

Genesis 2:18-25¹

God's Intention for Marriage

Genesis 2

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Introduction

Gen 2:18-25 tells of the first wedding recorded in the Bible. It took place before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Hence, you may call it a marriage made in Paradise. More accurately, it portrays for us what marriage is meant to be originally in God's design and intent.

I believe marriage is to be a sacred commitment between man and wife under the instruction and direction of the Lord. One thing we can do to live out this commitment is to ...

I. Treasure each other as God's gift in spite of honest differences (vv. 18-20).

Notice that the Lord said in v.18: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." We can understand v. 18 to mean that God's specific intent for the first man (Adam) is to give him a "suitable helper" so that

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he can truly experience community with this person. God saw something lacking in Adam—he was alone. He needed community in order to be complete.

And so in v. 19, the Lord took Adam to a zoological parade. All the beasts and birds were brought to him, and he was to name them one by one. The act of naming signifies Adam's authority over the animal kingdom as God's representative. More importantly, it was to help him realize his lack of a suitable helper.

So, the Lord paraded the beasts and birds before him. As Adam named the animals one by one, he came to realize to his dismay that no animal could be a suitable helper for him. Naming the animals was God's premarital counselling for Adam—he realized his own incompleteness and he was ready for Eve to come into his life.

Adam realized that he needed a person, not a pet. Adam realized that to experience community is to have someone whom he could relate meaningfully person to person. He could not do this with the animals. The animals were poor answers in his search for community. But isn't it true that some people do treat their pet better than their spouse?

But in His own good time, the Lord did something beautiful—He brought Adam and Eve together.

For those of us who are married, it is good for us to remind ourselves that it was in God's good time that He brought us together as man and wife. Thus, we are to treasure each other as God's good gift for each other—not as someone you can live with (as if it is a matter of tolerating someone who's 2nd best), but as someone you cannot live without.

When the novelty of a marriage wears thin, the danger is to view your spouse as a burden rather than a gift from the Lord. But Eve was indeed God's gift for Adam as his "suitable helper". The word "suitable" refers to someone who is the opposite, but in a positive sense. Eve was intended by God to be Adam's "suitable helper" means she is to come alongside him by complementing him according to his opposite; strengthening him in where he lacks.

The word "opposite" implies "not the same". Seeing our spouse as a gift from God doesn't mean there are no differences between husband and wife. But it does mean that in spite of the differences, we can still come to an understanding and acceptance of each other. It implies a willingness to respect the other; to talk things over; to adjust and adapt to honest differences.

When we receive a gift, we say, "Thank you. It's lovely. I like it very much." These are words of appreciation. When we see something or someone as less and less a gift, the words of appreciation become less and less. What become more and more are the words of abuse (e.g. sarcasm, name-calling, yelling, belittling remarks, unappreciative, unkind words).

God wants man and wife to commit to treasure each other as His gift for each other. One way is to always treasure each other as God's gift. Another way to do this is to ...

II. Guard the husband-wife relationship as the key horizontal relationship in family life (vv. 21-25).

Notice that the Lord fashioned Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side (vv. 21-22). God put a deep sleep over Adam, and then performed a "divine surgery". When Adam awoke, the Lord brought the woman to him. Adam declared in v. 23: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

Adam had finally found the suitable helper he was looking for in the person of Eve. In fact, neither would be complete without the other. Without Adam's rib, there would no completion in the making of Eve. Without Eve, there would be no completeness in the life of Adam. Such is the nature of their complementary relationship.

Eve was formed out of a rib taken from Adam's side. Man is to stay and walk side by side with his wife as partners in life together. As partners in life, man and wife are not to walk behind each other because there's nothing to hide from each other. They are not to walk ahead of each other because there's nothing to run away from each other. But they are to walk beside each other because they are to stand by each other "as long as they both shall live."

God intends for man and wife to experience community in their marriage. Many couples share the same roof and children, but at the same time they are also chasing different lives and dreams. This is not community because there is no significant communion between person and person.

To truly experience community, man and wife need to constantly remind themselves that marriage is not a temporary project, but a permanent commitment here on earth.

A man doesn't woo a woman when he is 28. Then he marries her at 30. Then have their first child at 32, and the second at 34. After that, he stops working on his marriage because he has finished with this project. Now, he moves on to the next thing in his life.

The danger with this mentality is that in time to come, you may view your spouse as a hindrance to your advancement in life rather than a gift from the Lord. But Eve was indeed God's gift for Adam as his suitable helper. She's someone to complement him "according to his opposite."

Working out a God-honouring marriage always begins with ME, not the other person. One of the greatest tragedies in life is to say "too late" because you have waited too long for the other person to do something that it becomes too late to do anything now on your part.

V. 24 reads, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” No, God’s Word does not teach us to leave or abandon our parents once we are married. Our parents are important people in our lives, and God’s Word exhorts us to honour and love them. But when we are married, the key horizontal relationship in our family life is that with our spouse, not that with our parents.

Similarly, children are also gifts from God and important to us. We are to love and bring them up in the way and fear of God. But the key horizontal relationship in our family life is still the one with our spouse, not that with our children.

This spousal relationship is to be built on love and trust such that it becomes unbreakably strong, like man and wife being “united” (literally “cemented”) into “one flesh”. This implies both can let down their barriers and be themselves before each other with no fear of being judged, rejected, or ridiculed by the other—unashamedly authentic and transparent.

The text tells us in v. 25 that Adam and Eve could be so authentic and transparent before each other that when they stood naked before each other in the context of this relationship, they felt no shame. Indeed, outside the context of marriage, such nakedness always seduces, threatening the stability of the home.

Conclusion

As husband and wife, we can fail each other. But God wants us to work at staying together for better or for worse. As husband and wife today, seek the Lord to help us honour Him in our marriage by:

- Treasuring each other as God’s gift in spite of honest differences.
- Guarding our spousal relationship as the key horizontal relationship in family life as partners standing with each other “as long as both shall live.”

A quick and final word is this—our ultimate pursuit of communion and union is not with another human being, but with Jesus Christ. Thus, whether we are married or single, we are to find fulfilment and joy as we pursue intimacy with Christ on earth, and anticipate eternal fellowship with Him in heavenly bliss. So whether we are married or single, we are to seek to live our lives in a way that will reflect our pursuit and anticipation of being in perfect communion and union with Christ when He comes to receive the Church (you and me) as His Bride.