

More than just living together:  
Part 1

Genesis 2:18-24 ESV

(18) Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

(19) Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

(20) The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

(21) So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

(22) And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

(23) Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

(24) Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

## Introduction

I am lead to do this series for several reasons

The first is the general and theological nature, the second is for cultural reasons.

### A theological consideration

In the last 25 years the very nature and role of the family has come under attack. People have tried to define it, and redefine it, based upon experience of sexual lifestyle choices.

They talk of a **defacto family**, one in where the parents of the are living together, but not married

There is the **homosexual family**, where the adults are people of the same sex living together and they adopt or have surrogate children

There is the **blended family**, adults with a divorced background getting married again and blending their families as one unit

Then there are **broken families**, where people are living together, present but not engaged

Now the family is the fundamental unit upon which not only our society is modeled, but it is a model of unity and collective partnership, it is a shadow of what the relationship is between the three members of the trinity.

Distinct and separate, with roles and functions to play, yet working together in harmony for the greater destiny that they share corporately.

***“The family is the corner stone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitude, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child.***

***And when the family collapses it is the children that are usually damaged. When it happens on a massive scale the community itself is crippled.***

***So, unless we work to strengthen the family, to create conditions under which most parents will stay together, all the rest -- schools, playgrounds, and public assistance, and private concern -- will never be enough.”***

***Lyndon Baines Johnson***

So we must go to the word for our understanding of what family is and how a family should begin

We must go to God to get a clear and precise picture of what he designed it to be

## **Cultural Considerations**

Here today in our church we have many people from many backgrounds with many experiences.

Single moms  
Single dads  
Blended families  
And broken families

And many of us got to where we are not based upon desire, but because of mistakes, or poor models, low expectations and lack of knowledge.

In the next couple of weeks I want to help you get a picture for what family could be and should be

I want to try and give you a starting point and some tools to help you get to the next step

I will do my best to give you clear, practical biblical advice...I just need one thing from you...that you don't get defensive and you don't walk in condemnation

None of us come to this thing called life perfect, none of leave this thing call life without making mistakes, however all of us can make the choice to love God with passion and become the best people we are called to be.

If I am going to help reframe your view of marriage and family and in some cases help you redraw what that looks like, you are going to have to give me permission to highlight some areas that you may feel uncomfortable with, and secondly you are going to have to allow God to do some open heart surgery.

You have heard me say it often

A photocopy of a photocopy becomes a grey smudge

As each generation tries to just copy the one before, without stopping and going back to the original, we lose sight of the beauty and the glory the original once held

Some of what I say may challenge some of your precepts, some of it may need a response from you, but all of it is said with love and a desire to help.

Here are a couple of things that I notice in this scripture

### **1. A divine institution**

The covenant between Adam and Eve was the second covenant that God instituted, second only to the covenant he put in place with Adam before the fall called the Edenic Covenant

The marriage covenant was in place before the fall and before Adamic Covenant or the Covenant of Grace

Therefore, marriage is a divine pre-fall institution  
It has a divine purpose

And is a Holy Covenant before God and should be considered in the same light by us

### **2. It is not good to be alone**

There is a difference between being lonely on occasion and alone.  
Men and woman are created and designed for life long partnership

God is aware of this, He made us this way

### **3. Marriage is a supernatural thing**

With out the supernatural intervention and participation of God, there would be no marriage

Marriage is not just hooking up with the first person who comes along because you're getting older and you don't want to get past your use-by date

God was supernaturally involved in making the first marriage work

He was supernaturally involved in picking the partners.

Partners that were created for each other and design to match each other perfectly

God is heavily into arranging your marriage

#### **4. Marriage is the union of different sexes**

God took Eve out of Adam.

He took the female out

He didn't leave bits of female in there

If Adam wanted to get in touch with his female side he had to roll over and give her a cuddle.

If you want me to be a man, don't expect me to act like a woman.

I will not make you watch "Rambo", if you don't force me to lie about enjoying "Julie and Julia"

Now I am not talking about buffoonery passing as masculinity

I am talking about chalk and cheese learning to live together

#### **5. Two halves make a whole**

Adam and Eve when they came together made one

You will more than likely marry someone totally different to yourself

And that is the divine order of things

## **6. Marriage is between two adults, not two sets of in-laws**

One of the biggest problems faced by couples in an ever increasing connected society, is it is very hard to leave and cleave.

They can see what you're doing on Face Book.

They can talk to you via instant messaging

They can hop on a plane and be down here in 2 hours and tell you that you shouldn't leave them

Often it goes like this:

Every mother generally hopes that her daughter will snag a better husband than she managed to do...but she's certain that her boy will never get as great a wife as his father did.

The only way that marriage can truly work is for a couple to leave and cleave.

God wants to start a unique family unit that takes all the lessons that you learned growing up – for good or for bad...and create something that is unique and original

That can not be done with some looking over your shoulder.

## **7. You have to hold fast**

There are times in marriage where the only thing that keeps it together is the decision to hold fast

It is so easy to let go

It is so easy to get a divorce now days

In fact people talk that way

When you get a divorce, they say...oh that was just your first, it is good to get that out of the way so you can get on to the real one

Marriage has its erotic moments  
And its exotic moments

But mostly it is two people called by God holding fast in friendship to each other and His promises for their life and their family

## **8. Married is not a partnership but a covenant**

Although God supernaturally picked the partners  
Although God supernaturally arranged the marriage  
Although God commanded Adam and Eve to leave and to cleave

There marriage was not officiated until they became one flesh.

Dallas/Forth Worth has the highest percentage of churches per population, of not only any city in America, but any city in the world.

Yet last week in the local newspaper it was reported that not only does Texas have the highest rate of teen pregnancy, but the highest rate of teenagers having their second child out of wedlock in the nation.

Why?

Because the church doesn't talk about sex. The church leaves the pornographers, perverts, and Hollywood to set the standard and to have the discussions with our children that we as parents should be having and me as your pastor should be equipping you for.

### **We need to redefine sex in light of the Word, not the world**

Sex is the highest physical act of love between two people. It is more than just a physical act; it is a union of spirit which is the external expression of an internal commitment.

Who do you think created sex?

The devil didn't.

Satan is not a creator; he is a counterfeiter, usurper, and thief. He will counterfeit, usurp or steal anything that God creates. God creates, Satan counterfeits.

Each time you have sex as husband and wife, you are once again saying with every fiber of your being that. You are committed to each other.

### **Sex the seal of the covenant**

As I said earlier, a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy ends up being nothing more than a grey smudge.

The issue we have with the degradation of sex in today's society is that we have gotten so far away from the original, that we have lost sight of its original glory.

We devalue sex because we have lost sight of how powerful and beautiful it designed to be.

Sex in America has been deteriorated to its lowest point ever.

A third of all married couples are completely platonic, they have no physical contact at all

Those who do still have sex average once a week for about seven minutes at a time (and that includes the time he spends begging).

The overabundance of sex in the culture seems to have had the curious effect of killing off our libidos.

It's gotten so bad that in a study sponsored by Intel in December of 2008 found that nearly one out of two women said they would rather give up sex for two weeks than go without the internet.

What is perhaps even more shocking is that one in three men agreed that they too prefer the internet to physical sex.

Why is that?

It is certainly not for the lack of sexual material but for the lack of understanding of what God created sex for.

The act of physical union was the culmination of a divine agreement that was put in place by God to be manifested between Adam and, at this stage, his eternal partner Eve

To understand this truth, it is necessary to understand God's covenant relationship with man and the importance of covenant in the eyes of God.

## **Historical Background.**

Blood covenants were a common practice between Middle Eastern people in biblical times, in fact it is still practiced widely in some parts of Africa and Asia.

Covenants were made between families and individuals based on needs, strengths and weaknesses.

In the day and time of Abram, entering into a blood covenant meant that you were totally and forever giving yourself away to someone else.

Nothing would ever be yours again.

All that you were, all that you had or ever would have, became the property of your covenant partner.

Your life would never be the same again.

This covenant of blood affected the lives of the unborn children for generations to come.

## **The ceremony of covenant.**

In preparation for the covenant ceremony, large animals, often 3 or more, were selected to be sacrificed.

A covenant animal was cut in halves from nose to tail and the halves laid out on the ground opposite each other.

A representative from each of the families stood in the middle of the sacrifices, in the middle of the blood and faced each other.

## **Exchange of coats**

First the two parties in the covenant exchanged coats with one another. This symbolized the exchanging of authority and the giving of character.

"I give of my very self, my substance to you."

## **The Exchange of Weapons**

Second came the exchanging of weapons.

People some times gave swords or shields or even belts as a symbol of the place where the sword is kept.

" Your enemies are now my enemies and your friends are my friends. He who attacks you attacks me."

## **The walk of Blood**

Next would come the walk of blood.

The two parties would stand in the middle of the trail of blood,  
A symbolic death to their own rights,

They would turn their back on each other and walk a figure of "8" between the two halves - "8" being a number without end, a sign of eternity.

They would then stop, return to the middle and repeat the terms of the covenant.

They made the figure of "8" because it was a number without end, it meant that this was a binding covenant for all times.

They would then face each other, cut their palms, slap and tie their hands together, and hold them above their heads so that everyone could see that a covenant was cut, blood was shed. They would then pronounce curses over each other if the covenant were ever broken.

## **The exchange of names**

Finally they would take on the surname of each other family and be seen truly as one.

The wounds in their hands or wrists would be cauterized with a hot blade or ash or dirt would be rubbed into them so that the wound would NOT heal cleanly and they would always bear the marks of the covenant in their flesh.

It was a sign for their life time that they were families of a covenant.

## **The shedding of blood**

It was only with this shedding of blood, the very last act, that the covenant was seen as ratified and immortalized.

When Abraham entered into a covenant relationship with God, God commanded that there be a shedding of blood.

Not only in the ceremony but also by Abraham's body. God commanded him to be circumcised.

Circumcision was the external evidence of the spiritual and internal work.

It was a circumcision of the heart first, then of the flesh.

Circumcision, the shedding of blood, was the sign of covenant between a man and His God.

It would come in the Old Testament to be a sign of covenant between God and His people.

The Old Testament practice changed in the New Testament.

In the New Testament the shed blood of Jesus Christ was the sign of the covenant between God and all of mankind.

The communion ceremony is a reminder of the act of sacrifice.

The act of shed blood and broken body.

It is the eternal reminder that this is a covenant of blood that we are engaged in as men.

### **What does all of this have to do with sex?**

Circumcision and communion are both symbols of a covenant relationship.

Circumcision was, and communion is, an external evidence of an internal work.

Sex is also an external evidence of an internal work.

When two people are joined together in marriage, they become "one flesh." Their bodies and spirits become united.

The exchange of their vows is a confession of faith that they have entered into a covenant relationship in marriage, and sex is the physical sealing or evidence of this covenant.

Marriage is a covenant relationship.

God's Word says, "marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled."

Sex is the sign of a covenant relationship that has been established between a man and a woman.

The covenant is why God gave sex only to those who are married. Sex was not designed for lusting and getting.

It was made for loving and giving.

Let's make sure we are all on the same page here – there seems to be a little to much grey creeping into the church for my liking:

- Engaging in any sex act outside of marriage is a sin.
- Engaging in sex when single is fornication.
- If indulged in with a member of the opposite sex other than one's marriage partner, it is called adultery.
- Sex between two people of the same sex is called homosexuality.

All of these mentioned activities are referred to in the Bible as sin.

The joy of sex is to know you have entered into a holy covenant relationship with the man or woman you love, and that God gladly has provided a joyous, exciting, repeatable, physically pleasing act of celebration with which you seal your covenant, and remember your covenant to each other.

### **The Glory of your virginity**

In this day and age, virginity is regarded as useless and a shame to those who have it. Something you should get rid of as quickly as possible. It's seen as a cherry to be plucked by "macho men," and as an embarrassment to women.

That is not how God sees it.

In Deuteronomy 22, God is very explicit in His instructions concerning a newlywed couple.

In the Jewish culture, there was a distinct manner in which newlyweds were to come together on their first night

God's standard for virginity before marriage was for a divine purpose and for a very specific reason.

The parents of the bride were to furnish the newlyweds with a set of new bed-coverings or bed sheets for the couple's first night of marriage particularly for their initial act of sexual intercourse.

When the couple on their wedding night engage in their first act of intimate sexual intercourse, and her hymen is penetrated, it causes the shedding of blood and that blood then becomes the "tokens of her virginity," and marks the bed clothes.

When this blood flows over the man's penis, it is a sign before God that the man and woman have entered into a sacred covenant relationship in marriage that is sealed through the shedding of blood.

That shed blood is symbolic of the sacred covenant relationship with God and with each other.

Think about this..... What a way to start a marriage, with a blood covenant recognized by you, God, and your new wife.

In our society we seem to place importance on a woman coming as a virgin to marriage, but think that a man should sow his wild oats before he "settles down" That is not how God sees it.

God expected both the man and the woman to be virgins at the time of their marriage.

If after their first night together, the man tried to get out of the marriage by bringing claims that the woman was not a virgin, her parents would present the bed clothes, the token of her virginity as proof.

It is possible to prove the virginity of a woman, but not the virginity of a man.

The man's word was to be reliable.

If the man was caught lying he was charged with caring for her for life and pay a hefty fine.

The decree of God was to protect a woman's honor and to encourage the man to be what she would need in a husband, a man of his word, a man of character, a man that saw her as the sole object of his desire and affections

Virginity is God-given, and a wondrous thing, it's not something to be shunned or a shame.

Your virginity is something you have to give one person, one time in your lifetime.

## **The Sacredness of Sex**

The sacredness of sex, in that it is a sign of a covenant relationship between a man and a woman.

God made sex good.

He made it to be the most desirable thing for a man in relationship to a woman, so the earth would be replenished, repopulated, and His Word fulfilled.

God made sex good so that man and woman would not feel forced to replenish the earth, but enjoy it.

He made it good and enjoyable because He loves us.

Sex is not something to be ashamed of, avoided or denied.

It is something that is lovely, good, and holy when it is kept within the covenant relationship between a man and his wife.

Sex is not a tool that either a wife or a husband has a right to use to control to manipulate their spouse.

Sex is a gift, not a weapon

In 1 Corinthians 7:2-5, Paul says that a healthy sex life is a preventative for immorality.

It is not just the wife who is commanded to give herself to her husband; the husband is likewise commanded to give himself to his wife.

There is nothing spiritual about avoiding sex.

Paul tells us that withholding sex from your mate is sinful.

### **The issue of Courtship versus dating:**

Now this logically brings us to the whole issue of how does a marriage start, I want to conclude by talking briefly about the concept of courting and dating

Let me say that there is not scripture for either of these models, but we do have principals that we see in the Word of God that need to be considered

It is absolutely essential that the most important relationship in your life starts out on the right footing.

*John 3:6 ESV*

*(6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

You need to do everything you can to get the right start

A popular culture should not set the tone for Biblical Christians.

Precept and example from the Word should.

So here are a couple of thoughts

A couple of definitions

There are two different views as to how to find your marriage partner.

The western concept of dating, which is about 100 years old or the eastern concept of courtship which some argue is the model used in Biblical times.

Both dating and courtship are two methods by which people can start relationships.

Before we start the discussion let me give you a very simple clear statement that will help frame the entire discussion for you and help you to know where I am going with this

Before you marry her, according to bible and common sense, she is not yours; therefore you are going out with potentially, another man's wife

Before you marry him, you are going out with potentially another woman's husband

You should conduct yourself that way

You should only do things, go places, and engage in activities that you would engage in with the marriage partner of another person.

Would you kiss the wife of another man?

Would you hold hands or engage in petting

Would you sit in a dark car with the husband of another woman?

Would you give your heart to the husband of another woman?

Would you put yourself in a position with the wife of another man so that accusations could be made as to the purity of your relationship?

I would hope not

Yet that sort of behavior is not only common place amongst non Christians, it is acceptable amongst Christians and is seen as a legitimate activity in pursuing God's life long partner for us

And it is primarily because we have allowed the world to dictate how we seek a life long partner and not the Word

## **The natural process**

Puberty is the time of life when a child's body begins to turn into an adult body. It is a very dramatic and exciting time of life.

As your body matures and you come of age, you will be attracted to the opposite sex.

In many cases, this attraction will be compelling and you will have to deal with it.

How you deal with it will make a major difference in the quality of your life and your service for the Lord as long as you live. The Biblical convictions, or lack of them, which you develop now to deal with the opposite sex will have far reaching consequences.

Believe it or not, they will reach through you to the next generation, to your children and eventually to your grandchildren.

## **A standard**

You must realize that as you come of age, someone or something (a group or philosophy) is going to set a standard, or lack of one, for how you deal with the opposite sex.

A standard does not mean a legalistic system or a social straight jacket. A standard is a set of moral and social guidelines that you go by.

You could have a very low standard or a very high one. When you go out socially or romantically with someone, some set of moral and social guidelines will guide your conduct. Everyone has standards, some low and some high.

## **What is dating?**

There are many forms of dating, perhaps as many as there are people.

Everyone has a different view of what is right and wrong. But there is a glaring fault in many of our models, a double- standard.

Once we are married, we recognize that certain things are sacred to our partner. Things such as co-habitation, kissing, intimate hugging, sex and bringing up children.

We recognize that not only our physical body, but our emotions, even our spirit, are dedicated to that one partner for the rest of our life (according to our vows).

The dichotomy is this: in dating, we presume to partake of many of these privileges of marriage.

We would be shocked if a married man had an emotional attachment to another woman, and yet it's quite acceptable for singles to have a different emotional attachment every week.

For me, our modern western model of dating is a little bit like “try before you buy”

Today, we often see children going out with each other on dates.

It is not uncommon for 12 to 14 year olds to be pushed into some kind of a dating situation by public schools or parents.

Dating is almost always too much too young.

When children start to date in the early teens, innocence is exhausted too soon. Dating is intimacy and soon creates familiarity and sexual pressure.

When children start kissing and petting at 13 or 14, what are they going to do at 18 or 19?

When pediatricians start diagnosing pregnancy, dating was started too young.

Some have said that innocence is dead!

## **What is COURTING?**

The Biblical basis for courting is found in the Bible in word, principle, and example.

### 1. In word:

Proverbs 18:22 ESV

(22) He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

Clearly the word “finds” implies a purposeful seeking and looking process, not a casual bar hop

### 2. In principle:

Deuteronomy 7:3 ESV

(3) You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons, or taking their daughters for your sons

Parents are to be involved in supervising their children's marriages.

Marriage is not something that they control, but something you seek their input on

### 3. In examples:

Adam and Eve, Isaac and Rebecca, Christ and the Church.

### 4. It involves mature people

"For this cause shall a man leave Father and mother, and shall cleave to a wife..." ~Matt. 19:5)

## "A MAN..OR MATURITY

It is a "man" who is to leave his father and mother for a wife and not a boy going out with a girl.

Think with me for a moment. Why did God wait to create Eve?

Why didn't God create Eve at the same time He created Adam?

Someone suggest that the delay was for Adam to prove himself in the garden by dressing it and naming the animals.

Adam had both a proven vocation and an education before God gave him a wife.

Adam and Eve were full-grown adults when God joined them husband and wife. Dating is almost always too much too soon

### **A Biblical model for marriage**

After God created Adam and placed him in the garden to tend and dress it, He said: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." (Gen.2:18)

Therefore, God made Eve and brought her to Adam. This is the first marriage. God instituted marriage for man's good and God's glory. I think it is clear that marriage is the normal estate for healthy young men and women.

I also believe that when we are passionately and pray fully serving God, he is preparing someone for us.

God's solution for man's aloneness is marriage, not dating.

Just as marriage became the first one-on-one, male/female relationship, the home became the foundational structure for the rest

of society, and a committed relationship became the foundation of the home.

In fact, God instituted the home before He created the church.

The principles of courtship are God-centered and Biblically based.

Courtship is a biblical process of finding and choosing a mate, while glorifying God and honoring and respecting each other.

Dating, on the other hand, is the world's alternative to courtship. Its principles are man-centered and culturally determined. The words "Christian" and "dating" don't go together because their principles are exact opposites. Christian dating is an oxymoron.

The primary distinction between dating and courtship lies in the intent of the relationship:

When a couple begins a courting relationship, they both know the purpose of the relationship is to consider marriage.

Conversely, casual dating is a romantic linking of a couple simply to enjoy each other's company for the present.

In dating, both parties understand that while marriage may be possible in the future, neither person is seriously considering it at the moment.

As a result, immediate pleasure is the whole purpose for dating, even for Christians who draw the line at sexual immorality.

Courting has a long-term end in view. There are no casual "tryouts" in courtship, and it is reserved only for couples spiritually and emotionally ready for marriage.

Courtship is not merely a Christian way of dating. When we date, we often have a window-shopping attitude that has "self" as the base: How will we look "wearing" our prospective partner ... having him ...

holding him ... owning him? We try on another person for size and see whether their style suits us. In contrast, someone in a courtship relationship says, "I believe God has led me to you above all others and I will honor, cherish, and marry you." No broken hearts. No painful baggage. No walking out.