

A Brief Look  
At  
Building a Foundational Marriage

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## **INTRODUCTION**

I like being married. It is one of the many joys that have become a part of my life. My wife Kathie and I have been married for almost 12 years. Now I know that doesn't seem like a long time to a lot of people, but in this day and age of quickie divorces, I count my blessings. My parents, for example, were married for 64 years. Marriage is a wonderful and a great institution.

But as great an institution as it is, a marriage needs to be built on a solid foundation. Jesus taught us about foundations. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus teaches us how a house that is built on sand will fall whereas a house that is built on a rock will stand. Why? Because that house has a solid foundation. And that is exactly what a marriage needs – a solid foundation.

Now don't get me wrong. Every marriage is going to have its ups and downs. Every couple will experience trials and tribulations. Even in my own marriage, Kathie and I have gone through many hardships. But it stays strong because it is built on a solid foundation.

It's said that there are basically three stages in a marriage.

Stage #1 is the Ideal. That's when everyone is excited, when love is grand, and "our marriage is going to be different!"

But then along comes stage #2. The Ideal becomes an Ordeal. This is when we realize, much to our dismay, that our Prince Charming has warts, and that our Sleeping Beauty is not nearly so lovely once she wakes up.

Then, far too often, along comes stage #3. And that's when either one of the spouses begins wishing for a New Deal. And this stage is happening more and more often than it should.

A successful marriage is going to have three individuals involved in it: you, your spouse and God. It forms a triangle with God at the top. As each of you move closer to God, you move closer to each other.

Now I know there are a lot of problems that can be in a marriage – but I'm not convinced that we should ditch the institution of marriage; rather, I believe we ought to return to God's original blueprint to find out how a marriage should be. You see, you cannot make proper use

of anything until you understand what it is made for. That's true about anything.

Take a pen for example. It's great for the purpose for which it was made. You can write a letter with it; you could write out a check with it; pretty much anything that deals with writing you can do with a pen. But if I try to use that pen as a screwdriver – not only will it not work, but I will essentially ruin the pen for the purpose for which it was made. The same goes with marriage. We've practically ruined the institution of marriage because we've tried to make it into what it is not!

It's time that we open up God's glove compartment and read the Owner's Manual.

In Genesis 2, I want to focus on one simple verse – verse 24.

*"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."*

This is a very important verse. It is so important that Jesus repeats it in Matthew 19:5-6 and then Paul reiterates it twice more (1 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 5:31).

I would like to suggest that this one verse is the foundational verse for a marriage. In fact, from this one verse we will learn that marriage is designed by God to operate according to three Fundamental Priorities.

A glamorous wedding does not guarantee a great marriage. Take Kim Kardashian for example. She had a very glamorous and a very public wedding; everyone that was everyone was there. It was all over TV and all over the news. But less than six months later, it was all down the drain. But having a commitment to these Biblical principles that are found in this one verse will ensure a sure thing.

## To Leave

If your marriage is going to be what it ought to be there has to be a leaving!

*"Therefore shall a man **leave** his father and his mother."*

The original Hebrew word for leave is 'azab' → to abandon, to forsake, to leave behind, to neglect.

Now I'm not saying that we should neglect our parents. Remember that we should always interpret Scripture with Scripture, and Scripture tells us that we need to honor our parents. So you see that 'azab' here is an exaggerated statement that is used in order to remind us that when you establish your new home, you are to loosen your dependency on mom and dad. What does this mean? It means that we need to sever the emotional umbilical cord. Whether it's an emotional dependency, a financial dependency, or even a physical dependency – we are to "leave" them.

Now parents, you need to realize that your child was given to you – but only for a short time. Your child was given to you for a limited period of training. You know that by the time your child is 12 years old, 2/3 of your time is gone! And by the time your child is making decisions about dating and mating, your job is, for all practical purposes, essentially over.

And when your child comes to you and says, "Mom, Dad – this is the person that God wants me to marry....," when that decision has been made, when your counsel has been given and the wedding march begins to play – that's when you are to give your child back to the safe-keeping of God. That's when you let go.

The principle of leaving is this....

NOTHING, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ON EARTH,  
IS TO TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MATE.

And when it does, you are in clear violation of the first fundamental priority of marriage.

That leads us to the second principle.....

## To Cleave

If your marriage is going to be what it ought to be, then there also has to be a cleaving.

*"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** unto his wife; ..."*

Now, let's make something absolutely clear. This cleaving has nothing to do with a meat cleaver. It has nothing to do with slicing and dicing. The word "cleave" comes from the Hebrew word *'dabaq'* meaning "to cling to or to stick to; to keep close to or to join to something." It refers to the inseparable relationship that exists between a man and a woman in a marriage as God intended it to be.

This same word is used in 2 Kings 5:27 to describe leprosy which clings to the body. It's also used in Job 19:20 in describing bones that cling to the skin and flesh. In Ezekiel 29:4 it's used to describe scales clinging to a fish. Now, scales cling to a fish and bones cling to a body and leprosy clings to skin, because they are joined together as one. They are merely different parts of the same thing!

And that's the point. God, when He created the marriage institution, said that THIS IS FOR LIFE! The marital bond is a permanent, lasting, never-to-be-severed bond!

It doesn't matter if you got married in a beautiful church, or in a park, or by the justice of the peace; when you stood there and you took your vows, and you said, "I take you to be my wedded wife (or husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part," you were making a covenant with the Lord. A vow to God! A vow of permanence!

This word 'cleave' is a very powerful word. It joins together two things. In Deuteronomy, we can see several examples of how this word is used in speaking of cleaving to the living God.

*"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name" (Deuteronomy 10:20).*

*"...to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him" (Deuteronomy 11:22).*

*"Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him" (Deuteronomy 13:4).*

*"That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days ..." (Deuteronomy 30:20).*

In the eyes of God, cleaving means a wholehearted commitment; not only in the spirit, but also in the intellectual, emotional and the physical.

And the last principle is ...

## To Weave

If your marriage is going to be all that it's suppose to be, there has to be some weaving involved.

*"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and **they shall be one flesh.**"*

It says "...they shall be one flesh." In other words, the husband and wife weave themselves into each other's lives.

Weaving into each other's lives is a process; it's not an instantaneous event. This "one flesh" doesn't happen when the preacher says, "I now pronounce you husband and wife." It doesn't happen when you sign the legal documents. It doesn't happen at the reception. It doesn't happen in the hotel room ten miles down the road. It's a life-long process! And this weaving is built upon the leaving and the cleaving.

A survey once said that 84% of women feel they don't have an intimacy, or an oneness, in their marriages. A large majority of female divorcees say their married years were the loneliest of their lives.

God has called us men to love our wives in the way that Christ loves the church. Ephesians 6:25, *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."*

God's plan for marriage is for a man and a woman to become one. That's much more than sharing a place to live or the food or the bed or a checking account - its two people giving themselves over to each other; weaving their lives together and forming a companionship. Stop using marriage as a screwdriver and begin to use it for its designed purpose!

There are certain necessary elements that are needed in order to weave two lives together. . .

- **A Vow:** Only when a covenant vow is made will you be willing to blend your heart with your spouse's, forming, in every sense of the word, a team.
- **Time:** You will need to make room in your life for your mate. Only then will your lives weave together.

- **Hard Work:** Marriage will be the hardest task that you will ever attempt.
- **Forgiveness:** There will be times when you will be hurt, disappointed and offended by your mate, and the only way you can recover is to commit now to granting forgiveness. There are 12 words that will keep a marriage together: "I was wrong, I am sorry, please forgive me, I love you." These words should be spoken often in a marriage.
- **Avoid Criticism:** You don't need to be a big football fan to know that you don't tackle the guy who is wearing the same color uniform. Your spouse is your teammate, so go easy on the criticism.
- **Prayer:** Pray with and for each other.
- **Ministry:** Have a ministry where you are serving together
- **Fun:** Laugh. Do things that are fun. Enjoy life.

Remember, your marriage will never be perfect. Adam and Eve, God's original and perfect humans, messed things up. The best of marriages will have breakdowns, doubts, disillusionments, anger, distress and conflicts. But that doesn't mean it won't work. Remember, you are two imperfect persons living in an imperfect world. Of course there will be difficulties. But when troubles do occur, will you focus on your assets or your liabilities; the problem or the potential?



## **To Have and To Hold**

Marriage is not necessarily finding the right mate as it is in **being** the right mate. So you think you married a dud? Try looking in the mirror. Truth is you probably married over your head; and even if you did marry the wrong person, you can always treat him or her as if it were the right person and make the union work.

A letter was written to dear Abby several years ago. It read, "Dear Abby, I'm single; forty years old; and I'd like to meet a man about the same age with no bad habits." Abby's reply was, "So would I." It is more important to be the right person than it is to marry the right kind of person.

So God's manual on marriage is clear.

- 1) The husband and wife are to LEAVE their parents and form a new relationship that will take first priority.
- 2) The husband and wife are to CLEAVE and form a permanent relationship by cementing themselves together in the marriage.
- 3) The husband and wife are to WEAVE their lives together as they give themselves to each other in developing an oneness with each other.

May God help each of us to follow His instructions for a wonderful marriage.