

A Helper Fit For Him

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Date: 23 February 2025

Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0 : 01] Please take your Bibles and let's open them up this morning to Genesis chapter 2. Our passage this morning is Genesis chapter 2 verses 18 through 25. And when you found it, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word.

Genesis chapter 2 verses 18 through 25 this morning. Then the Lord God said, And to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.

But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. And while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife.

[1 : 28] And they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Grass withers and the flower fades for the word of the Lord endures forever.

Father, we thank you for this word. And we pray now as we open it up and we seek you in it. God, would you give us clarity and understanding.

Would you open our ears and our hearts that we might hear and understand and love the truth this morning. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. Good. I wonder where do you turn to get your understanding and your definition of marriage.

Of course, for most of us as we grow up, kind of our first exposure to marriage, we get our first understanding from our parents, our mother, our father, whoever it is that's in our household raising us.

That's our first exposure to what marriage might be. But as we grow older, maybe we gain our understanding of what marriage is from political affiliation. Or for most people, I would venture to say most people, gain their understanding of what marriage is simply by looking out at the culture at large.

[2 : 39] What does culture deem to be good and appropriate and right? What's the acceptable norm all around us? This morning, as we come to Genesis chapter 2 and we see this foundational text on marriage, what I want us to see this morning is that Christians don't ultimately look to any of these things for their understanding of what marriage is.

Christians must root their understanding of marriage not in experience, not in preference, not in political affiliation, and not in culture, but in the unchanging word of God.

Christians, it turns out, you may realize this, hopefully you do by now, Christians, we believe a lot of unpopular things, but I think that in our day and time, our view of marriage may be one of the most unpopular beliefs that we hold.

This passage in Genesis 2 and the truths that it teaches us are completely contrary, against the grain of what our secular culture believes. We read last week in our service from our statement of faith concerning the family.

This article from our statement of faith, what we agree to believe as members of this church. I'm going to read it again, and I just want you to notice here how strange these words are to our secular culture. Okay?

[4 : 04] We believe that marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman. Stop there. Already. We're feeling the tension, aren't we?

Already, same-sex unions are ruled out, not marriage. Already, multiple partner unions are ruled out here in the first phrase, not marriage. Keep going.

We believe that marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman before God in covenant commitment for a lifetime. Stop there. Here, we affirm that the glue that holds marriage together ultimately isn't feelings or compatibility or ease of relationship or chemistry, whatever that may be. Of course, in a sin-cursed world, there are biblical reasons to divorce, but we affirm that they are few. That'll have to be another sermon. But we believe that the marriage covenant is the bond that glues a healthy marriage together.

It's covenant commitment for a lifetime. That marriage covenant ought not be entered into casually, and it cannot be broken easily simply by signing some legal papers. Keep going.

[5 : 19] We believe that God has established marriage as his only intended channel for human sexual expression and procreation, and that God calls all unmarried people to celibacy and to devotion to himself.

So, here we go. Casual hookup culture gone. Out the window. Even, loving, faithful, committed, yet sexual relationships outside of marriage is ruled out.

Gone. Any sexual expression outside of marriage is gone. One more. We believe husband and wife are both made in God's image and have equal value before God, while at the same time possessing distinct and complementary roles within marriage.

Stop there. In other words, we believe that men and women are not interchangeable. They have complementary roles to play and to fulfill within the marriage covenant for their good.

Do you see how strange we are yet? Everything that we believe concerning marriage is completely counter-cultural. And what I want us to understand here as we begin looking at this text this morning is that culture will continue to ebb and flow.

[6 : 45] Definitions will continue to change and expand. Political parties will continue to shift what's acceptable and normal in our culture at large will continue to progress.

But Christians must plant their feet firmly down on the unchanging word of God. Amen? So let's look at our passage this morning and what we're going to see here is four counter-cultural truths about marriage.

Four counter-cultural truths about marriage. First, we see marriage has a God-defined value. A God-defined value.

Look there with me starting in verse 18. And remember where we've been to this point. We've seen the first week of creation already in chapter 1 with this sort of cosmic view. This is the view from the air, so to speak.

But now, remember in chapter 2, he circles back around and he zooms in here kind of on the ground level. And so now we're back to day 6, the sixth day of creation.

[7 : 48] We're back to the creation of man. And what we saw in chapter 1, you remember, was that at every turn in the creation story, seven times in fact, God pronounced a value over what he had made.

Do you remember what he said? It is good. It is good. It is good. All leading up to the sixth day when he says all of this is very good.

But here now, verse 18, look there. Then the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. This is like a record scratch moment here in the garden.

What do you mean not good? It breaks the flow of what we've seen so far. Good, good, good, good, good, good, good. Very good. Not good. Now what do you mean?

Well, apparently in God's design, the creation of man was not yet complete. It was not yet deemed very good until he says, I will make him a helper fit for him.

[8 : 48] And then in God's determination, it was very good. You know, some of us are prone to isolation. You call us introverts, whatever it may be. Some of us just really prefer to be alone.

And I think what we can gain from this is that, yes, moments of solitude are good. We see that even with Jesus in the New Testament. He pulls away from moments of solitude. But a life of isolation is not good.

Mankind was created from the beginning to enjoy relationship and community with other humans. And one of the highest experiences of that sort of community is in the intimate relationship of marriage.

God here, he institutes marriage in the garden. And he gives it a value. It is very good. Now, of course, some people may be called to singleness.

And I do want to mention that here in a sermon on marriage. And if that's the case for you, then praise God. If you're called to a life of singleness, praise God. Use your unique capacity and availability and your unique gifting for the glory of God as a single man or a single woman. [10:01] But I would venture to say the majority are not called to this. And in our individualistic age and our individualistic culture, we really need to ask ourselves, do we prefer singleness because of calling or because of convenience?

Now, it's clear to me that our culture has so embraced individualism as a highest value and so embraced self-autonomy as a highest value that marriage, the whole idea of marriage is becoming less and less good in the eyes of our secular culture.

Now, I went searching for some stats this week and I came across a couple of articles that I think you would find interesting. One article I read said that the United States has been experiencing a decades-long marriage recession.

In fact, the rate at which adults marry today has never been lower in recorded American history. Think about that. A study from KGN law firm said that marriage rates have fallen in the U.S. over time, starting at 8.2 marriages per 1,000 in the year 2000, and falling to only 5.1 marriages per 1,000 by the year 2020.

In 2011, the never-married population among men 20 to 34 was 67%, but by 21, that increased to 72% of men.

[11:35] Among women in this age group and period, the never-married population increased from 57% to 63%. You see the decline here of the vision of marriage as a good thing.

Listen, here's something interesting. That same study found that nearly 100% of highly religious men, 97%, were likely to be married by their mid-40s, while only 65% of non-religious men were likely to be hitched.

Now, I have no idea what they mean by religious, what their definition of that is, what religion they may be talking about, any of that, but I am convinced that now and into the future, if marriage is going to be seen as good anywhere, it must be in the church.

If anybody is going to champion marriage as very good, it's not going to be our schools or our culture or our politicians or anybody else.

It must be the church. We, as God's people, must show the world what marriage is. And we must communicate to the world that it is very good in the eyes of God.

[12:52] This means that we ought not talk about marriage the way that everybody else talks about it. You know the way that our culture talks about marriage? The old ball and chain, right? We gripe and moan and complain.

You see it on television. You hear it at the workplace, out of the lips of your friends. We ought not talk about marriage like that, should we? We ought not think about marriage the way that others think about marriage.

We ought not go about marriage the way that our culture goes about marriage. If anybody is going to champion marriage, it must be the church. How strange is it?

We're strange, Christian. How strange is it in the eyes of the world for a young man and a young woman to get married young and have kids young? Those are supposed to be your wild and free years, right?

How strange is it to prioritize the health of your marriage, even over your career, even over your social life, to have this as a priority? How strange is it for a man and a woman to persevere through difficult seasons in their marriage, to not simply call it quits and split and call it irreconcilable differences?

[14:00] How strange is it in our culture to keep intimacy within the bounds of the marriage covenant? To not just grab all the benefits of marriage for yourself without actually committing to the covenant relationship.

Friend, I hope you see Christians are strange and are getting stranger by the minute. We don't believe that marriage is just take it or leave it, good if it's convenient, some formality or tradition. We believe that in the eyes of God, it is very, very good. Second, we see marriage has a God-defined mission.

A God-defined mission. Part of our culture's confusion about marriage is that we have completely lost sight of the mission of marriage. You know, marriage has a mission. You realize this?

Beyond just self-fulfillment, beyond just finding that person that you just love and want to spend the rest of your life with, beyond just you just being happy, as good as those things are, there's a mission, a bigger mission, a big picture here for marriage.

[15:05] Look there with me back up again to verse 15. You remember from last week, this command that God gave to Adam. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.

Adam has a job to do in the garden. God gave Adam a task. You remember what it was? Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it.

And I imagine Adam's just looking around him like, Who's going to help me do it? I can't do this by myself. And he's right. He needs help. So God proves this point to him by parading all of the animals in the garden right there in front of him.

Look there at verse 19. Out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him.

[16:12] It's like Adam is watching all of these creatures come by. And all of them are coming with their pairs. And all of them are made, as we saw in chapter 1, they're all made according to their kinds.

And he's like, well, this is great, but where's mine? God, where's mine? None of these creatures go with me. God parades all of these animals in front of Adam to show him he needs a helper.

And none of these animals are going to cut it. He needs somebody like him who can be his partner to help him with the mission God has given him.

So verse 21. The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. And while he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. And just look at how Adam responds. I love this.

[17:11] It's like those old Bugs Bunny cartoons. You know what I'm talking about? When he sees something that he likes and his eyes turn into hearts. And his heart starts pumping 10 feet out of his chest and steam's coming out of his ears.

You know what I'm talking about? Adam lays eyes on Eve and all of a sudden he becomes a poet. This is the first recorded poetry in human history. This at last.

And don't you love that? I mean it's been half a day, Adam. Come on. This at last. This bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She's like me. She goes with me.

She's my partner. She shall be called woman. For she was taken out of man. Men, would you just take notes here? Now just look how Adam rejoices over his bride.

How he delights in her. Eve's first words that she hears in her life are the sound, the words, the voice of her husband just showering her with praise and delight.

[18:13] At last, Adam has a helper so that now together they can together as a unit get to work fulfilling God's mission for them.

See the mission here. They can together as husband and wife now be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over it.

But they don't have to wonder or ask, what in the world is the purpose of our marriage? What is our marriage all about? What are we doing here in this relationship?

They have a clear, God-defined, shared vision for how they will go about glorifying God together through their marriage. And church, I believe this is absolutely key for a healthy marriage.

church, you have to understand together and be committed together to your mission. Ask yourself, do you have this?

[19:17] The married people in the room? Are you committed to this mission together? Do you share a vision together for how you will go about the work of honoring and serving the Lord together?

Expanding the reach of the kingdom of God here on earth together? Filling the earth with image bearers together, both physically by reproducing children and multiplying, that's physical multiplication, but also spiritually, how you'll invest in others and make disciples and multiply spiritual influence together?

There may be a lot of reasons why you may not have this. Again, we live here on this side of the fall. Sin has come and disrupted this whole thing.

Most marriages are far from this picture of this ideal that we see in the garden. And it may be that you're married to an unbelieving spouse. It may be that one partner is further along, one partner is unwilling, all of us have our own degrees of selfishness that we have to deal with, but here what we see in the garden, in God's design, the mission of marriage.

Adam and Eve are made to serve and worship the Lord, to obey Him, to honor Him, to fill the earth with His glory together. Father, if you are married, the mission of your marriage is to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ through your marriage.

[20 : 55] Marriage has a God-defined mission. And for the mission, third, for the mission, marriage has God-defined roles.

Now, talk about being countercultural. Most secular people, when they hear something like that, like roles in a marriage relationship, they call that old-fashioned.

In fact, that might be the nicest thing that they might call that. And they're right. This is all the way Genesis 2 type of old-fashioned. We're going back to the design here, all the way in Eden.

We see that God defines the roles here for husband and wife. Adam is made as the leader. He's the leader. He's the head. And Eve here is made as his helper.

Let me just show you a few places where we see this here in the passage. For one, we see man was created first, not woman. God could have easily created both at the same time, but He didn't.

[21 : 56] And the Apostle Paul apparently found that significant. He used it as the basis for some of his instructions in 1 Timothy 2. Again, this is not a statement of worth.

I want to make that abundantly clear. But it is significant. Man here from the beginning takes the lead. Man is given the word first, not woman.

Before Eve was even created. Here in verses 15 through 17, God lays out all of the covenant stipulations, all of these life and death conditions.

God gives Adam the law before Eve was even created. He gives the instructions for how they would live and continue in this blessed fellowship with the Lord in the garden. Meaning, it was Adam's primary responsibility to make certain that the commands of the Lord were kept.

And presumably, it was Adam's primary responsibility to relay those instructions to Eve and to teach her to make sure she understood their responsibility together in the garden.

[23 : 01] And what we'll see in a couple weeks in Genesis chapter 3, when Eve sins and when she eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, who is it that God calls into account? It's Adam who bears the burden.

It's Adam who's called into account before the Lord. Why? Because that's the burden of leadership that Adam bears in the garden. We see woman was made out of Adam's side, not the other way around.

She's not made from the dust like Adam was. She's made from Adam. We see she's given this title, this purpose, that she would be his helper. A helper fit for him.

You see the dynamic here taking shape. There's leader and there's helper. Now, of course, our natural response to this is, well, that term's a little derogatory, isn't it?

A little demeaning, maybe? That's not the case at all. We should remember the Lord himself is called helper more than a few times in the Psalms. Moses calls God his helper.

[24 : 06] In Exodus chapter 18, the Holy Spirit is called the helper. It's not a statement of value. It's an assignment of a role and function.

Lastly, here we see man is given this unique authority over his wife within the covenant relationship. He names her, not the other way around.

Now, go back to this scene of God bringing Eve to Adam. It's such a beautiful scene. This is the first giving away in human history. I remember my own wedding.

There I am. I'm standing. I'm sweating. I'm waiting. And all of these bridesmaids and groomsmen come marching down the aisle.

And I smile at them. But I'm not there for them. That's not why I'm there. They pass by and then finally, at last, here comes my bride. And her father is walking her down the aisle.

[25 : 06] And in a symbolic way, we've all seen this in a marriage ceremony, in a symbolic way, her father hands her to me. It's a shift. It's a shift of authority. No longer is she primarily under her father's authority.

Now she's been given over to her husband. That's exactly what we see happening here in the garden. Adam sees all these bridesmaids and groomsmen coming down the aisle. All these animals pass by him. He's like, okay, get on. Go on. Get out of here. They're not for me. Finally, God brings his bride down to him. He proceeds down the aisle with Eve. He hands her over to Adam. And he names her woman. For she was taken out of man. So here's the idea. Again, I want to be crystal clear about this. Adam and Eve are equal partners in the task God has given them.

And they come with God-defined roles. Adam and Eve have equal worth. They're both made in the image of God.

[26 : 08] They're of equal value. There's no difference in value. And there is distinction in role and function. Adam is given a role of leadership and authority in the family unit.

And Eve is given the role of followership and support and help in the family unit. This is God's design here from the beginning. God has designed men and women differently.

To serve differently. To complement each other in marriage and in distinct ways. Why? For the purposes of advancing his kingdom here on earth.

But once again, sin has made this incredibly difficult, hasn't it? The design isn't the problem.

The design is good. All of this is before the fall. But our sin comes in and takes this good complementary relationship of leading and submitting of head and helper.

[27 : 07] And it makes it all just so hard. I know you know this, right? Please don't say amen, fellas. Okay? Word of wisdom. All of us have seen what sin can do to a marriage.

Men either sin by abusing our God-given authority or we give it away.

Either on one hand we're harsh, domineering, at the very worst abusive. And let me just say that that is not godly authority.

That is not what it means to love and to lead your wife as God designed it to be. Or on the other hand, men, we sin by sinfully just not leading at all.

We let go of this God-given role in the family and we're passive. Women, on the other hand, especially with the rise of feminism in the late 60s and 70s, can be prone to sin in the direction of grappling for the position of leader and head and wanting to take that on themselves.

[28 : 13] They either desperately want to be the leader of the relationship or the husband is so darn passive that they feel like they have to be the leader because somebody's got to.

Either way, again, we recognize sin comes in and absolutely disrupts this whole thing. We've all experienced this in various ways, haven't we?

But Christian, what I want to say to you is that even if your marriage is far from this ideal that we see here in the garden, take heart this morning.

Because in Christ, if you are in a Christian marriage, in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God at work in you, at work in your spouse, there is hope for you.

Your marriage truly can begin to look more and more like what it was always supposed to be. A Christian marriage doesn't have to continue in patterns of sin.

[29 : 16] Praise God. A Christian marriage, by God's grace, truly can make progress to be what it's meant to be. And when it does, when our marriages begin to thrive, when our church is full of happy, healthy, thriving marriages, when a husband is serving and leading and loving his wife and a wife is respecting and following her husband and both of them together are living for the glory of God in the world and both of them are enjoying this gift of marriage as a very good thing, then the message of marriage will shine brightly for you and for all who see it.

Fourth, we see marriage has a God-defined message. Look there down at verse 24.

And here we see that Moses is sort of reflecting on this account and he adds this kind of summary statement there in verse 24. Therefore, therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

In marriage, we see this beautiful picture of union between husband and wife. The two shall become one flesh.

Of course, physically, that's part of that, but men is just one part, okay? Just one part. This is total oneness. Spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, morally, they are bound up together in union.

[31 : 00] And this union between husband and wife, it speaks a message. It proclaims the message of the gospel. Paul, I want you to flip over with me to Ephesians chapter 5.

You flip with me to Ephesians chapter 5, to the passage that was read this morning. We'll start in verse 22, because Paul draws this connection for us to show that all along, in this relationship that God instituted in the garden called marriage, the message of the gospel has been proclaimed. Paul says, Wives, submit to your own husbands, not to every man, to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its savior. Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

I remember when I was in college, I served under a pastor there, and he was doing premarital counseling with two non-believers, who asked him, Would you perform our marriage?

[32 : 13] And he was walking them through this passage, Ephesians chapter 5, to explain the message of marriage. And at this point, as you could imagine, the woman spoke up and said, Are you serious?

Are you for real? Wives, submit to your husband. You know what year this is? Are you crazy? And then they kept reading. And they saw what the husband was called to do.

Verse 25, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? How did Christ love the church?

He gave himself up for her. He died for her. That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

[33 : 32] Therefore, quoting Genesis 2, verse 24, a man shall leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Now listen to this, verse 32. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Do you see the message here? Baked into the design for man and woman in marriage, marriage in union together, is God's plan of redemption in Christ.

This is why Paul calls it a mystery here in chapter 5 of Ephesians. It's not mysterious or unclear. A mystery is a truth once concealed, but now revealed.

Paul says the truth of the gospel has been concealed, has been held up here in this gift of marriage, just been proclaimed this whole time, through marriage, from the beginning.

[34 : 41] And now that Christ has come, and he's lived, and he's died, and he's risen to purchase his bride, now we look at marriage, and we get the message. How unbelievably wise is our God?

Here even before the fall, here even before sin enters the world, God is teaching mankind about redemption in Christ.

Marriage is a picture. It's a temporary pointer of how Jesus Christ shed his own blood to create the church, not just a rib, but his own life.

It's a picture of how Christ, Jesus, is our head, our authority, our leader, who loves us, and nurtures us, and cleanses us, and represents us.

It's a picture of how we, his bride, receive our life directly from him, and how now we come alongside him as his helper, as his body here on earth to accomplish the mission, the task of filling the earth with the glory of God.

[35 : 56] Now, our oneness with our spouse, the most intimate connection that you can have with anybody here on earth, is just a temporary pointer to our eternal oneness, our union with God through Christ, which is our deepest and truest need.

Friend, if you're here, and you're not a believer, what you need more than anything in the world, more than a spouse, and more than a healthy, happy marriage, what you need more than anything is to listen to the message of marriage, and to be united to God through faith in Christ, to see the message that Christ, Jesus, has come to save sinners like you repent and believe the gospel. single people, as much as you may desire, espouse, desire Christ 10,000 times more. Married people in an imperfect marriage, as much as you may wish that your marriage were better or healthier or happier, rejoice in the love of God for you in Christ, and by God's grace, take whatever

steps are needed to move your marriage closer to this picture of Christ and his church.

Let all the joys and the pleasures and the blessings of a good marriage point your heart forwards to the day when Christ will come to retrieve his bride, and all of God's people will sit and feast in fullness of joy at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Amanda and I, early on in our marriage, took a trip to Rwanda, and I still don't know if this was just a tourist trick or if it was just great timing, I don't know, but we were in a small house made out of mud with a family, and we were watching them cook and clean and just observing and seeing how they went about their life when all of a sudden we look out the front doorway, this entryway of the house, and there's a figure coming over the hills.

[38 : 07] As we watch the figure come closer and closer, we saw he had a large animal with him, and finally, he makes his way all the way to the house, and we see it's a young man with a cow tied to a rope, and I still don't know where they came from, but here they were.

He handed that rope off to a member of the family, and they all started talking and laughing and just jabbering, and of course, we couldn't understand a word that was said until eventually somebody explained to us what was happening.

They said, he is coming to pay his dowry. He's come to pay the bride price. He's come all this way bringing this gift, this sacrifice in exchange for his bride, and we don't do it like that in the United States, do we?

But I thought, what a picture of the gospel. the Son of God himself journeyed all the way from the throne room of heaven down here to our mud and our mess and our filth and our sin, and he went to the cross, and he offered up himself as a sacrifice so that he might purchase a bride for himself. From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride, and with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

[39 : 42] That is the message and the beauty and the glory of marriage. Father, we thank you for this picture of the gospel that you've given us.

and we pray for any non-believer in the room that they would look to the message of marriage, to the message of the gospel, and be drawn to faith in Christ.

And we pray for each one of us, Lord, for those that are struggling in imperfect marriages and difficult marriages, Lord, would you give us grace to persevere and to see it as very good despite its flaws, and to labor by your spirit to work hard to move our marriage back to this image that we see in the garden.

God, would you point all of us in hope to the union that we might have with you through Christ, not just here on this life, but into eternity. We love you, Father.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.