

Series: God & Man & Woman #826

Title: Genesis 2.24, Part 29

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! I hope that are well. Let's pray together before we return to Genesis 2, verse 24 and begin to wrap up our discussion on marriage.

Our Father, in heaven, Lord God, thank you for this time we have together with one another now. We pray you will bless and protect these minutes. We are surrounded by distractions, but we want You to pull together our full attention on You and on Your Word. I pray especially for my friends who are struggling, being miserable in their marriage. Especially as we now take up a Bible based discussion on abuse in marriage, meet with us. I pray for myself, that You will give me wisdom, discernment, knowledge, and love. Please help me to communicate clearly. I pray I will not be misunderstood.

I pray specifically at this moment for the woman listening in whose husband is acting in an abusive manner towards her. I pray for the man tuning in whose wife is constantly acting in rage against him. I ask that You will give this friend of mine Your wisdom to know what to do about this. Being the recipient of abuse is horrifying. And often we just do not know what to do about this. I pray these radio broadcasts and Internet podcasts, these days together on God Is, will leave us with answers for how to respond to an abusive spouse.

And I pray for children (of all ages, including adult children) of abusive parents. Will you also minister to them? Protect them from the Devil. Draw them to Yourself and reveal Yourself to them in such a way, through this Bible, that they will always know of Your *love*. You are our *loving* heavenly Father. So that even when our earthly father is abusive, You never are. When our earthly mother is abusive, You never are. So may these children find safety and refuge in *You*, God. Be with us now.

For those of us, thankfully, not in an abusive relationship, please give us compassion for those who are. Teach us also. Give us the courage to reach out and to be a good friend to someone who is living with abuse as we pray. Use us to encourage others with what we learn here. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

As you can tell from my prayer, we are going to now answer our final question that has arisen out of our study on marriage, based in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 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.**" And we have said therefore, that marriage is one man as one flesh with one woman for one lifetime. However, while all of this is true, I am aware that defining marriage this way does not match many people's experience. And even Christian people's experience.

And so I proposed four practical questions that deal with the reality many marriages face. They are not one-flesh marriages and they are not one-lifetime marriages. And we come now to the last of the four questions. It is this: **what about one spouse abusing another in the marriage? Should the one being abused really stay married for life? What about abuse in marriages?**

As we begin to answer this question we need to acknowledge the following: I don't know you. Out of the two of us you know me far better than I know you. Unless you write to me, I have no idea who you are. One of the many challenges of communicating Bible truth on the radio and via the podcast is that the Bible teacher does not know who is listening. Whereas, in pastoral ministry in a local church, we know the people we pastor. And the discerning pastor always knows what is going on with members of the congregation.

The best environment for handling abuse in marriage is within the local church. This is true *if, if*, the local church responds rightly. (Next week I will talk about how the local church often fails a spouse who is being abused.)

Anyway, the *best* environment for handling abuse in marriage is within the local church. In such an environment if I were your pastor I'd know you and would either know your spouse or could get to know him or her. We would come together in a pastoral-counseling arrangement in which I would listen attentively to exactly what is going on with you. I'd ask probing questions. I'd hear you and your spouse out, or perhaps just you, and then prayerfully discern how to provide counsel.

And then, of course, especially if you and your abusive spouse were a part of the church community (members, regular attenders), we would likely appeal to church discipline as a way to bring the abusive spouse to repentance (to changed behavior). We'd follow Matthew chapter 18, verses 15-20. (That's the process so clearly laid out for us by Jesus in Matthew 18.) But *God Is* is not a church. And, unless you write to me, which I welcome. Indeed, I'd *love* to hear from you. But unless you introduce yourself to me and share the specific situation in which you find yourself – the abuse you are enduring in your marriage, I will be limited to the kind of advice I can only give through the radio and the Internet.

So, I have a request of you. Please remember what is required of me here. I have to speak on this sensitive and challenging real-life, practical, sad and tragic matter in many marriages *without* knowing to whom I speak. Are there people tuning in who are living in an abusive marriage? I think there are. Sadly, this is *very* common. It's on the rise all the time, statistically. But the pastor in me sure would love to combine teaching with counseling as we navigate biblical wisdom on abuse under the command of God for a one-lifetime marriage.

As always, in anything I say, I also run the risk of having you misunderstand, misinterpret, or misapply what I am saying, even as I convey what I think God is saying. It's very possible someone will use what I say as justification for whatever you want to do, even if that is not the right thing to do. And there will be the ones abusing who listen to me. It's entirely possible to have men and women listening to Christian radio all the time, who go home and are a terror to live with. For years in churches I've seen people – faithful on Sunday – who are anything but Christians Monday through Saturday night! Sadly, listening to Christian radio and Christian podcasts guarantees nothing when it comes to how we treat one another, especially behind closed doors in the family.

If you are abusive to your spouse, family, and abusive in other relationships (at work and in friendship, out in public) will you be teachable? Will you hear God say: confess this to Me as sin, seek the counsel you need to learn how to handle your anger and rage properly, and to change your behavior towards others? My prayer is that abusive people will meet us here and God can use this ministry to forever change their (your) life.

If you are in an abusive marriage, I want to encourage you to seek counseling. Start with your church. If the church is unable to provide adequate counsel, seek out a local Christian counselor and ask that person's assistance. Will you have to pay for it? Likely yes, although perhaps not initially or on a scale that you can afford. Negotiate the fee if you must, but never give up finding a wise Christian who knows and will apply the Bible, who asks great questions, who listens to your answers and who believes you! Find a counselor who will chase down "both sides" to the story of your marriage, who will find out the truth, and guide you and your spouse through the abuse and safely out the other side.

Ultimately, your marriage is the responsibility of you and your spouse. Blaming the counselor (or me, for that matter) may well give your emotions some relief, but will not help you resolve your difficulty. OK. I hope you're with me. I am not saying any of this to somehow dodge answering our question. I am only saying this as something to keep in mind as we proceed.

Remember, you can write to me anytime about anything! mark@godisministry.org (that's Mark with a K) mark@godisministry.org. And God Is, PO Box 802, Winchester Massachusetts 01890. Or, contact me through my website godisministry.org. Just click the link marked *Contact*.

When you come back tomorrow I want to start by defining for you what I mean by abuse. What is abuse? I hope that you'll join me then and for the next several days. And now is a great time to invite someone to join you who you know is struggling under abuse. Or someone who is abusive! Tell them about *God Is*. We meet on this podcast and/or on this station at this same time every Monday through Friday.

I've saved a little bit of time now to remind you of two books I recommended last week. I still have some free copies if you would like one. They are: *Broken Vows* by John Greco or *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers* by Jim Newheiser. Do you remember this offer? Just write to me and ask for one of them. I will be happy to send it to you. Please remember to include your mailing address, written clearly, in your email or letter.

Broken Vows deals with the painful reality of divorce. John, the author, is himself divorced. It's well written, and he understands and applies the Bible wisely. And then *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers* does just what the title says. So, write to me for one.

Join me tomorrow for God Is!

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