

## “Leave and Cleave”

Genesis 2:18-24

February 10, 2019

When two people get married sometimes we refer to it as “tying the knot.” Apparently this phrase grew out of an ancient custom where the bride and groom would actually have their hands tied together with a rope during the wedding ceremony, indicating that they were making a special commitment to each other. Even today some pastors will put a sash around a couples’ hands instead of a rope to symbolize their commitment to each other as two people become one in marriage. Marriage is hard work. It can be tough in that dating often reveals the best of you, while marriage often reveals the worst of you. Even couples who have the best of marriages still have their obstacles, difficulties, and battles on a regular basis. Unfortunately, this knot – known as marriage – can easily become untied these days as some people simply walk away from their vows when the marriage becomes a bit stale or uncomfortable.

While there is certainly nothing in this world that will guarantee a successful marriage, I do believe if people build their marriage on God and His Word or if they let God tie the knot, their marriage will be stronger. The first marriage between Adam and Eve was intended by God to be a model for every marriage, of what marriage should be like and why marriage is important. But sadly, it was attacked and destroyed by Satan. Did you ever realize that Satan didn’t appear to bother Adam until Eve was created? As soon as Adam and Eve were married Satan attacks. Clearly Satan hates marriage as he looks to destroy all families and relationships.

It all started when Adam was naming all of the animals that God had made. One by one, Adam examined these creatures, noticed what their individual characteristics were, and then he named them accordingly. Imagine the situation, Adam looking each creature and saying, “Giraffes, Lions, Elephants.” But it didn’t take long for Adam to realize that something was missing in his life. There was no one like him in all the world. He couldn’t have an intelligent conversation with an animal. He could talk to God, but it wouldn’t be quite the same. Adam needed someone by his side and without that companion, that helpmate, something was missing.

Up until this point, everything that God had created was good, and in the case of humanity, very good. But God knows that it is not good for Adam to be alone. It is not that God had made a mistake or had forgotten something, but His creation was just not completed yet. So God decides to make a helper suitable for Adam.

Now before I say anything further, I should state that there is nothing wrong with being single. God doesn’t call everyone to be married. Jesus was never married. Paul, who wrote our text from last Sunday, 1 Corinthians 13, which describes in great detail what true love is all about, was never married.

So initially, Adam is in a situation that is not good as there is no one like him. But Adam doesn’t complain. He trusted that God would take care of him and do whatever was best. So, as we heard in our Old Testament lesson, God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping, He took one of Adam’s ribs and made a woman from the rib, and brought her to Adam. We should also note from where God took the bone to make the woman. He didn’t take a bone from Adam’s head, so Eve could rule over Adam. He didn’t take a bone from Adam’s foot so he could (figuratively) walk all over her. God picked a bone from Adam’s side, a bone close to Adam’s heart, so that she could be an equal helper to Adam in every way, but they would have different roles in marriage.

Husbands and wives, do you see this blessing that God has given you in your marriage? Adam noticed this blessing right away. When God presented him with Eve, notice Adam’s response. He said in verse 23, “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.” Adam was so happy to be blessed with a spouse, and this is what God wants our attitude to be in marriage. God has provided you with someone to help complete you, to help cover up your weaknesses. How could anyone complain about this gift of God? How could a husband ever beat or hurt his wife, a gift given to him from God; and how could a wife ever speak poorly or take advantage of her husband, a gift given to her from God?

We should also note that the word, “helper” in verse 18, “...I will make him a helper fit for him” is not derogatory term to suggest that the woman is the “man’s assistant” or someone less equal than a man. The word has the idea of supplying something that would otherwise be lacking. Many times in the Bible it is used to refer to God as our helper.

There is an old saying, “It is not how you start, but how you finish that counts.” But when it comes to marriage, how you start is just as important as how you finish and may determine how you finish. The main

principle of marriage, of “tying the knot,” is to let God bring the two strands (man and woman) together, and to let Him tie the knot together.

Then, when the wedding is over and the marriage is official, God tells the bride and groom in verse 24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.” The Hebrew word for “leave” is often translated “abandon” as in “abandon ship.” That’s some strong language. Those who are about to marry are to abandon the ship of their parents in which they have been nurtured for as much as 20 or 30 years. But there’s a reason for that as the man and woman now have to get on their own ship called “marriage.” This doesn’t mean that we are to suddenly neglect or disrespect our parents who have given so much of their time and treasure to care for us. After all, the Bible tells us that we are to always honor our parents and we are to provide for our relatives, especially our immediate families. But in this sacred bond called marriage, a new home, a new family, a new life is being formed. A man and a woman form a new body, one flesh from two; and this new body is to be nurtured and cared for at all times.

As the husband and wife leave that parent-child relationship, our text for today says that the man shall “hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Those words “hold fast,” suggest something that means, “to be glued to” or “to be cemented together.” Every husband should hold fast to his wife for dear life – no matter what, because it is in this process of holding fast that God builds character, perseverance, faith, trust, and love.

Other translations of this text say that the husband and wife cleave to each other in marriage. That word, “cleave” suggests more of a strong “stick-to-it-iveness.” This bond of marriage is more than a mutual agreement. Agreements can be changed. Opinions can be swayed as we see more and more of this happening today when it comes to the understanding of marriage. But the bond that God had in mind and instituted in marriage despite our opinions is to be lifelong: “...a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to His wife, and the two will become one flesh.” They will be two hearts, woven together as one.

But a good weave always involves 2 strands plus one. Consider a hair braid. For all appearances it looks like 2 strands of hair twisted together, but in reality there is always a third, not immediately evident, but playing an important role in keeping the other two closely woven together. If we were to pull that strand out the other two would be weakened and eventually pull out. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that “a cord of three strands is not easily broken,” and when a man and woman come together in marriage as one flesh, behind the relationship is the understanding that God is the third strand, though not immediately evident, who has promised to be with all married couples and every one of us to the very end of the age.

Therefore, when two people come together in marriage, God weaves that new life together around His love. A love that forgives the past, gives us a new start, nurtures and sustains us in all circumstances, and keeps our love from growing stale and weak. Indeed, God’s love can deepen our love and help it to grow stronger through every joy and sorrow shared together.