

The Christian Home

Lesson 1: God's Design for Marriage: Leaving, Cleaving, and One Flesh -- Genesis 2:18–25; Matthew 19:4–6

Go back to the very beginning, before the noise and the hurry, before there was a single broken home or a single tear shed over love gone wrong. Walk with God through a garden in the cool of the day. Everything He has made, He has looked at and called good. Light and dark, sea and sky, the sparrow and the great whales, all of it good. And then, for the first time in the whole sweep of creation, God says that something is not good. “It is not good that the man should be alone.” The man has work, he has a garden, he has the very presence of God, and still something is missing. Adam is about to learn that he was made for more than solitude. He was made for another.

So God does something tender and deliberate. He causes a deep sleep to fall on the man, and from his own side He fashions a woman, and He brings her to him the way a father walks his daughter down an aisle. Adam wakes, and the first recorded human words are a love song: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Not a servant. Not a possession. A counterpart, standing face to face with him, his equal and his completion. And the writer of Genesis lifts his eyes from that first couple to every couple who would ever follow and says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

We live a long way downstream from that garden. We have all seen marriage at its worst, the cold silences, the slammed doors, the papers signed in a lawyer's office. Many of us carry wounds from homes that did not hold. It can be tempting to think of marriage as a human invention, a social arrangement we are free to redraw as the culture pleases. But Jesus reaches back past all of that, past Moses, past the hardness of human hearts, all the way to the garden. When they came to test Him about divorce, He answered with Genesis: “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,” and “what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

That is where this study begins, with God Himself as the architect of the home. Marriage is not something we thought up. It is something He designed, blessed, and joined together with His own hands. Before you are a husband or a wife, before you are a parent or a child, you are a person standing in a story that started in a garden and runs straight through to a wedding feast at the end of all things. Read these verses slowly, and let the One who first said “it is not good to be alone” show you what He had in mind when He gave the world the gift of marriage.

Group Discussion: Our culture often speaks of marriage as a contract two people design for themselves, something they are free to define, reshape, or dissolve as they wish. Jesus speaks of

it instead as something God Himself designed and joined together. What practical difference does it make whether we see marriage as a human arrangement or as God's own design?

Personal Reflection: Think about the home you grew up in and the picture of marriage it gave you, for good or for ill. In what ways has that picture shaped what you expect marriage to be? Where might God be inviting you to trade an inherited picture for His original design?

Read Genesis 2:18–25; Matthew 19:4–6

Study Questions

1. God looks at the unfinished creation and says, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18). This is the first thing in all of creation God calls "not good." What does this tell us about why God made marriage, and about the kind of need He designed it to meet?
2. Adam had meaningful work, a beautiful garden, and the very presence of God, and God still said he needed companionship. Where in your own life have you been trying to fill the place God made for human companionship with work, achievement, screens, or busyness instead? What would it look like this week to invest in the relationship God has actually given you?
3. The woman is described as a "helper fit for him," and she is formed from the man's own side (Genesis 2:21–22). How do these details teach both the full equality and worth of the woman and the distinct, complementary way God designed husband and wife to fit together?
4. Adam greeted his wife with delight: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (v. 23). Whether you are married or single, where have you allowed criticism, comparison, or familiarity to replace that kind of delight in the people closest to you? Name one person you could begin to honor and cherish more deliberately.
5. Genesis says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother" (v. 24). In a world where Moses had not yet written and there were no in-laws to leave, why does Scripture begin its picture of marriage with leaving? What does godly "leaving" actually involve?
6. Every marriage has rivals for first place: parents, old friendships, careers, hobbies, even children. If you are married, what is the one thing you are most tempted to put ahead of your spouse? If you are not yet married, what loyalty might you need to be willing to reorder one day? What would real "leaving" require of you?
7. The man is to "hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (v. 24). Jesus quotes this and adds, "So they are no longer two but one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). The word behind "hold fast" means to be glued or cemented together. What does it mean for two people to become "one flesh," and how is this far more than a physical union?
8. Becoming one flesh is the work of a lifetime, not a single ceremony. In your closest relationship, where do you sense a fracture in that oneness right now, a place of distance, division, or unforgiveness? What is one concrete step toward repair you could take this week rather than waiting for the other person to move first?

9. When the Pharisees came testing Him about divorce, Jesus did not argue from culture or convenience. He reached back to creation: “He who created them from the beginning made them male and female,” and “what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4–6). What does Jesus’ appeal to the beginning teach us about God’s unchanging design for marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman, and why does it matter that it is God, not the couple, who does the joining?
10. Look back across both passages, the garden where God designed marriage and the moment Jesus defended it. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth about God’s design for the home that you most need to carry into your own marriage, family, or future this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Proverbs 18:22, the man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord; Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, two are better than one and a cord of three strands is not quickly broken; Song of Solomon 8:6–7, love as strong as death that many waters cannot quench; Hebrews 13:4, marriage held in honor among all; 1 Corinthians 7:1–5, the mutual belonging and self-giving of husband and wife