

GENESIS 2:18-25 | THE FIRST MARRIAGE

This guide is designed to be used for community group discussions, but can easily be adapted for personal reflection.

ENGAGE (15-20 MINUTES)

Real Biblical community involves people “doing life together.” As much as we can, we want to create an atmosphere where people get to know one another, and feel comfortable sharing the ups, downs, and in-betweens of life. So take some time for people to get acquainted. A possible icebreaker question: Share a high and a low from the previous week. Or, rate your week 1-10. Or, make up one of your own.

REFLECTION AND STUDY (30-35 MINUTES)

On Sunday we talked about a famous passage – one often referenced at weddings. The New Testament looks back to this story to root its teaching on the meaning and institution of marriage. But the scope and reach of the text is well beyond marriage. It has things to teach us about the way we were created.

Read Genesis 2:18-25

- 1.) What is surprising about God’s pronouncement “It is not good” in verse 18? What does this teach you about humanity?
- 2.) How does God remedy the problem?
- 3.) According to this passage, how are men and women supposed to relate to one another? How does this text challenge both conservative and liberal views of gender roles?
- 4.) Focus on verse 24. What do you learn about the institution of marriage?

Read the Article on the next page.

- 5.) Do you believe you need community? How can you place a premium on this in your life?
- 6.) If you’re married, how can you better celebrate your spouse’s differences? In what ways does your spouse make you better? If you’re single: how do your friends of the opposite sex bless and challenge you?
- 7.) How can you welcome other people into your friend circle, community group, or church? Who can you have in your home for a meal? (How is the New City Hospitality Challenge going?)

8.) Stanley Hauerwas says “you always marry the wrong person.” What do you think he means? What is “the missing ingredient” in contemporary thinking about marriage?

PRAYER (15 MINUTES)

Break into men and women for prayer. Share prayer requests and pray for one another. Pray especially for the development of community at New City, for the hospitality challenge, and for healthy and growing marriages.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE

You Need Relationships

Verse 18 is very surprising. How can something be “not good” in Paradise? Derek Kidner comments: “*The naming of the animals (v.19-20), a scene which portrays man as monarch of all he surveys, poignantly reveals him as a social being, made for fellowship, not power: he will not [really] live until he loves, giving himself to another on his own level*” (Genesis, p.65). God deliberately made Adam to need other people. Adam’s need for Eve was before the Fall, before sin entered the world. This means that our need for other people is not weakness, but part of how we are created. Thus we need to put a premium on relationships and realize that “no man is an island” (John Donne).

Men and Women Need Each Other

God addresses Adam’s “aloneness” by creating Eve. We learn a lot about the relationship between the sexes in these short verses. The woman is to be a “helper” – a Biblical word often used of military reinforcements (Psalm 20:2, 121:1-2, 124:8), and even of God himself – the “Helper of Israel” (Exodus 18:4, Deut 33:7, 1 Sam 7:12). This is a word of strength and importance – women help men by providing something that is lacking. This is a corrective to those who believe women to be inferior to men. The other word used to describe the woman is “fit” (or suitable). Literally it means “like opposite.” Think of two pieces in a puzzle. Identical pieces don’t fit together, nor do randomly different pieces. Only complementary pieces fit together, which is the meaning of this term. The woman is meant to be a complement to man – equal in value, but with significant differences. This is a corrective to those who see gender as a social construct – Genesis tells us it is part of the creation order.

Matthew Henry: “*Not made out of his head to top him, not made out of his feet to trample him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.*”

The Institution of Marriage

In verse 24 Moses comments on the institution of marriage. He says that marriage involves “leaving” and “cleaving.” When we marry, we leave our old family and make a new one. This can be a challenge as our parents (previously our immediate family) become our extended family. But for marriage to work, men and women need to prioritize their spouse and new family. To cleave means to “hold fast.” It’s a covenant word, used in Deuteronomy 10:20 of our responsibility to God. This is the missing ingredient in contemporary thinking about marriage. The foundation of marriage is not compatibility (finding “the right person” – because people change and if they are the right person now, they won’t be at some point), nor feelings of love (these wax and wane). The foundation of marriage is covenant promises, and when taken seriously, these protect and grow a relationship by keeping partners coming back together even when they rub each other the wrong way.

Marriage Points Us To Something Bigger

6 – Origins
06.19.11

God calls himself the husband of Israel (Isaiah 54:5). But they (and we) are the spouse from hell. God gave us his heart and we rejected him (Hosea calls this spiritual adultery). But he has not left us. In fact, he pursued us all the way to the Cross. Jesus, the Bride Groom, has poured out his blood to purify his bride (see Ephesians 5). The Bible begins with a wedding, but it also ends with a wedding – the wedding supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19). Every human wedding is meant to point us to this one.