

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹Now 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. ²⁰So 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. ²¹So 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. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The 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.”

²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (NIV84)

Theme: God instituted marriage for his creation

1. Two become one
2. Man and woman are united for life.

It is safe to say that God’s gift of marriage is under attack. More and more people are living with each other outside of marriage. The number of divorces each year in the U.S. is in the millions. A recent survey said that 39% of Americans believe marriage is obsolete. People often say marriage is old fashioned—an old way of life stemming from an ancient society. Those who do get married often don’t fulfill their God-given roles and quite frequently they fail to show love their spouses. Many in the world see marriage as a burden instead of a blessing.

But today we see that God instituted marriage for the benefit of his creation. In marriage two become one and they are united for life.

It was Friday, the sixth day of the world. God had already made all the animals and a man, Adam. But he had yet to make woman. And God knew that it was not good for man to be alone. So he paraded all

the animals in front of Adam. And Adam then realized that there was no one compatible for him. Then God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. And he opened up Adam’s side and took one of his ribs. And from that rib he created a woman. Woman—perfectly created and compatible to man. Created as a compatible helper for man. God brought her to Adam, who took her as his wife. And then we learn what marriage is: **A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.** Two people, became one. That is what Jesus emphasized in our gospel when he talked about God instituting marriage. He said, **so they are no longer two, but one.** Sure they are still individuals and must believe on their own for eternal life. But they are no longer merely individuals. They are together. The decisions they make no longer only affect themselves, but also their spouses. They are united by God. And they become one flesh. Part of being one in flesh includes a special gift God reserves for marriage. It is to be shared only between a husband and a wife. Husband express their union together, together. It’s something that God expects and blesses. In chapter one of the book of Genesis God told them to **be fruitful and increase in number.** The family unit is one that God had in mind when he instituted marriage. A husband and wife—a father and mother raising their sons and daughters in the Lord.

Sadly, It’s now normal for people to sleep together and have children outside of marriage. It is actually rare to find a person who obeys God’s commands and waits until they are married. Virgins are mocked and ridiculed. They are often looked down upon the world, who sees them as stuck up and having a “holier-than-thou” attitude. Hollywood glamourizes sexual immorality. It is all over movies, magazines, tv, and so on. It doesn’t really surprise us that one-night stands, hook-ups, friends with benefits are all common. It’s pushed upon people so much that it has become the norm. It’s almost expected of them—and you can expect that most people are committing this sin. The world considers you weird if you don’t. And it’s not just the young and immature who commit this sin—it’s all the across the board.

a. There are over 7.5 million couples in America that are currently living together outside of marriage. And over 60% of

couples who are currently married lived together at one time before they got married. The numbers are staggering. But not all that surprising. I'm sure you know at least a few people who are living in sin right now. You know people who are satisfying their carnal cravings instead of obeying the Lord.

And it doesn't matter that "everyone's doing it." It's still a sin. God makes that clear in his Word. He says in the letter to the Hebrews, **Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.** God will judge them. He will condemn them. Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians about those who those who commit this sin: **Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders...will inherit the kingdom of God.**

In John chapter 8 a group of Jews dragged an adulterous women out of town in order to stone her to death. Jesus calmed down the mob by asking if any of them were without sin. Obviously, none of them could make such a claim. And they all left. Then Jesus turned the women, who was repentant. And told her that he didn't condemn her. He says the same to us who are repentant. Even though we are guilty of sin, Christ does not hold that sin against us. For he forgave our wickedness. And washed our sins in his own blood. Our sins have been removed through the blood that Christ shed on the cross and they will never return to us and haunt us.

Jesus also told the woman, **Go and leave your life of sin.** He says the same to us. Leave your life of sin. It's something we willingly do because of God's grace. God has freely forgiven us, so we strive to obey his will. And we show our repentance by our deeds.

The unmarried aren't the only ones who sin against God's gift of marriage. Many married couples do so as well.

Again, let's look at God's definition of marriage. **A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.** In order for a marriage to happen a man and a woman must agree to it. Marriage begins when both a man and a woman pledge unconditionally to one another. Consent makes a

marriage. A marriage happens when a man and a woman agree to be husband and wife. They do this when they make their vows. "In the presence of God and these witnesses, I take you to be my spouse, I promise to be faithful to you as long as we both shall live." This agreement and promise to be husband and wife makes is the essence of marriage. Both husband and wife leave behind their families to be joined together. The love they reserved for their families they now share with each other.

Consent makes the marriage, not love. Yet many people make love the basis of marriage. They have feelings for someone. They enjoy being around someone. They have grown together. They just know that this person is "the one." They have feelings for their significant other. They get some warm gooey feeling inside whenever they are around each other. "It's love" they say. "We're in love, so let's get married."

The problem with basing a marriage off of love, is that it often comes and goes. And what do many do when love grows cold? Well, you get a divorce, of course. In the minds of many, once love is gone the marriage has run it's course. But love rises and falls. It wavers and, at times, may go away. Those who base their marriage on love think that once love is gone, so is their marriage. They don't have feelings for their spouse anymore, the spark isn't there, they just aren't happy. "I just don't love you anymore" they say. But love is has never made a marriage—consent or agreement is. Love is something we strive for in a marriage—the pinnacle of marriage, but it does not make a marriage. Lack of love does not a marriage break—and is not grounds for divorce.

Yet many people will use lack of love as an excuse to get a divorce. And God hates that. He says so in the book of Malachi, **I hate divorce.** In our gospel Jesus is talking about God instituting marriage and concluded: **what God has joined together, let man not separate.** God joins a man to his wife as a life-long union—until one of the spouses dies. And since God decides when to end a life, God decides when to end a marriage. Sure, God does allow divorce in two cases—adultery and malicious desertion, but not as a means to end a marriage but as a way to declare that the marriage has already ended. If the promise to stay faithful to each other has already been broken—then and only then does God permit a divorce. So there is no such thing as

a no fault divorce—there is always sin involved somewhere. That is why God says, **I hate divorce.**

Love may not make a marriage, and lack of love is not grounds for a divorce. But that doesn't mean that love doesn't play a role in marriage. In our second lesson Paul tells husbands to love their wives. And the same stands for wives to their husbands. But love in the Bible is not some sort of gooey feeling or emotion. It's an action. **Love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast,** Paul says in 1 Corinthians. Notice that Paul doesn't say that love is that feeling you get in your stomach when you are around someone. Love is being nice to others and showing them kindness. As Christians we are to show this love to everyone. And there is no better way to do this than in marriage. For we are around someone 24/7—numerous times every day we have an opportunity to show love to our spouse.

And numerous times every day we fail to show love to our spouse. Being around someone for that long means that you are around a sinner for that long. We refuse to forgive and hold grudges. We push buttons. We bicker, argue, and fight. We look toward our own interests before that of our spouses. We don't love as we should. And there are times when some may even break the marriage covenant through the sins of adultery or malicious desertion. When we take a look at our married lives we must admit that we have much to confess of and repent. And we have much to strive for.

God tells man and woman to love each as Christ loved the Church. That is what a God pleasing marriage mimics. Christ loved the Church. And he proved that love in that he willingly came down from heaven to be born as a little baby. He lived on this earth for more than 30 years so that he could keep God's law perfectly for us. And yet he was put death on a cross. But on that cross he nailed all our sins upon himself. He became guilty of all the times we have sinned against his gift of marriage—not to mention all our other sins. He suffered through hell—what we deserved for our sins. He removed their guilt so we could be pure and innocent in the eyes of God. Then he rose from the dead and promises that all who believe in him will join us forever in heaven.

Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her. He made her holy. He cleansed us with his won blood. It is this love that motivates us to show love to our spouse. It is this love that leads us to follow his commands and desires for marriage. It is this love that assures us that we stand redeemed and forgiven. Marriage is not obsolete. It's a blessing that God gives to us so that we can show love to each other and remind each other of the forgiveness we all need and possess through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.