

### **Courtship & Marriage article 3**

Dear Young People,

In my last mailing on the subject of courtship and marriage, I gave the background in Genesis 1 & 2 of the institution of marriage. In this installment, I am going to discuss the institution of marriage itself as it took place in the beginning. You will remember that we are still discussing Chapter 1 in *Leaving Father and Mother*.

You may wonder why I discuss marriage before courtship, when in life courtship comes before marriage. The answer is that it is necessary to understand marriage first, because marriage will define what courtship really is. The nature of courtship is determined by the nature of marriage. Biblical marriage determines Biblical courtship.

When God created Eve out of a rib that He took from Adam, God “brought her unto man.” That expression means that God brought her to Adam as one who would satisfy Adam’s lack and fill the void in his life when he came to realize that he, among all the animals and birds, had no help who was meet or appropriate for him. It was God’s act of marrying Adam and Eve. It was the first wedding, the first marriage in history. The birds and the animals were the witnesses.

It was also a unique institution that belonged to man alone, for no such act of God accompanied the mating of the animals and birds. It was unique to man because man is the highest of all God’s creatures, and the blessing of marriage was God’s blessing only upon man.

Adam understood all this very well. His response to God’s pronouncement of Adam and Eve as man and wife was, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.”

Adam’s words that Eve was “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” immediately remind us of what Paul said in Ephesians 5 concerning the figure in marriage of the relation between Christ and His church: “For we are members of his [Christ’s] body, of his flesh and of his bones” (verse 30). So Eve was Adam’s flesh and Adam’s bones.

Of course, when God married Adam and Eve they were not aware of the fact that their marriage was a picture of Christ and His church. They could not be aware of this, because they did not know anything about Christ; and they did not know anything about Christ because they had not fallen into sin and did not yet need Christ to save from sin.

Nevertheless, God already was looking ahead and had planned for what was to come in the future. He saw man’s fall before man fell; He saw Christ; and He saw Christ and His church as one flesh. He instituted marriage to be a picture of that.

Immediately after the fall God did tell Adam and Eve about Christ, when He promised the sin-stricken couple One who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). But that gospel could come only after the fall.

Verses 23 & 24 of Genesis 2 (look them up in your Bibles) are the conclusions of this first marriage ceremony. These conclusions were drawn up by Moses, who is the author of Genesis (as well as of the next four books), but who wrote them because God told him what had happened in Paradise. How else could Moses have known? This is why Scripture is infallibly inspired, for God is really the Author.

God's conclusions are 1) that because of the institution of marriage, a man leaves his own parents and family to marry someone else and start a new family. 2) This man will "cleave to" his wife. The Hebrew word really means, "to be glued to:" a man is glued to his wife. That is, he and his wife cannot be separated from each other. They are glued so tightly that separation is impossible. That glue is stronger than any super-glue, any magic glue, any glue that is superior in strength. It is a glue that welds together so that two pieces once separate, is now part of each other and forms one single piece. That is why the glue that holds husband and wife together is a glue that makes husband and wife "one flesh".

Although we will have to discuss this idea in the future, it should be noted here already that this is the institution of marriage to which Jesus appeals when He is debating with the scribes and Pharisees over the question of divorce: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6).

There is no power on earth or in heaven that can break apart two who are one flesh. It is like cutting a person in half – and, of course, if you do that, both halves die. Only death can break the marriage bond. You may ask: If man and wife are glued together so that they truly become one, why can death separate them? The answer is that death can break the marriage bond, because marriage is an earthly institution and relationship, and when death comes, it takes both man and woman out of this earthly creation.

I have had many occasions to talk with some man or woman who has lost a wife or husband through death. These people have said to me, "It seems as if half of me is gone. I am now only half a person." That was not literally true, of course, but so real is this "one flesh" aspect of marriage that even death, which alone can break the marriage bond, seems like cutting a person in half.

The "one flesh" of which Genesis 2 speaks is a bond that unites two people in an unbreakable relationship. While that bond is a bond of life, of love and of physical union, it comes to expression especially in the bringing forth of children, for a child is a part of both husband and wife. This is why divorce and remarriage create confusion and chaos in families. Husband and/or wife usually divorce because one of the two is unfaithful. And so, personal lust is placed ahead of the welfare of children. Children suffer the most in a divorce. As children are growing up, their one sense of security is that they are cared for and protected by a mother and father both of whom love each other and love their children. To see father and mother fight, hate each other, scream at each other, and finally leave each other shakes a child to the foundations of his soul. All his sense of security is gone. He is adrift on an unknown sea. And while a child

may seem to adjust to it and return to a normal life, a mark is left on its soul that nothing can erase.

A recent book entitled "*Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*", is interesting on this question. The author is herself an unbeliever and she comes from a home in which her parents were divorced. The trauma of divorce was so great for her that she made a lengthy study of children of divorced parents. After interviewing many, many children of divorced parents, she discovered that not one child had endured such an event in their lives without some serious emotional and psychological damage. And she is an unbeliever!

And so marriage was instituted by God as a special gift to men. And that special gift to man is a life-long relationship of love.

With love in our Lord Jesus,

Prof Hanko