

Foundation Blocks For Marriage

Introduction. Four-year-old Suzie was told the story at her preschool about *Snow White*, and she could not wait to get home and tell her mother all about it. When she was recounting the story, she said, "Momma, then Prince Charming kissed Snow White, and do you know what happened next?" Her mother looked at her and said, "They lived happily ever after?" Suzie frowned and said, "No, they got married." Although marriages were made in heaven, they must be worked out here on earth. In the next several lessons, we are going to look into the Bible and discuss how to cultivate and develop your marriage. Somebody once accurately said that most marriages start out as ideal, and then they turn into an ordeal, and before long both of them want a new deal!

We have all ages and kinds of people here with all kinds of needs. We have some people here who are newlyweds and others who have already passed their golden wedding anniversary. We have some who are single and never want to get married. We have others who are single and are dying to get married. We have some right now who are in marriages that are great and love how everything is going. However, others may be in marriages that are having difficulties. Whatever your situation is, this series will help you as we see God's plan for marriage.

There are three goals we need to accomplish in this series. First, we need to comfort. If your marriage is having difficulties, this series will encourage you. Second, we need to convince. Too many people today have an incredibly negative attitude toward marriage because they have looked at the generation ahead and said, "It just cannot be done." I am here to tell you it can! If you are contemplating marriage or are in a troubled marriage now, your marriage can be better than you have ever imagined. Third, we need to challenge. There may be sinful attitudes which are causing problems in your marriage that need to be corrected.

In Genesis 2, God created Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden. That garden was a perfect environment. He had a perfect place to live, he had the perfect purpose to live for, and he had a perfect plan for protection. He had it all! He had no toils, no cares, no real needs, no concerns, no pain, and yet God looked at Adam and said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Man's oldest problem is loneliness. It is not wrong to be single (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). If you are single, you can devote more time to the Lord's work. Paul and Jesus were both single. God never condemned being single, but He makes it clear from the beginning that He never intended for anybody to be lonely. One of the basic purposes of marriage is the sense of partnership that prevents loneliness.

God had created the whole animal kingdom and he let Adam name all of the animals (Genesis 2:20). If you are not careful, you will read that passage and say, "Eve was just an afterthought!" God created all the heavens and the earth and said, "Wait a minute! I may have left something out." No, God was gradually, graphically letting Adam realize there were two of everything except him. Something was missing. So in Genesis 2:21, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he took a rib from Adam's side and made Eve. We have read the story so many times that maybe we miss the strength of Adam's reaction. He has been alone for who knows how long. He has never seen a woman. All of a sudden, Adam goes to sleep and when he wakes up, this absolutely beautiful and perfect woman was in front of him. He was excited! Every marriage begins that way, but the excitement and anticipation can easily fade.

Genesis 2:24-25 are two of the landmark verses in the Bible and they are God's basic blueprint for marriage. They lay the foundation and show how a marriage is supposed to be built. You look at any good marriage, and these foundation blocks will be in place. God is the architect of great marriages. Marriage was His idea, and any great marriage must follow His plan.

I. **Severance**

- A. Genesis 2:24 says that a man will "leave his father and his mother." The Greek word chosen in the quotes of Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31 means "to cause a particular relationship to cease -- 'to leave, to no longer relate to.'" The writers avoided an expression which would suggest abandoning or deserting. It is the limitation of a particular relationship which is involved.
- B. A new home begins when a man and a woman separate themselves from their respective homes. You cut the emotional, psychological, and the financial umbilical cord. Just like a brand new baby cannot live if the cord is not cut from the mother, a marriage cannot make it if you do not cut the psychological umbilical cord from the parent.
- C. Severance is not necessarily geographical. You can live right next door to your parents, you can see them everyday, and you can still be, though it is fairly difficult, psychologically independent of them. On the other hand, you can live 2,000 miles away, and you can still be psychologically, financially, and emotionally dependent upon your parents. Unconsciously, the mate will be in competition with the parents. Therefore, the greater the link between a husband or wife and his or her parents, the greater the strain there is going to be on their marriage.
- D. The greatest wedding gift parents can give their children is to release them. Moms and dads need to verbally tell your children, "I am

severing the ties. I love you, I will always support you, but you are in your own home now. You are not part of this one." The action is painful, but the lack of severance has kept many couples from cultivating a deep relationship with their spouse.

II. **Permanence**

- A. Genesis 2:24 says a man will leave his parents and cleave or be united with his wife. The Hebrew word literally means "to glue" or "stick together" (Deuteronomy 28:60; Ruth 1:14; 1 Samuel 31:2; 2 Kings 18:6; Jeremiah 13:11). The idea is a bond that will become stronger than the two individual pieces you stick together. That is exactly what marriage is supposed to be.
 - 1. If you were to glue two pieces of construction paper together and after it dries, try to pull it apart, both pieces of paper will tear. That is precisely what happens in separation and divorce: both sides tear.
 - 2. When you have lived with somebody and then separate, it tears both people. There is always a little bit of you left behind, and a little bit of them left behind. To cleave is an active commitment, and you have to mean it when you say, "I do." The simple problem with a lot of marriages is that people who say, "I do," do not really want to cleave to their mate. God says good marriages are not a matter of chance; they are a matter of choice. They are the result of commitment, not convenience.
- B. Before couples get married, they need to make two commitments.
 - 1. First, they must agree that they will never get a divorce (cf. Matthew 19:9-12). We need to be encouraging marriage and discouraging divorce. It saddens me that several brethren are advocating that a man and woman may divorce for a reason other than fornication, and advocating that one may put away another in their mind after a divorce for a cause other than fornication has occurred, thereby discouraging marriage and encouraging divorce by removing its stigma among brethren.
 - 2. Second, they must agree that they will do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to make their marriage work. You do not need a preacher or a ceremony; whether your marriage is good, bad, or somewhere in between, husbands and wives need to re-declare your permanent commitment to each other.
- C. Winston Churchill, as London was being bombed and voices were telling him to surrender, stood up and said, "Wars are not won by evacuation." On one level, this is a poor analogy because marriage should never be like war. But Churchill was right, you do not win by

giving up. You do not succeed by quitting. Marriages succeed through permanence (Song of Solomon 8:6-7).

III. **Unity**

- A. Genesis 2:24 says that the two will become "one flesh." When we read these words, we usually think of the sexual union, but God had a lot more in mind. Becoming one flesh is a process, it is not an instant fact. Two people with different backgrounds, personalities, ideas, habits, and interests do not leave a wedding ceremony with perfect unity; but, that is where the process begins. With patience, wisdom, love, and time, their lives become more unified as they go along.
- B. Do not misunderstand -- unity is not uniformity. Two people in a marriage do not have to have the same personality. In fact, they tend to complement one another. And sometimes, the ones that get along the least are the ones who are exactly alike. But there needs to be unity in common purpose. Each party must be willing to give, share, listen, and forgive.
- C. The true point of a passage like 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, using the sexual relationship as an example, is total unselfishness (Romans 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:24; cf. Haggai 1:4, 9-10). One of the best reasons why you need to marry a Christian is because they have humbly accepted the fact that they need changing. Being a new creature means laying aside your desires and taking up the cause of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). That fundamental attitude in both spouses will produce unity in a marriage.

IV. **Intimacy**

- A. Genesis 2:25 says that they felt no shame. It is no accident that this passage is structured this way. Intimacy comes as a result of the other three and it completes the foundation. Intimacy, and not necessarily physical, is possible, when and only when, severance, permanence, and unity are in place.
 - 1. It is really hard to imagine the beauty that existed in Eden. Adam and Eve were there before the fall in absolute innocence. They had no hang-ups, inhibitions, or fears; they were both naked and they were not ashamed, there was just total transparency.
 - 2. The absence of sin allowed that kind of elation. But it is compelling that when sin entered their lives, they began to fashion makeshift clothing. The direct consequence of sin was that they felt fear and self-consciousness (Genesis 3:10).
- B. Each and every one of us ultimately long for intimacy, but today our world is so polluted and diseased by sin that we wrestle to relate to

other people openly. There are frankly very few settings and very few people with whom we are open.

1. There is only one person for whom I would sever all ties, confirm my permanence, strive daily to be united, and be absolutely intimate, free to express and to reveal my whole self and to bear my soul (1 Samuel 18:1; 20:4; Ephesians 5:28-29).
2. Far too many couples find intimacy a frustrating struggle, mixed with selfishness, resentment, dissatisfaction, and embarrassment. The reason is the same as it was in the Garden of Eden: sin has destroyed the foundation that lets a husband and wife be truly intimate.
3. We will develop this further in another lesson, but couples whose needs are truly met because of a deep sense of intimacy will not have to look around for others to meet their needs.

Conclusion. I like what one author says with regard to marriage or anything else: "The grass is not greener on the other side of the fence, and the grass is not greener on my side of the fence. The grass is always greener where you water." Is that not true? Every marriage needs cultivation. Someone once said that marriage is not so much finding the right person as it is being the right person. When you and I mature in Christ, we really set the standard by which we can enter into a relationship, and put all these foundation blocks in place.