

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript.

Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: Marriage God's Way
Message: Marriage as a Covenant, Pt. 1

Transcribed Message
June 26, 2022
Genesis 2:24-25

The question that is often asked is what exactly constitutes a marriage? When is it that in the eyes of God a man and a woman are actually married? Are they married simply by living together? Are they married by being involved in a physical sexual relationship with each other? Are they married when they repeat their vows to each other on their wedding day? Are they married when they consummate those vows at some later point? how exactly are we to understand from God's perspective when it is that someone is married? Paul said in Ephesians 5 that marriage is a great mystery. This is kind of a part of it. There are many aspects to that and what he meant by that has many nuances. My answer to those four questions are no, no, yes, and yes. No, in the eyes of God people are not married even though it is commonly recognized in many states as common law marriage. In the eyes of God, just because people live together does not constitute a marriage. When two people come together and involve themselves in a physical, sexual relationship, in the eyes of God they're not married. That would make nonsense of all of the commands of Scripture about sexual purity and not involving ourselves in those kinds of things outside of marriage. Yes, I would say we are married by virtue of repeating our vows to each other and stepping into a covenant relationship with each other at that point of ceremony. I think, yes, we are married when those vows are consummated. There is actually room to make a distinction there because even in the Bible Mary and Joseph were married in the eyes of God. He referred to them in that way even though we know from Scripture that they did not consummate that relationship until after Jesus was born. But in the eyes of God they were married.

Let's go to the foundational passage in all of the Bible dealing with this matter of marriage and especially of marriage as a covenant. We're turning to Genesis chapter 2 and we're going to spend actually two Sundays looking at these two verses at the end

of the 2nd chapter. Next Sunday, we'll look at that second part of that 24th verse, and we'll look at the 25th verse and the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed. Again, I just say in advance of that lesson that we do not need to be ashamed nor should we be afraid to speak about the things that God isn't ashamed of nor is He afraid to speak about. Marriage is the commitment of two people. It is a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant relationship.

Quick review of what we did two weeks ago when we started this little summer series on marriage. What we've already established is first of all that marriage is God's idea. Marriage is God's idea. This is based on our view of the authority of the Word of God. It is based on our understanding of the Lordship of Christ. God is the one who came up with this idea. It is not a social construct that people evolved into. It is God who came up with this idea. It simply reminds us that if we are going to be successful in this venture, we need to step into His marriage manual, which is the Word of God, read His instructions for how it is to work, and God will bless that.

Secondly, marriage is God's answer to "not good". Back earlier in that 2nd chapter when God looked at Adam and said it's not good for him to be alone, that was God's declaration. It wasn't Adam's discovery. It was God's declaration. It simply reinforces the idea that marriage is God's idea. He's the one who's come up it. He has provided for someone who would be a companion. It doesn't mean that everybody is to be married. We know the Bible speaks of the gift of celibacy. There are periods of time in our life, obviously when we're not married, but even in those times when we're not married it is important to remember that it is God's plan for us to be in community. It's God's plan for us to be connected with other people. He never intends for us to live life alone and isolated from others.

With that in mind, we say finally marriage is to be celebrated. It's to be celebrated. It is to be lived for the glory of God like all other things in our life. In fact, I think you could argue that you can't understand the storyline of the Bible if you don't understand what God has given to us in this matter of marriage. The storyline of the Bible is in many respects God's pursuing us. God's chasing after us, if you will, in bringing His love into our life, which is in many ways a picture of what we know transpires within marriage.

The crucial question to ask and answer then is what is a Biblical marriage? What is a Biblical marriage? I want to begin by setting the context that we come to in this Genesis passage. I said two weeks ago that when you come to Genesis 1 and 2, you have in Genesis 1 the account of creation from the beginning of God's first spoken word all the way to the end of that 31st verse and the creation of the man and the woman. In that first chapter, that's kind of like a comprehensive overview of all of God's creative work. When He comes to the end of it, He says this is very good. He had made man and He had made woman. Then you come to chapter 2 and beginning at that 5th verse, it's almost as if God pushes the pause button in this creation account that He is giving to us. God reaches over and He pushes the pause button and He says I just want to step into this picture and I want to give you an enlarged picture and an enlarged understanding of what I did when I created man and I created woman. Chapter 1 is this quick picture of all of the creative work. Chapter 2 gives us a little bit more of the pulling back of the curtain and the creation of the man and the woman. All of it in chapter 2, all it, is moving towards verses 24 and 25. Everything that's happening is going to culminate in this ceremony, in the first wedding that occurred in the Garden of Eden.

That's why when we come to the 24th verse it begins with the word "therefore". Every time we see that word "therefore" we have to figure out what it is there for. In this case, it is just as I said. It is there to say to us stop and think about everything that has happened previously to this because now here is the culmination of everything that I said to this point.

I ask you: Who is speaking in this passage? Who is speaking specifically in verses 24 and 25? Who is speaking? Somebody might very well say well, obviously the writer of the book of Genesis. Everybody knows that. We know in Luke 24 that Jesus said that it was Moses who wrote these words for us. But someone rightly said behind the words of Moses are the words of God. We are to read and understand that what we're looking at here is in fact God's word to us with regard to marriage. This is what we need to understand. Genesis chapter 2 verses 24 and 25 are absolutely foundational. These verses are the go-to verses in all of the Bible about marriage. These verses appear five times throughout Scripture beginning here in Genesis 2. Every time, whether it was Jesus or Paul, they wanted to lay and revisit foundational truths about

marriage and about men and about women and about what God has created, they go right back to Genesis 2. We don't want to miss the fact that these are fundamental and they're foundational to our understanding everything about marriage.

You see this in the context when you go back to chapter 1 verse 27: "So God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created him male and female. He created them." The "them" that he's created are those He has made in his Image and likeness. It speaks to the fact that God has distributed His *image deo* into two genders – into a man and into a woman. The insight that we should understand from that is that by themselves they do not fully represent this image that God intends to be seen within a man and a woman. God, in creating a man and creating a woman, says I'm stamping my image and my likeness on them together so that together they will reflect this likeness. Neither gender by themselves is alone sufficient to be able to do that, so great is the glory of the image of God that He wants us to see and to behold.

I don't need to tell you that God's truth in this regard is under assault and under attack today. You know what I find interesting? Since the ruling on Friday (turning over Roe vs. Wade) everybody in this country seems to know what a woman is. All of a sudden. A week ago, you could ask the smartest people in the room what is a woman. And they couldn't come up with an answer to save their life. Now, after a ruling on Friday, and it's an attack against women. It is the oppression of women. We're going back to the dark ages for women. Everybody knows all the sudden what a woman is. But the reality, my friends, is that the truth of God is under assault today. When Paul talks about the doctrine of demons, he's talking about the assaults that are taking place against the very character of God and the truth of God. That is the doctrine of demons. They oppose and they hate the truth of God, the church of God, you and your marriage and all that it represents. This is the great delusion of 2 Thessalonians 2 that Paul said would sweep across the nation in the end days. This is what we looked at earlier in Romans 1 when we read that God gave them over to their own foolishness. That's what we're seeing today.

Now sadly, it's happening as we know in our culture. But even more sadly, it's happening in the church and it's happening in the church at an alarming rate that these fundamental questions are being asked by people in the church. God clearly establishes

from the beginning that marriage is between a man and a woman. I find it interesting that the G7 summit that is getting ready to meet in Germany this week there is only one nation out of those seven that still affirms the fact that marriage is between a man and a woman. That's Japan. Their Supreme Court ruled just recently that marriage is between a man and a woman. They're the only one of these countries that still affirms that.

I want to take a moment before we even jump into the rest of these verses. I want to walk with you through four progressive stages that are occurring in the church today, the Church of Jesus Christ, with regard to this matter of gender and of marriage. and this is the way it looks. It's happening with greater frequency. I bring it to you out of pastoral concern for the voices that you're listening to, for the people that you're reading, for the podcast that you're hearing. I just simply want all of us to be alert to the fact that there is a definite deterioration within the body of Christ today with regard to these fundamental issues.

It begins with everybody being opposed to gay marriage. that's where Orthodox Christianity has been for a couple thousand years. It all begins there. But it doesn't stay there. The next step is not taking a stand on this issue. Not taking a stand on this question. We suddenly become so aware of how offensive this position is to other people that many in the church today simply do not want to talk about it. So, they'll just simply skirt around issues like this and rather than speak what the Bible speaks, they simply are silent because they understand that to speak of marriage between a man and a woman, to say that it takes a man and a woman to represent the *Image Deo* is offensive to people. it is viewed as being less than loving. It's viewed as being mean-spirited and so we don't want to talk about it. But that's not the final stop. The next step is to when we actually affirm gay marriage. We affirm gay marriage.

You ask how is it that Christians take that next step? How did they go from having opposed gay marriage, to then not really wanting to talk about it, to actually now affirming homosexual marriage relationships? Well, it generally happens in two steps. The first one always begins with the questioning of Scripture. It always begins with the questioning of the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Christ over this area of our life. It always starts there. But then it moves to a revisionist interpretation of basic passages and a reinterpretation and some exegetical gymnastics to make a passage

that seemingly speaks clearly about these things to all the sudden we're just not really sure what this means. Or even worse, to change the meaning completely and make it allow for something it never intended to say. Then the last step. The last step is then the vilification of those who have a traditional marriage perspective. The proponents of putting forth a God-centered vision of marriage then become those that are vilified. The church is now the oppressor. The church is mean-spirited. The church is bigoted and discriminatory.

I have mentioned this name in the past and I'm going to mention it again, but Jen Hatmaker is an exact picture of these four steps. She is a voice that many women have appreciated for many, many years, and I would imagine there are many who still listen to her. But she has come all the way to point number four to where she has felt the need to leave the evangelical church because her view of embracing homosexual marriage is simply unacceptable. Rather than submitting to the Word of God and the truth of God, there is a turning and a vilification of those who have never left their position.

This is kind of related. An illustration at least in our culture of this very thing. A week or so ago, the Tampa Bay Rays major league baseball team during pride night had their team uniforms with different logos of rainbows and colors. Five evangelical Christian men on that team chose not to wear those emblems and those rainbows and those colors. They spoke with a gracious spirit. Jason Adams, I think it was, who represented the five of them spoke of their love and acceptance of everybody, but just did not feel that it was the right thing for them to do as Christian men to promote something that they believe Jesus and the Scriptures simply speak against. You know that couldn't just be let stand, right? You can have a Christian family night without any emblems, without players having to participate. It all happens after everybody else has gone home that doesn't want to stay.

But on this night, on this occasion, if you didn't wear a rainbow on your uniform, this is what Sarah Spain said on ESPN: "This is what tends to happen when a privileged class isn't affected by things. This is not just about baseball. That religious exemption stuff which is used in sports and otherwise also allows people to be denied healthcare, jobs, apartments, children's prescriptions, all sorts of things. We're trying to protect

people who are trying to be bigoted. They're trying to use religious exemptions to affect the opportunity services available and resources for people who are LGBTQ." According to Sarah, just because I don't wear a rainbow on my sleeve, I am bigoted and discriminatory. I want to deny people healthcare, apartments, every imaginable thing. But she doesn't explain how any of that happens if I don't wear a patch or if I do wear a patch. But that's our culture, isn't it? And that culture, I'm saying to you, has not just seeped into the church. It is as almost in some cases as if the floodgates are opening and the evangelical church that has stood on this Orthodox truth of men and women together being created in the image of God and God bringing them together in holy sacred matrimony we know is now to be bigoted and mean-spirited.

When we turn to the Scripture, what do we see? That's what we always want to ask. What does the Bible say? The Bible, I believe, in this Genesis account you can find four different things that constitute a marriage. Four things that constitute marriage. We're going to look at two this morning. Hopefully we have time for two. Marriage, first of all, is to be a primary relationship. The primary relationship that God has created is this marriage relationship.

Look at the beginning of the 24th verse. Therefore. Pause and think about everything that I've said to this point. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother." We're going to stop right there. There's a leaving and there's a letting go. What does it mean to leave? What does it mean to leave your father and your mother? It's interesting in a culture like the Middle Eastern culture where there were these strong bonds between generations and family units. It is so fascinating that the very first thing that God says is needed to establish a marriage is there has to be a leaving. You have to leave your father and your mother. Adam and Eve didn't even have a father and a mother, so we know it was for us. We know it was for the generations after. It is to us that this speaks. It is a strong and intense word. It means that we are to forsake. We are to abandon. We are to depart from. Don't let the strength of those words confuse what is behind them, because it doesn't mean that you disregard your parents. It doesn't mean that you ignore your parents. It doesn't mean that you dishonor your parents. Absolutely not. The fourth command (the first command with a promise) said honor your father and

your mother for all of your days. So it can't mean any of those, but it does in fact mean to forsake abandon and to depart.

This is a breaking of the parent-child bond. It's understanding that first point that the primary relationship that God has created for the good of humanity is not the parent-child relationship. It is the husband-wife relationship. That is so fundamentally important. This primary human relationship is to be between a husband and wife. If I were to use a Carlonian paraphrase I would say this: Don't make your partner compete with your parents. That is what he is saying. Don't make your partner compete with your parents in the establishing and the living out of your marriage relationship.

What are the implications of leaving your father and your mother? What comes to mind when you hear the word "leaving"? Probably separation of some kind, right? Maybe what we would most naturally think of is a geographic separation, a physical separation. But again, it's interesting that you can't stop there because in this culture families tended to live together generationally. It's not God laying a requirement. Probably in our culture it is very different. I think in our culture we have a different expectation and a different set of circumstances. There is certainly to be an understanding here that it may be physical. It may be geographic, but it is most certainly emotional. It is certainly psychological. It is financial. Just name all the different ways that this word is speaking to. Whatever ties you to your parents. Fill the blank in. There needs to be a breaking off. There needs to be a leaving. It's a matter of loyalty and a matter of meeting needs.

The broader principle here. The broader principle that can also be stated and needs to be stated is that even in coming together and getting married you do not have any longer the privilege to live as a single person. That's the underlying principle behind this. You're leaving and you're going to be coming together, as we'll see in just a moment, but you're leaving with the express intent of establishing this new primary relationship. I don't know if it applies to guys more than it does gals. It kinda seems to me like it maybe does. But in either case, guys or gals, you don't get married, you don't come together and then continue to live as if you are single, in terms of going out and doing the things that you used to do at the frequency that used to do them. You're not

gone five nights a week to hang with the guys. When you're married there's been a breaking, off an establishment of a new relationship.

I think the other implication of this leaving is it includes both partners and parents. It includes both partners and parents. It again was expected in the Middle Eastern culture for the woman to leave her family. That's the way it happened. Just think of the story when Abraham sent Eliezer off to his family to find a wife for Isaac. Eliezer gets there and remember how this incredible story unfolds. It is Rebecca who was front and center. She's the one that God has providentially brought all of these details together for. Eliezer says you need to come with me. What does Rebecca's family say? Can she stay longer with us? Can she stay 10 more days with us? Eliezer says no, she may not. She needs to come with me and we're going to leave now. They asked her, and she said yes, I will go. She was leaving her father and her mother. In that culture, it was much more likely that the woman would be leaving. But this is obviously to both. I think that's why it might very well be that in this writing, in this context, in this culture God says therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother. It is assumed, if you will, that the wife is going to, the woman is going to because that was the culture in which this was written. But it is to both of them.

The other part of this is the leaving and the releasing on the part of the parents. The parents have to release. That dad walking down the aisle, there's a symbolism there. The symbolism of giving away, of releasing, and this new relationship beginning. The fact of the matter is some families are easy to leave. That was not supposed to be funny. Some families are easy to leave. There's a lot of nuance there that we don't have time to go into, but some families are easy to leave. Some families are hard to leave. And when I say some families are hard to leave, I don't mean just the emotional love bond. I mean some families are hard to leave because parents won't let go. Some families are hard to leave because there are controlling, manipulative, insecure parents. This is to all of us. This is a good word to all of us, whether we're parents or grandparents, teenagers or college-age or young adult. It covers everybody and it reminds us that God's principles and God's ways are so very important. Parents, we follow God's example because God brought Eve to Adam and He gave her away. He established this new relationship.

You have children for a certain number of years, and then you have each other. It is you and your spouse for all of life. Again, if we have time we can go into what happens when parents pour their life and their energy into their children alone, and they don't give themselves to each other. You know what happens when the nest is empty. This is why divorce among people 50 and older is increasing. They've spent all of their time, all of their energy, all of their money pouring into their children and God never intended for the parent-child relationship to be the primary relationship. He intended for the primary relationship to be that relationship between husband and wife. You give yourself to each other while your children are at home and you'll have each other when your children are gone from home. Obviously, that's God's intent.

Well, our time is up. We're going to be back here again next Sunday ... amen? ...and we're going to just make it a three-pointer next Sunday. We actually got one point covered this morning. Do not tell anybody else outside the church family about that. Let's just leave that a family secret, okay? We'll be a loving and caring family and keep it to ourselves that Carlon only made it through one point in his sermon. But here's the thing. We will do what we take away.

What do we take away? We take away the reality that marriage is a gospel issue. That's what I want you to see throughout this series. Marriage is a gospel issue. That's why clarity about marriage matters so much. That's why when Paul talks about the mystery of marriage there are many things no doubt that you can explore within that statement. But one of the depths of what he's talking about is this matter of the gospel being put on display. When we step away from a biblical view of marriage, we're stepping away from the gospel. That obviously has great consequence. Preach the gospel to yourself every day. Remind yourself every day that you married a sinner. Remind yourself every day that your spouse married a sinner. Remind yourself every day that if it were not for the grace of God at work in your life that you would not be where you are. It is only by His grace that we advance and move forward.

Our hope in the midst of the most hopeless situations is in the gospel. That gospel simply says that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that He rose again, and that He offers us the gift of forgiveness and eternal life if we will simply believe that alone. Not that and some stuff that we offer. Not that and getting to church as often as

you can. Not that and getting baptized or taking communion. Not that and giving money to the poor. All of those are good, but grace and grace alone is what gives to us the gift of eternal life.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, thank You for this amazing snapshot into this matter of marriage. Lord, it is ultimately our marriage to Your Son Jesus, the church as His bride, that we want to represent to this world that is in such a mixed-up state of mind. Lord, help us as Your people to paint this picture, this portrait every day of the gospel whether we're married or whether we're single. Help the gospel to be on full display in our life because it is in that and that alone that we trust. In Jesus's name, amen.