covenant relationship that God had established with Israel His people, there is literally a public declaration that we are committing ourselves to each other. We're bonded to each other.

What are the implications of this idea then of cleaving together? What are the implications of this? Well again, to me it speaks of the fact that this is the transmission

from something that's temporary to something that is permanent. The temporary relationship, the parent-child relationship, to now a permanent one. It just further reinforces what we've already seen. Leaving and cleaving. Severing and bonding. Departing and now bonding and attaching ourselves to each other.

We ask the question. How permanent is this bonding? How permanent are we to see this bonding together of husband and wife? What does that look like? Jesus was asked that question in the Gospels. Matthew 19. They came to him remember with the question about divorce and instead of answering the question about divorce, Jesus transitions into a commentary about marriage. Where do you suppose He goes when He wants to make a comment about marriage? Does anybody have any idea where He went? That's right. He went right back to Genesis 2:24, 25 and He said in response to that question, "What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder." When we think in terms of marriage vows and marriage commitments and marriage ceremonies, that is what couples say to each other. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate. God is the one who has glued this couple together. You are glued, you're bonded to your spouse. You're not bonded to your job. You're not bonded to your career. You're not bonded to a hobby. You're not bonded to that video controller. You're not bonded even to your children. You're bonded to your spouse. You're bonded to each other.

What does that mean? The further implication is this is all about commitment. This is all about commitment with the idea behind that you're leaving and you're cleaving. This is all about the word commitment. This is what keeps the marriage together, this idea of commitment. It is not about being in love. It is not about staying in love. Every pastor, every marriage counselor, has sat in the office at some time, too many times honestly, and had somebody say but I just don't love them anymore. That's not the point here. That is not the point do you love them. The point is you're bonded together. You're committed to each other. It is your commitment to this vow, this relationship that you have entered into. It's not feelings that hold the marriage together. It's commitment that holds the marriage together. Remember, we've said it before and we'll say it again. Every marriage is the coming together of two sinners. It is when two

sinners come together and they step into this relationship and they say no matter what happens we're committed to each other.

Let me just pause, step in and say I understand that there are many who are divorced. Some of you that have been divorced have been divorced because of somebody breaking this marriage bond and they were unfaithful to their vows. The Scriptures allow for that. God makes it clear that in those instances there is allowance for divorce. Some, I'm sure as well, stepped away from their marriage commitment without biblical grounds for divorce, but even in those circumstances I say to you this morning, that while we uphold the biblical standard that God has given to us that we commit to each other for life, God always meets us where we are. He always meets us where we are. He always comes to us in His grace. Whether you find yourself having gone through a divorce and there were biblical grounds or whether there were not, ultimately right now today our heart before God is what is the greatest importance. God looks at that heart. If there is a heart of repentance, then obviously He meets us with the grace that He is so famous for. So, we leave and we cleave. The first and the second.

Now the third. Marriage is to be characterized by oneness. Marriage is to be characterized by oneness. Look at verse 24 again. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh." Now before we look at that particular statement, I want you to look at God's math. Let's look at God's mathematics right here first of all because I noticed that one man and one woman, one plus one in God's mathematics system equals one. There's one man, there's one woman, and they become one. God's plan for marriage, we discovered already, is heterosexual. *Hetero* different, another. Homosexual same. God's declared plan for marriage is a heterosexual relationship, a man and woman. He has made that clear.

Now here He is telling us that God's plan for marriage is monogamy. God's plan for marriage is monogamy. It is the created order that he goes back to to say to us God's plan is for there to be a heterosexual relationship and a monogamous relationship. God by virtue of what He is saying to us here is ruling out all other arrangements. His instruction manual says it will be one man and it will be one woman and they will give themselves to each other. Scripture grounds monogamy in this

created order. Of course, we have in the Old Testament descriptions of polygamy, don't we? Descriptions of polygamy are not prescriptions for it. People are troubled when they read the Old Testament and they see that there are examples of polygamy. We don't see God coming out and saying in so many words that polygamy is wrong, but that same argument is often lifted up when people say can you show me in the Bible where Jesus says that homosexual marriage is wrong. We don't have a verse that we can turn to. There isn't a verse that we can turn to that says in so many words, but we have the principle of first priority. The very first time God speaks of marriage and introduces us to marriage, He tells us what that plan looks like. It's a man and it's a woman. They're in a monogamous relationship with each other. That's the instruction that He gives to us.

When we have these descriptions, for instance, Lamech is the first man in the Bible who boasts about the fact that he has two wives. It's not a picture of God saying oh, here's another alternative. If you want to have two wives, guys, go ahead, it's okay. I had envisioned one but two is ok. No, of course not. It is a picture of the downward spiral of sin. You're only in the fourth chapter and God's already saying look at what's happening. You've got Lamech now boasting about how he's corrupted the divine plan in that he has two wives instead of one. Descriptions are one thing. They're not prescriptions. We know Abraham stepped out of God's will. We know that Jacob did. We know that David did. We know Solomon did. We had godly men who violated God's standard at this point. But we also know that far from commending in any way this picture of polygamy, what the Bible so clearly shows is the devastation that comes into the family and comes into their lives because of these choices. The terrible consequences are there for us to see because God intends for there to be a heterosexual, monogamous relationship.

Let's go back to "they shall become one flesh". What does it mean? They shall become one flesh. The obvious answer is this is a picture of the physical, sexual relationship within marriage. They become one. Paul is speaking of that very thing in 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 where he says do not defraud one another, that there is something mysterious, beautiful, unique, special about this physical, sexual relationship that God has created. So, leaving and then cleaving. Cleaving is the consummation then of this one flesh relationship. They've entered into this new covenant relationship. But it's much

more than just the physical relationship. There is much more envisioned when God says and they will become one flesh. That's the obvious thing, but there's more for us to see.

What are the implications of this relationship now being defined and described in this way? It's alternately a picture of the goal that God has for all of us within marriage. It's a picture of the divine goal for marriage. You go back again to those earlier verses 18 to 23 when Adam was struggling with the fact that there wasn't anybody for him. And it is not good that he is alone. Then, this is now flesh of my flesh. The purpose of marriage, at least in part, is companionship. God had intended for this goal to be realized between one man and one woman. This oneness. This oneness of purpose. This oneness of their life goal now together. This oneness of their story, their united lives becoming one. They are now one in terms of their purpose, their reputation. One bed. One budget. All of this is pictured in this idea of oneness. In fact, the NET Bible translates this 24<sup>th</sup> verse like this: That is why a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife and they become one family. That's fully the intent of this 24<sup>th</sup> verse. A new family unit has been created. One family that now has come together with all of the shared purposes.

Then secondly, it certainly is a part of God's protection. It's a part of God's protection. The more we understand about the goal of marriage, that the goal of marriage is literally oneness in all of these different areas of our lives, we're looking to become one. We're looking for shared purpose, shared goal. We're much less likely to be striking out at each other. If we understand that the goal that God envisions for us is that we experience unity together, we're far less likely to strike out to hurt each other, to do anything that would cause division within that marriage. It is a violation of the very purpose and intent that God would have for us. The more we understand that it is now us and is no longer me and you. It's now us. That bonding together further adds protection to God's intent for marriage.

Then let's look at this last one. Number four. Marriage is meant to be an intimate relationship. Verse 25 "And the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed." What do we have pictured here in this 25<sup>th</sup> verse? What comes to mind when you think in terms of this description in verse 25? They obviously have total openness. Just total transparency. There's just complete honesty. There's no shame, no

fear, no embarrassment. All of those things. There is this perfect oneness. There is perfect unity, perfect intimacy. That's what God wants us to see in this 25<sup>th</sup> verse. It is just exactly how that previous point of they become one is now pictured in this relationship that they have with each other. It's a commentary in many ways on the first three points. You leave, you cleave, there's oneness. There's something incredibly meaningful and special about the marriage relationship. That's why again Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 5 as a great mystery. There are depths that we will never fully plumb and realize in the beauty of what God has created. It is so meaningful, so important, so special. It's worth all of the effort. You could really say that when you get to verses 24 and 25 that the crowning achievement of all of God's creative activity is the institution of marriage. Chapter 1 and chapter 2 are all building alternately to verses 24 and 25 and that brings us to this pinnacle of God's creative work.

What are the implications of that 25<sup>th</sup> verse? The first thing we should say is that this is reserved for husband and wife alone. What is given to us in this 25<sup>th</sup> verse the context of that is this is the first marriage. This is God bringing this couple together. This is God in this public demonstration and covenant relationship establishing this first marriage. This one flesh that is described for us, this nakedness is a picture of intimacy that they have with each other. That intimacy is physical obviously as we said. But is more than that. It's emotional. It is as well spiritual within that marriage relationship.

Our culture, as you do not need to be reminded, is absolutely consumed with sex. CS Lewis described it best in one of his writings. It is an obsession that is beyond any rational, reasonable explanation. What our culture, what our society, what fallen humanity desperately wants is what's described in verse 25. They just don't have any idea how to get there. They think that the way you get to intimacy is you just take your clothes off with just anybody and everybody. But they never find it. They never find it because the first thing that God says is this is for a husband, this is for a wife, this is within the context of marriage. This is the gift that God has given and provided to humanity within this special context.

But it is also this. It is a picture to us of the total and complete acceptance that this couple has. The book of Genesis was written after the fall, so this is Moses after Genesis 3, which Lord willing we'll step into next week and see where everything went

wrong, but this is now Moses taking us back before Genesis 3. He's saying here's a glimpse. Here's a picture of God's ideal. This is what He designs for you. This is what He wants for you. He wants for you to have this kind of openness and acceptance of each other. Of course, this is what all of us want. We want this kind of acceptance. We want this kind of openness. This is the recovery in that sense of the original state in Genesis 2 where there was purity and innocence. Genesis 3, of course, we find the fall. The first thing they do is they cover themselves over. All of us have been spending all of our days covering ourselves over. I'm not speaking physically, but we've been covering ourselves over in every other way because of now that innocence and the purity has been replaced by sin. Sin turns us into exploiters of each other. It causes us to take advantage of each other. It causes us to strike out and to hurt the very person that God has united us to and said of who we are one with that person. We do that because of sin. But here is this picture of total acceptance. Two imperfect people coming together and making a commitment to love each other for life, all within the gracious context of the grace of God at work in the covenant of marriage. Marriage in the eyes of God is the commitment of two people a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant relationship.

What do we take away? The first thing we take away is the absolute necessity to follow the divine order. What we have here is a beautiful description, it's the instruction manual, it's how to follow the directions right here in front of us. You leave, you cleave, you unite, and you strive for intimacy. That's the wisdom of God. When you walk in that wisdom, God brings about something beautiful. He brings about something very special. That's the only way that it works, the way that God intended for it to work. So, follow the divine order. Leave your father and mother. Cleave to each other. Step into this goal, this purpose, this unity of marriage that God intends and experience the intimacy that He has in mind.

Secondly, understand this is a process. This is going to take time. That's the whole intent of this. This is going to take time. It's going to take a lifetime. That's why we commit ourselves to each other for all of life. It's going to take a lot of patience and involve a lot of effort. It is going to include a lot of failure and a lot of forgiveness and a lot of starting over. All of those things because this is a process. There's a divine order but there's also a process by which we step into.

Then finally, it takes nothing less than the power of God. Relying on God's power. That's not just a cliché. That's the reality that you and I will never experience what God has for us in marriage, or in any other area of life, if we're not stepping into and depending on God's power to be at work. It's only the Holy Spirit that can produce this kind of beauty in our lives and in our marriage and in our families. It all works when you and I individually walk with God. That's where it starts, each of us individually responsible to walk with God, in reliance on the Holy Spirit. That, of course, all brings us back to where we left off last week, which was marriage is all about the gospel. Marriage is all about the grace of God being exercised every day in our lives to each other. So, we come back to where we started. It is the gospel that is pictured in marriage. That gospel reminds every one of us that we've married a sinner and that we're a sinner. The only way for these two sinners to make it work is to rely and depend on God and His grace at work in our life.

That work began by our understanding the gospel, which is simply to say I've sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. I can't work my way into God's favor. It doesn't matter how much I do, or how long I try, I can't earn God's favor in that way. It simply comes to me by His grace through what Jesus did on the cross in payment for my sin. That's the invitation that we extend to each one this morning.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you again for this covenant of marriage, this beautiful picture of your love for us that testifies of your unconditional love to us every day. Irrespective you are there for us. We are so grateful for that. We pray, Father, that you will enable us by your Spirit to step into that grace to love each other well. Father, I pray again this morning for anyone within the sound of my voice who has not put their personal faith and trust in Jesus as their Savior that they would do that even this morning, recognizing that they have sinned and fallen short of your standard of perfection, but knowing that what Jesus did He did for each one of us. All you ask us to do is to believe and trust and you give to us the gift of eternal life for which we are forever thankful. In Jesus' name, amen.