

Series: God & Man & Woman #790

Title: Genesis 2.24, Part 8

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world! This is the end of the week, and I want to use our time wisely to move forward to our third question in response to Genesis chapter 2, and verse 24. I will ask this question and begin to answer it, but we will need to carry the answer over into next week's podcasts and broadcasts. So, as always, please plan to be with us all next week!

First, this reminder that at Genesis 2, verse 24 I am teaching the verse by way of asking good questions. This is a kind of Q&A approach. We began last Wednesday with the first question: *why here?* Why does God introduce us to marriage right at the beginning of the Bible? We then spent the last seven broadcasts and podcasts answering that question. Also last Wednesday, I asked and answered a second question. That one was more minor: who said what we read in verse 24? The answer was clear and concise: under the divine inspiration of God, Moses wrote verse 24 for our instruction. So, we've had one big question that took us some time to answer and one small question that we answered quickly. Let's get going now on question number three.

Here it is: **what is marriage?** (What is marriage?) Now, you must understand that I plan to answer this question from the divine perspective. What is God's perspective on Genesis 2.24? The Bible says, **"²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."** What can we say about marriage that will please God? What does God mean by what God reveals in these words? I am not answering the question from the human perspective. I do not intend to survey public opinion or even church opinion in my answer. Rather, I want to ascertain God's opinion.

And someone might say, "Yes, Mark, but you are human. And so when you give us (quote/unquote) 'God's perspective,' you are still doing that from your perspective on what you think God's perspective is." OK, this point is well taken. You figure that someone else can come along and teach Genesis 2.24 forming an opposing view to mine and they can say, "This is God's divine perspective." And now you are left wondering whom to believe. What view to accept as truly being God's?

Well, what do we do about this? Here is what I propose we do. If you're willing to stick with me in the days ahead – remember, carrying this over into next week – you hear what I have to say.

You follow along with my interpretation and my logic. As I talk, you listen. Maybe you jot down some notes. You respond. Use your mind. Use your logic. Read the text for yourself and make your own interpretation. Does yours match mine? Where was I wrong? Where was I right? Is there some flaw in my interpretation? Am I missing something that you think God is saying when He includes in the Bible that, **"²⁴ ...a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."**

I have done my homework. I have studied. I think that I am prepared. If you listen to me often enough you should see how my interpretation of Genesis chapter 2 and verse 24 fits tightly with how I interpret the Scripture elsewhere. Yes, you may well find what I have to say as at odds with what you believe, and certainly at odds with what the culture in which we live believes. And by culture I mean both the secular culture and the religious culture. So it is not just people who are not Christians that may disagree with me, but is also people who are Christians, or participants in some other religion, that may disagree with me. And of course, there may be agreement with my interpretation as well. Certainly many of you will follow along with me and make similar conclusions to the ones I make.

Look, I invite disagreement. I believe that each one of us should take up the Bible, read it, study it, discern how to interpret what we read, and then make our conclusions. I also think it is essential that we apply our conclusions to real life. So, if you were to conclude that marriage is a bond of one man to one woman, and you are a man who is married to a woman, then you are also not married to another woman! (Or to multiple other women.) But if you were to conclude that marriage is a bond of one man to multiple women, then if we were to meet you could introduce me to one of your wives, then another and then another. And, if you think polygamy is not practiced in our society today, then you do not know what is going on in said society.

My point is our biblical convictions must be applied; they must be lived out. People who say one thing and do another lose credibility rapidly with me, and most likely with you also. Another way to say this would be: as we make our interpretation, we do what the Bible says to do. But when it comes to marriage we often do *not* do what the Bible says to do. And I will say more about this as we move along.

But the bottom line: while you and I may come to opposing views on what God means by what God says, let's at least both do our homework. Let's both put in the time in the classroom of God, and not simply depend on our "gut instinct" or "feeling" or on "what my pastor" or "the book I am reading" and the "YouTube video I watched" answers on what is marriage.

This is my proposal on what we should do for those of you who think that when I say we will answer our question from God's perspective/we will settle on the answer that best pleases God, that you still cannot fully accept this as God's directive for marriage because out there somewhere there is an opposing interpretation. My friend, do your work also and make your own conclusion. Whatever each of us believe about marriage will one day be tested by the judgment of God at His throne. (As will all interpretations of the Bible we make and then live by.)

With that as introduction, let's dig into the verse and see what it means. What does it mean that, "²⁴...**a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.**" I will tell you up front what I believe it means. I can answer my own question in one sentence: **marriage is one man as one flesh with one woman for one lifetime.** Or, if you prefer marriage is one woman as one flesh to one man for one lifetime. That is the best, most succinct way to say what Genesis 2, verse 24 means.

How does that strike you? Are we already at odds in interpreting this verse? Well, I hope you will give me a chance to explain myself, to show you in the Bible *why* I believe that marriage is one man as one flesh with one woman for one lifetime.

And let me begin my explanation with a focus on this word *one*. There is exclusivity here: *one*. There is one man and there is one woman and there is one flesh. We do not need a degree in theology to see this. Anyone who can read immediately finds that "**a man,**" that is one man, is joined to "**his wife...**" Notice that man is singular – "a man" – and the woman is singular – "his wife," not wives (plural). Wife. W-I-F-E. (Not W-I-V-E-S.)

The verse does not say, "a man be joined to his wives." Furthermore, notice that the flesh is also singular, "**one flesh.**" Becoming one flesh with one woman is one married man's one-time God given calling. Becoming one flesh with one man is one married woman's one-time God given calling. I gave you an earful there. Let me say that again. It's Friday, the end of the week, you are tired and you might even have had a terrible day at work or in your home. So, let's cover this again.

My understanding is that becoming one flesh with one woman is one married man's one-time God given calling. Becoming one flesh with one man is one married woman's one-time God given calling. You will have picked up on the emphasis I give to *one*. Marriage is an exclusive relationship.

We can immediately rule out polygamy. Marriage is monogamy. Polygamy is the practice of having more than one wife or more than husband at the same time. Monogamy is the practice of having only one husband or one wife at the same time. God commands monogamy. According to God marriage is monogamy not polygamy. "A man" to "his wife" and "they shall become one flesh." And that is exactly what we have in the first man and the first woman. Adam (the man) is married to Eve (his wife) and, as we continue to read the Bible, we see that they become one flesh.

Oh! I can hear the questions and objections already. So bring those with you on Monday as we continue this valuable discussion on God Is!

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