

*Genesis 2:18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

*<sup>19</sup> Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.*

*But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

*<sup>23</sup> The man said,  
"This is now bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called 'woman,'  
for she was taken out of man."*

*<sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

### **SOME THINGS ARE MEANT TO LAST FOREVER**

No one appreciates a cane... until you have difficulty walking. But when you're sitting in a chair, and you are afraid to cross the kitchen to get a glass of water because you might fall, you suddenly look at a cane as a very good thing. Without it, freedom vanishes and dangers multiply.

A Bible proverb says this, "*To the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet*" (Proverbs 27:7). If you are hungry enough, you will eat anything that even resembles food. Even if in normal circumstances you would never touch it.

No one likes to take medicine. But when medicine is the difference between the terrors of repeated heart attacks or seizures or diabetic comas, a person is ever so thankful for that medicine.

### **I. Marriage Blessings**

Well, Adam in Genesis 2 was that lame man without a cane, that hungry man without food, that sick man without medicine. In a world—a beautiful brand new world just created by God (still had the new car smell in it)—in a world occupied by thousands of species of birds and animals, Adam was alone. How deeply he felt his loneliness, I do not know. But God made sure he felt it. God brought to Adam all the wild animals and birds and Adam observed them and named them. But he couldn't talk with them, he couldn't work together with them, he couldn't sing or dance with them, he couldn't watch a football game with them. Adam was alone.

God looked and said, "*It is not good for the man to be alone.*" This wasn't divine oversight, like the guys at the car factory who forget to tighten a lugnut on the back passenger-side wheel. For a few hours on that sixth day of creation God *wanted* Adam to feel incomplete, to know it by experience. After designing a perfect world, God allowed one little bit of imperfection to exist for a blink of an eye, so that when God gave Adam the best thing he would ever have, he would appreciate her as the best thing in all of creation.

Now what do you think God had in mind when he created Eve? The LORD God said, "*I will make*

***a helper suitable for him.***” And the ladies out there start thinking, “Yep, it all started pretty early. God made a ‘helper’ for man. Sounds like another word for ‘work’ to me.” Well, maybe it was and maybe it wasn’t.

You know, the Hebrew language has a word for slaves and servants – and this one isn’t it. This word “helper” was not used of slaves, but of God. Yes, most often in the Bible, this word “helper” refers to God. *“Blessed are you, O Israel!... The LORD is your shield and your helper.”* (Dt. 33:29). That gives us a more balanced view of how Eve was Adam’s helper. He needed the help and she was what he needed. It wasn’t slave labor, or even an employee. It was help that a friend can give.

Likewise, when God said, ***“a helper suitable for him”*** we should really think about what that means. Now how many of you like English grammar? Probably about three of you. But grammar is kind of neat right here. “Suitable for” is actually a preposition and it isn’t quite like the English word here. When you hear the word “helper suitable for him” it kind of sounds like woman’s purpose is to serve man. But the Hebrew preposition isn’t quite like that.

It is kind of like this. [I am holding up the back of my two hands to the congregation.] These two hands, are they shaped the same? You might say, “Yes.” But if they are shaped the same, when I place one in front of the other hand, why don’t the two shapes match up? It because they aren’t the same shape. They are actually mirror images. And that is a good thing, because if my right hand and left hand were shaped exactly the same, if they were not mirror images, I would have a lot of difficulty doing a lot of things. I couldn’t fold my hands. I couldn’t grab the handles of a wheel-barrow. Right handed people would be able to write and left-handed people would have great difficulty – or vice versa. But because God made my hands as mirror images – the same, yet different – it works perfectly!

That is man and woman – the same and yet different. That is that helper “corresponding to each other.” Remember that this was written centuries ago in a much more male-centered, world. But even then, God had said that he had not made woman as a servant to man, he had not made her inferior to man, but “as a helper (and remember what that word means) a helper suitable to him.” Yes, man was placed as the head, the leader of the pair. But neither was the superior or inferior, in value or even abilities. Different, but equal. Let all men who think themselves superior to women, and all women who think men ridiculous, let all of them remember that. That’s what it says when God resolves, ***“I will make a helper suitable for him.”***

God’s creation of the world had been a crescendo. Have you ever visited a really big waterfall? We recently visited Cumberland Falls when the river was at flood stage. As we parked the car a quarter mile up-stream, we could hear the rumble of the falls. Every step the rumble became a tiny bit louder. Soon it is not just a sound, but we could feel the ground trembling with the tens of thousands of gallons a second pouring over the falls. As the noise and tremors increased, I could feel the excitement rising with every step. Walking to the brink was awesome, and even more as we walked around the walkway to the bottom of the falls. It isn’t just sight and sound, like looking at a two-dimensional device with a 6” screen, it is the shaking of the earth beneath the feet, the smell of the mist, the feel of water droplets settling on your skin, the 360° view. Like a good story, all of these sensations had grown step by step to its climax.

Creation was like that. God created amazing things in the six days of creation. More or less, he started with the most basic and moved to the more complex. First was light, then land and sea, then the plants, then animals of all variety, and finally Adam, and then Eve. But that wasn’t the last thing God created. Then what was the last thing God created? ***“Then the LORD God... brought her to the man.”*** The last thing God created wasn’t a thing. It was a relationship. Isn’t that beautiful? The crowning moment of God’s creation was when he established, instituted, marriage.

Do you know women who cry at every wedding? I do. As a boy child, I always wondered at weddings what tragedy was unfolding before me that women were crying. But you know, there is one

man who just about always cries at a wedding. That man is the father of the bride. Many a father of the bride has had words he wanted to speak to his soon-to-be son-in-law as he handed his daughter's hand to that young man, but he couldn't say them. He was afraid that a word would breach the dam of emotion and he would be reduced to a puddle of tears. Think of God, at the apex of creation, the father of the bride handing off Eve to Adam.

My grandfather had a sign on his desk in his study. (You need to know that he had been a gradeschool principal for over 20 years.) In my youth I saw that sign for many years before I understood it. The sign said, "Yes, God made Adam before Eve, but then you always write the rough draft before printing the final copy." Our God was the father of the bride, Eve. And like every father of the bride, his utmost concern was that his daughter be well taken care of.

And Adam—the loneliness he had felt when by himself, was filled. And they were without sin. God gifted those two with a perfect marriage.

## II. Marriage Rules

Take all the wise cracks about nagging wives and lazy husbands, forget all the misery suffered in millions of marriages, and realize that it is because God's children don't listen to their Father's direction and advice. It is not the Father's fault. The problem with marriage is not marriage, but the people. We realize that we live in a fallen world, and so we will never enjoy the perfect marriage that Adam and Eve briefly enjoyed. But how can we come closest to enjoying it? What are the rules of marriage? That is a big topic.

Here, briefly, we must deal with a question that never was even asked in the past. First of all, a Christian marriage is only of a heterosexual couple, man and woman. There is lots of room here for outrage and anger and Bible passages. But I am not going there. To the Christian who takes his Bible seriously, this is so obvious that I will only make this comment. It was "*male and female*" (Genesis 1:27) that God created them and united them. Likewise, in our Gospel reading, Jesus in defining marriage, spoke of "*male and female*" (Mark 10:6).

But in the recent debate over homosexual marriage, I have heard a very insightful point from the other side. Some have said this: "You Christians divorce like everyone else, you live together like everyone else. You break all the Bible's other rules about marriage. It's just on the this issue of homosexual marriages that you have a problem." Indeed, if that is the way we live—and in many parts of "Christendom" it is—then truly, to object to homosexual marriage is hypocrisy.

The Bible clearly forbids living together without marriage. The Bible clearly forbids divorce, except when the other party has effectively carried out a divorce in action. The Bible forbids these things, but many Christians seem okay with them—but not with homosexual marriage. If that is our attitude, then we are hypocrites.

God has designed and declared marriage to be an unconditional life-long commitment to each other. Secondly, God gave the blessings of marriage: sexuality and children, to be within the brackets of marriage. It's not just a heterosexual / homosexual issue. "People do not have the right to set their own standards for marriage, to determine their own rules for terminating it, or to devise alternate lifestyles to replace it." (*Genesis*, Jeske, 42, 1991)

Let noone be offended by anything I have said. Let noone offer excuses. I am telling you what God says. And if there is something in the past or the present of your life that needs to be addressed, then know this: According to John 8, there was an adulterous woman who was brought to Jesus. In regard to marriage, she had been thumbing her nose at God's will. When she was brought to Jesus, Jesus looked into her heart and then said this: "*I do not condemn you... Go now and leave your life of sin*" (John 8:11).

Breaking God's will in regard to marriage is a serious sin. And it has serious results. Often the

results extend through generations and affect many people. But whoever looks at their sins and finds that they have sinned against this greatest gift of God, even then God forgives. In the name of his Son, every sin is forgiven.

Now here is the other part: When we feel that forgiveness, we realize that we no longer want to live in the shadows, to make excuses, or to hope that people don't recognize what is going on. In the joy of forgiveness, we ask God, "Now, dear God, how can I make this right? How can I honor you and this gift you have given to us?" And such people go and find ways to make things right. For one it might be to step out of a relationship. For another it might be to immediately make the relationship official and permanent. But this greatest gift that God gave to us people, let us honor it. Let us make it a source of blessing to us and to all around us.

And finally, this reminds us of how important it is for us to guide our children and grandchildren in God's way. May we not be afraid to talk to them about how they can benefit from this greatest blessing of God in the week of creation.

Marriage: Some things are meant to last forever. Amen.