



Naked & Unashamed

Grace Reigns: God's Gospel for All Peoples Series #6

Genesis 2:18-25

David Sunday

February 8, 2015

Please open your Bible to Genesis 2. Let's be honest. The subject of marriage brings up a multitude of emotions. For some, it is pure delight. For others, there is heartache, unfulfilled longings, guilt, secrecy, loneliness, confusion and even hatred. We live in a post-Fall, post-Genesis-3 world. Many times, our relationships are scattered out on the floor like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

We come here to the picture of the world God intended back at the beginning. It is the world God made it to be. In Genesis 2, we see life in Eden. It is like the picture on the box of a jigsaw puzzle, a beautiful picture of life as God intended. As we read this text, we need to read it with Jesus Christ before our eyes. He is the One Who came to repair the ruins of the Fall and the One Who came to restore that which we broke through sin. He is the great Redeemer; so let's keep His redemption in mind. As these echoes of Eden fill our minds and hearts, may it remind us that we were created for a better world and cause us to look forward to the new creation that Jesus Christ has inaugurated and will bring to completion.

Let's read Genesis 2:18-25:

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. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Thanks be to God for His Word. Let's pray.

O God, wherever there is hardness in our hearts causing unbelief and unwillingness to bring our relationships and, in particular, our marriages under Your searching gaze, we ask that You would have mercy, forgive us and change us. Lord, as we look at this picture, cause us to yearn for what only Your Spirit can do and what He is absolutely able to do for all who come to Him in faith. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Our outline this morning is going to follow the verse on one of the banners in our sanctuary. It says, *“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen”* (Romans 11:36). In place of “all things,” you could write “marriage.” “From God, through God, and to God are all marriages. To Him be glory forever. Amen.”

Marriage is from God

As we come into Genesis 2 and start with the Google Earth view of the creation, particularly focusing on the creation of man and woman, the name of God becomes personalized. The name “Lord God” is repeated throughout this section. He is called “Yahweh Elohim” (Hebrew for “Lord God”).

God created a perfect environment for His presence and glory to dwell in the midst of His people. The Garden of Eden was like a temple in which God dwelt with His people, and they existed to guard, till, keep watch over the garden and serve Him. The goal is for God's glory to fill the earth as the waters fill the sea (Habakkuk 2:14) and as man and woman are under God and faithful to the creation mandate given in Genesis 1:27-28.

What makes 2:18 so startling is that God abundantly provided for His children. He gave man meaningful responsibility and offered Adam personal care. Adam had a future filled with hope. But there is one flaw in this otherwise ideal environment. In previous verses, God had repeatedly said, “It was good,” and, at the end of day six, “It was very good.” That is why we are shocked by these words in verse 18: *“It is not good.”* There is something missing and emphatically wrong in God's creation. It is bad! What is it? Verse 18 says, *“It is not good that the man should be alone.”*

If we don't remember Genesis 1:28, we will probably fail to understand Genesis 2:18. We could read that statement, "*It is not good that the man should be alone,*" and infer that marriage exists to solve the problem of human loneliness. In God's grace and mercy, marriage is often a balm for human loneliness, but God's design for marriage is bolder than that. It is not about me getting my selfish needs met. From the beginning, marriage is to be outward facing and should be a partnership whereby man can fulfill the mandate God has given Him in Genesis 1:28: "*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion...*" to represent God's rule in this world.

There is work that needs to be done. There is service in God's Kingdom that He has called man to do. For that service, work, and mission, man needs a helper, specifically a helper fit for him.

We sometimes think of a helper as someone who is inferior but we must emphasize that the word "helper" reveals the inadequacy of man, not the inferiority of woman. In the Old Testament, the word "helper" was often used as a name for God (Psalm 54:4). He is the Helper of His people which shows God's superiority and our need.

In 2:19-20, we see God highlighting the fact that Adam was incomplete without Eve. In His genius of divine creativity, as God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, He brought them to the man. We can imagine Adam marveling as he viewed the animal kingdom hot off the press, one-by-one. He was given the responsibility of naming the animals. For example, he looks at an elephant and says, "That has the nature of an elephant," and names it that due to its nature. There is the aardvark and all different kinds of animals that are named.

Yesterday, as I was in my office, I looked out at the snow in the field and saw two beautiful, bright red cardinals on the tree in front of my office window. I marveled at God's beautiful creation. Adam saw beautiful birds and was given the responsibility of naming them, as well as all the other animals. He analyzed them and gave them a name appropriate to their nature.

As he named them, he found that there were none that fully shared his own nature. Verse 20 says, "*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.*"

Through this naming exercise, God conditioned Adam to recognize his needs so that Adam would appreciate the wonder and goodness of the gift when it was given to him. And for this need to be met, Adam had to be put to sleep. He couldn't watch God in the act of this great creation. Verse 21 says, "*So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man...*"

While Adam was under divine anesthesia, God took one of his ribs, closed up his flesh and literally built a woman from that rib. That is the word in verse 22. He took the rib and “*made [it] into a woman.*” If you look at the footnote, it says, “Hebrew: Built.” God built a woman, an exclusive model of His wonderful creation.

Puritan Matthew Henry made a delightful and quaint explanation of the woman being made out of a rib. He said, “Women were created from the rib of man to be beside him, not from his head to top him, nor from his feet to be trampled by him, but from under his arm to be protected by him, near to his heart to be beloved by him.”

Husbands, ponder that for a minute. If you have a wife, consider the only appropriate response to this marvelous gift God has given you. Under Jesus Christ, she is God’s best gift for you. She is not to be domineered over or trampled upon, but to be equal with you, protected by you, nurtured by you, treasured by you and beloved by you.

Because this marriage was made in heaven, it was love at first sight. Can you picture it? God built this woman and breathed into this beautiful creature the breath of life. I hope you will agree with me that every woman whom God has created is beautiful, full of dignity and worthy of honor.

Then God said, “O dear Eve, I have someone very special I want you to meet. He is desperate for you but he doesn’t know it yet.” God performed the role of Father of the Bride. He said, “Come, dear. Come with me. You see this object sleeping over here?” [Dads, you know what it’s like to try to wake a sleeping young man from his slumber.] God went over and shook Adam a little bit, saying, “Son! Son! Wake up! You’re never going to believe what I made for you today. I made an amazing gift just for you that is just breathtaking!”

Adam woke from his slumber and was astonished as the Father of the Bride brought His first daughter to man. Here in 2:23 we have the first recorded words of a human being in all of Scripture. What are they? Love poetry. Mere prose would not suffice. Adam 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.*” He broke into song: “You’re the one for me, Babe.” He was delighted in her.

Husbands, I do hope that your wives hear you delighting before God in the gift that God has given you in your spouse. I hope to hear you thanking and praising God for this exquisite and undeserved gift of grace.

Adam’s desires were fulfilled at last. She met the need of his heart, so Adam gave her a name that publicly declared, “She is one like me.” Unlike all of the other creatures, she is named *Isha*, which is related to *Ish*, the name for man. It is like our English words, man and wo-man. Marriage is from God. It was His design, not an afterthought. God did not create the man and

the universe and then look around and say, “Oops! I forgot something.” It was God’s design all along to first create man and then to create woman, joining them together in the bond of covenant love. That is His design. Marriage is from Him.

Marriage is through God

The Designer is the Definer of marriage. He Who designed it gets to define it. Furthermore, He gets to perform it. The only way a marriage can really happen is if God joins a man and a woman together. Jesus teaches this in Matthew 19:3-6:

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

These are the words of our Savior, Jesus. In saying this, Jesus argued that God is at work. Marriage is through God. He is the One Who is at work joining a man and a woman together in this covenant. Because marriage is from God, it is His design and because He designed it, He alone has the authority to define it and perform it. We are not at liberty to call any relationship we feel meets our needs a “marriage.” Only God can define what marriage is.

It is important that He gives us a definition right here in Genesis 2:24 at the very beginning of human history. Ray Ortlund says:

In verse 24, it’s as if we are sitting in Moses’ living room, watching the DVD of the Garden of Eden. Moses picks up the remote control, pushes the pause button and the action stops here at verse 24. Moses says, “Do you realize what’s happening here? Do you realize what God is doing when He creates a marriage?” Verse 24 gives us definition to what’s happening.

In this definition from God, there is a lot we can learn about marriage.

First, marriage requires a man and a woman. For millennia, this would have gone without saying, but not anymore. In the last few weddings I have officiated, I have noticed that the Kane County marriage license no longer says “wife and husband.” It says “spouse and spouse.” If we define marriage as simply a relationship that meets our own needs and divorce it from God’s design and purpose in creation, there is no limit to how that relationship can be expressed.

Notice in verse 24 that a man shall cleave to his wife. It is a man and a woman. God doesn't join a man and a man, a woman and a woman, or any other combination of relationships together in a marriage. By biblical definition, marriage is necessarily one man and one woman.

Second, marriage involves a severing of all other dependencies. Verse 24 says, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother..."* This is quite a shocking thing to say. Until now, the closest relationship you have had is your relationship with your mom and dad, and you have depended on them for everything. But now that you are married, a stronger bond exists. There is now no one who influences your life as much and no one to whom you are more closely related than your husband or your wife. When a man is married, he must sever dependency on father and mother—stop depending on them—and redirect his dependence toward his wife. He must put that marriage on a pedestal, far above all other human relationships, even above his relationship with his mom and dad.

If we have sons or daughters who are about to get married, this is an important thing for us to remember. That umbilical cord may have stayed connected for 21+ years, but it really needs to be severed now. Moms and dads, we are not in charge of our adult children who are married. Those who do get married, remember that you should not depend on mom and dad anymore, but you should depend on your spouse.

Third, marriage demands exclusive loyalty. This comes from the words *"hold fast to his wife."* In the Old English, this beautifully says "cleave to his wife." The man promises to his wife, and she to him, "Whatever the future holds, we will face it together. We are going to be stuck together like glue." It's like taking two pieces of paper and sticking them together with glue. You cannot separate them without destroying both pieces of paper.

Cleaving to our spouse means that no matter what we feel, no matter what our difficulties are, we will be true to a promise we have made before God. A man who cleaves to his wife says, "I will be attached to you and you alone. I will be content with you and no one else. I am not going to look for someone else, either on the internet or in person. I will find fulfillment in you, and I will seek no fulfillment apart from you or against you. I cleave."

Fourth, marriage establishes an unparalleled unity. *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* When a man and a woman enter into marriage vows together, God no longer views them as two separate individuals. In God's eyes, they are one.

This is the argument that the Prophet Malachi made against divorce in Malachi 2:15-16.

Listen to these words from God:

Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit, they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel. And I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment, says the Lord Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith, because you have been made one flesh.

Being one flesh includes much more than just the sexual dimension of marriage. Ray Ortlund describes it like this: “The new life created by marriage fuses a man and wife together into one fully shared human experience, prompting mutual care, tenderness and love.” That’s what “one flesh” involves.

This is the reason why Christians and Bible-loving people do not think casually about sex. Sex is not a casual, recreational activity. The Bible forbids sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage, not because the Bible is prudish about sex. Read Proverbs 5 or the Song of Solomon—there is uninhibited delight and joy regarding human sexuality. The fact that the Bible teaches that sex is to be confined within the bonds of marriage proves the Bible’s elevated view of sex.

Sex is like fire. The right place for fire is in the fireplace. It is beautiful to behold and it warms the home. But if that fire spreads beyond the fireplace, it destroys everything. The fireplace of sexual expression is within the protected, exclusive, tight bond of a covenant marriage.

Sex is far too sacred, beautiful and wonderful to be treated casually. It is not just a physical act; it is a spiritual act as well. In some mysterious way, God has ordained sexual activity to join two lives—two souls—together into one flesh. When the sacredness of sex is not respected, those souls are torn apart and lives are scarred, not to mention the harm that can be done to the body.

In 1 Thessalonians 4, the Apostle Paul says to flee sexual immorality. Whoever disregards this instruction disregards not man, but God, Who gives us the Holy Spirit. And God will be an Avenger in these matters. To ignore God’s teaching about sexual activity within the bonds of marriage is an act of rebellion against the Creator’s design. Thankfully, it is a rebellion that can be forgiven when we run to Jesus and repent. Even the brokenness of sexual promiscuity can be healed and wonderfully restored through Christ.

Fifth, marriage is not the ultimate experience. In Genesis 2:21-24, the word “flesh” reminds us that marriage is not ultimate. As beautiful, deep and intimate as marriage is, it is not the final experience. What does the Bible say about flesh? “All flesh is as grass. Its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers; the flower fades but the Word of our God abides forever (Isaiah 40:6-8; 1 Peter 1:23-25). Marriage is not the ultimate relationship. Every delightful marriage will come to an end one day.

C.S. Lewis married Joy Davidman knowing their days were numbered. Kate and I watched the movie Shadowlands about their marriage the night she went into labor with Rebekah. It is a beautiful movie and we both cried. In the few, short years of their marriage, one biographer writes: “Their relationship deepened to the point that Jack asked God for permission to bear some of Joy’s pain from the bone cancer. In fact, during her remission, doctors found that Lewis was developing osteoporosis. As her bones grew stronger, his weakened.” In Alister McGrath’s biography of Lewis, he writes about the joy Lewis had in being able to share some of her pain out of his love. That is a beautiful example of oneness in marriage.

A sixth thing we see in verse 25 is that marriage yearns for an uninhibited intimacy. Verse 25 says, “*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*” That’s why I named this sermon “Naked and Unashamed.” This is not the Bible’s endorsement of nudist colonies. It is a beautiful picture of a longing that exists in every human heart to experience a relationship in which we have nothing to hide, where there can be complete openness and where someone knows everything there is to know about you and it’s safe. There is nothing of which to be ashamed or embarrassed.

It is a beautiful picture that is rare in this fallen world. Adam and Eve broke covenant with God in Genesis 3:7: “*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin clothes.*” Once they failed to trust the Word of God, they could not fully trust one another. They were no longer safe in each other’s presence and felt self-conscious about their shame. Mankind has been striving ever since that time to find this uninhibited intimacy, this relationship of complete openness and the one in whom we can enjoy the pleasure of having nothing to hide. We will never find it if we ultimately look to marriage and stop there, failing to look beyond marriage to the One to Whom marriage points.

Marriage is to God

Marriage is pointing to God. Listen to what Paul writes in Ephesians 5:31-32: *“For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”*

In the mind of God before the foundation of the world, there was a living, lasting and loving union between God and His people. He chose us in Christ to be His people. In order to show the world something of what that living, lasting, and loving union between God and His people looks like, God said, “Let Us create marriage to serve as a parable of this eternal reality. Marriage will become a living display of this glorious truth of My relationship with My people.”

This means whether or not you have a great marriage, are mourning the loss of a marriage, or are wishing you could get married, if you come to Jesus and put your trust in Him, you don't have to miss out on marriage. The ultimate marriage is the one that lasts forever between Christ and His people. This is what we are celebrating when we come to the Lord's Table. This is the dress rehearsal for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

What do we get out of this marriage? Grace upon grace. Jesus takes our sin, shame and all the blemishes of our nakedness; He clothes us in the robes of His righteousness, washes us with the water of His Word and purifies us through the sanctifying work of His Spirit. When He comes again, we will finally be presented to Him as a radiant bride without spot or blemish. Marriage is pointing to all of this and helps us live together in marriage now with broken, sinful people.

If you are married today, you are a sinner married to a sinner. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said this to a couple getting married: “In a word, live together in the forgiveness of your sins, for without it no human fellowship, least of all a marriage, can survive.” I think that is one of the reasons God wants us to partake of the Lord's Supper frequently. No human fellowship can survive unless we are living together in the forgiveness of our sins, viewing one another in the shadow of the cross and seeing each other through what Jesus has done for us.

Live together in the forgiveness of your sins. When you do that, husbands, do you know what you will be able to regularly say to your wife? Song of Solomon 4:7: *“You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.”* It is not because you are perfect yet, but because you are in Christ.

When Kate was sick with cancer around April 2008, I was reading the Bible and came across those verses in Song of Solomon. They captivated my heart; I found them beautiful and sweet. I remember getting her roses when our church merged and I had the florist write on the

card, *“You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.”* I remember the night Kate had her surgery on August 2, 2010 to have her lung removed. I waited about 14 hours before I could see her. I remember going into her ICU room that night and seeing her hooked up to all this medical equipment. She was aware of my presence, but she was not really able to engage with me. These were some of the first words the Lord brought to my mind and heart that I wanted to speak to her that night: *“You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.”* That is because of Christ.

From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

(The Church's One Foundation; words by Samuel Stone; music by Samuel Wesley, 1866)

Listen to what Martin Luther said happens when Christ engages with us in the covenant of marriage and when faith unites our souls to Him:

Faith unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. From such a marriage, it follows that Christ and soul become one, so that they hold all things in common for better or worse. This means that what Christ possesses belongs to the believing soul, and what the soul possesses belongs to Christ. Thus, Christ possesses all good things in holiness. These now belong to the believing soul. The soul possesses lots of vices and sin. These now belong to Christ. Is this not a happy business? Christ, the rich, noble, and holy Bridegroom, takes in marriage this poor, contemptible, and sinful little prostitute, takes away all her evil and bestows all His goodness upon her. It is no longer possible for sin to overwhelm her, for she is now found in Christ.

If you believe that and cling to Him for that, He says, “Come to this table! Do not refuse! I give Myself wholly to you.” And you say, “I do,” to Him. Return to Him the love, affection, faith, delight and obedience that belongs to so gracious a Husband.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You planned to love us from eternity past with such a depth, such an exclusive loyalty, such a profound intimacy and delight and such a generosity that Your relationship with us caused You to think of marriage. Lord, we delight in our marriages and thank You for them. For those who are grieving the loss of a marriage, we pray that You may point us beyond that loss to the One in Whom every shadow that shines in marriage becomes resplendent in its fullness at the consummation that we will have in Christ. Lord, we pray that we husbands would love our wives as Christ loves the church, laying ourselves down, sacrificing

ourselves and washing her with the water of the Word. Jesus, we thank You that You are committed to purifying Your bride until we stand before You radiant, faultless and with great joy. So we partake of Your communion table in faith, thanking You for Your body and Your blood for us. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Text provided by sermontranscribers.net ♦ emily@sermontranscribers.net