

**“God’s Definition Of Marriage”**  
**Ephesians 5:31**  
**Sermon Series: “Jesus And My Marriage”**

**Introduction:** Because God is the creator and designer of marriage, only He has the wisdom and the authority to set the pattern and define marriage (Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:1-10): What is the biblical, God-authored meaning of marriage?

**A Biblical Definition of Marriage: Leaving + Joining + Consummating=Marriage**

**1. There is a leaving.** The text says, “Therefore a man shall *leave* his father and mother.” Clinton Arnold has written, “This does not refer to disowning or dishonoring our parents, but to the fact that marriage is beginning a family of our own. The command for a man to leave” his father and mother is not a command to forsake them. It must be understood in terms of degree. Both spouses will relinquish their primary allegiance to each set of parents and transfer it to their mates. They remain obligated to honor their parents (6:2; Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16), care for them in their old age (1 Tim 5:3-4), and listen to their advice (Prov 23:22; 6:20), but their principal focus will now be on their spouses.” Implications include:

- A. Parents must switch from being CEO’s to consultants.
- B. A married couple must form their own identity. They should respectfully listen to their parents, but they must make their own decisions under God’s guidance. The husband, not one of the parents, is the head of the family according to God (Ephesians 5:23).
- C. It shows that marriage is a priority that takes precedence over every other human relationship and activity.
- D. A couple should not get married until both are ready to “cut the apron strings” and place one another first.
- E. A couple should not get married unless they are prepared to take care of themselves.

**2. There is a joining.**

That text says that a man shall...”be joined to his wife.” Some translations refer to it as “cleaving.” It means to “cling to someone in affection and loyalty” (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*). John MacArthur refers to it as being “stuck together” or “permanently superglued together.” The language refers to the making of a covenant that could not righteously be voided. This is what constitutes a marriage. A man and a woman leave their families of origin and are joined together into a new family unit by publicly making a covenant with one another and with God (Proverbs 2:17). Implications include:

- A. Marriage is a divine joining while divorce is a human tearing. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) because it tears apart what he glues together, and therefore, it hurts people.
- B. Marriage is an exclusive union. There cannot be more than two and have genuine marriage. This excludes polygamy, adultery, pornography, etc.

- C. Marriage is exclusively a union between a man and a woman. This is defined by God in Genesis 2 and affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19. Gender distinctions are real and important.
- D. We marry “for better or worse.” Our commitment is based on our covenant promise and not our circumstances.
- E. Make a commitment that divorce is not an option and that the only option is to work things out. Make a commitment to not even use the word “divorce” in a joking way.
- F. Marriage is always work and sometimes hard work. We can’t coast and live in the past, but we have to be actively joining our lives together as a team daily.
- G. Make a decision to never to go to bed mad at one another or without working things out.

**3. There is a consummating.** The text says, “And they shall become one flesh.” This refers generally to the two becoming one unit but more specifically to the sexual relationship. Sex is a good gift from God that becomes destructive when used in the wrong way, and the only God-given place to express it is in the marital relationship. C.S. Lewis wrote that the “Christian rule is either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.” This is based on the pattern given in these verses where a man and a woman leave their families and make a public commitment to one another and then consummate the relationship. There must be a marital covenant before there is sex because God’s pattern is one man for one woman for one lifetime. We are to only give our bodies after everything else has been given to one another. Sex is not casual, merely physical, or the expression of some animal urge. Instead, it is the physical means that God has ordained for expressing the loving, permanent commitment that two people make to one another in marriage. It physically expresses and symbolizes the joining of wills, minds, and emotions that takes place in the marriage ceremony. Casual, promiscuous sex cheapens the God-ordained ideal of this act being the most exciting, most intimate, and most special act that can happen between two people. Thus, it is also wrong for people to live together before marriage. Someone has said, “Sex in marriage is like fire in a fireplace. We need to keep it in the fireplace and stoke the fire as hot as we can.” God’s purposes for sex within marriage are:

- A. Picture of our spiritual unity (Genesis 2:24)
- B. Physical expression of intimacy (Genesis 2:25)
- C. Purity (Hebrews 13:4)
- D. Procreation (Genesis 1:26-31)
- E. Pleasure (Proverbs 5:15-23)
- F. Protection [from temptation] (1 Corinthians 7:1-9)

**(4) The end result of this is an intimate union (v. 32).** This is pictured in the union of Christ and the church in verse 32 and pictured in the union of a husband and wife in Genesis 2:25. Marriage lived out the right way produces incredible intimacy that is a blessing from God and honoring to God. In true intimacy, there is nothing between us, and we are genuinely joined together mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.