

Kingdom Marriage
Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC - 5-18-2025

We are in a sermon series entitled Kingdom Families. Today I'm preaching on Kingdom Marriage.

If you're not married – don't think this doesn't apply to you. You may be married someday and you'll need to know this truth. Plus - you know people who are married and you need to encourage them with this truth.

By the way – I know some of you are divorced. Just know there is no condemnation from us today. We don't view divorce as the unpardonable sin. However – we all need to learn God's wisdom regarding relationships so we don't end up in the same situation again.

Your marriage may be weak – but it can become stronger!
 Your marriage may be strong – but it can become even stronger!
 How do I know that? Because God tells us how.

I want to remind you that marriage and family have a divine origin. God created them – God designed them and God defined them. We find that all the way back at the beginning in Genesis 2:18-24

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." ...So 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. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The 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." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

From these passages, we see God's plan and purposes for marriage. We see that God created it and everything God created – He called good! That includes marriage and family. However, one day God saw something that was not good. God said that it is not good for man to be alone. So, He created a woman from the man's rib to be a help meet for him.

God created man and woman to rule and reign in life together. But many of us feel life is ruling over us rather than us ruling in life. But to have a life God blesses - we must live life God's way. And to have a marriage God blesses, we must do marriage God's way.

Marriage and family will not work unless we open the owner's manual that God gave us – called the Bible – and do it His way.

A kingdom marriage is a marriage that is based on God's kingdom purposes and principles as revealed in God's Word. Remember Psalm 127:1

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

To build strong marriages and families we must do it God's way. But knowing about God's principles and God's power are not enough. For a marriage to work, you must make it work.

Strong marriages and healthy homes don't just happen--they take work! Nothing gets better by neglect. Don't mow, water, weed, or feed your yard and see what happens. Don't change the oil, check the tires, or do a tune up on your car and see what happens.

People are always amazed when they find out Deb and I have been married 51 years. "Wow, you're lucky. "I'm on my 3rd marriage and I hope this one works." I want to say, "It won't." It won't work by itself; you have to make it work. Too many people buy into the Hollywood view of romance and the worldly view that if you're married to the right person, the marriage will just work effortlessly on its own. Wrong!

Many people today shop for relationships the way my wife shops for clothes. She usually doesn't like trying on clothes in a store – so she buys it – takes it home – and tries it on. If it does not fit, she returns it for something else.

Many people try that with relationships. I'll live with this person – it's just a test drive to see if it works – and when it doesn't they are relieved they found out and they move on to the next one. And the next one.

Listen – test drives do not work with people! Statistics show that people who live together before marriage have a higher divorce rate than those who don't! People are not clothes to be tried on. They are not cars to be test driven. They are people with feelings. They are people created in the image of God.

And relationships work only when we make them work - and if you're going to make it work, you must do it God's way. As James 2:17 says:

Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Yes, you need to believe God for a good marriage, but God's not going to do all the work in your marriage - you must make it work. But how? I'm going to show you by focusing on one simple verse – Genesis 2:24.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother, be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

Remember that family is foundational to society.

And marriage is foundational to family. And I want to suggest that this verse is the foundational verse for marriage. What God spoke here in Genesis, it is repeated by Jesus in Matthew and by Paul in Ephesians. From this verse we will learn that God designed marriage to operate according to three fundamental principles.

The Bible says God created marriage and family – and then it tells us how to respond to that. It says - for this reason – because God created marriage and family – we are to do three things: leave our parents – be united to each other - and become one flesh. The King James Version puts it like this:

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

I want to give you three words to help you remember these three principles today: LEAVE – CLEAVE – AND WEAVE.

I. For Marriage to Work, You Must Leave

If your marriage is going to be what it ought to be– THERE HAS TO BE A LEAVING!

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother.

Now, the Bible is not teaching us to abandon or forsake our parents. We know from other Scriptures that we must always honor them. Leaving our parents does not mean we must move to another city. This verse is teaching us that to establish your family – you must leave everything else behind – in the sense that that everything else is now a lesser priority. Where the parent/child relationship was once the priority – the husband/wife relationship is now the priority.

The Bible is using the example of parents here because before we marry they are the most important people in the world to us. They feed us, clothe us, teach us, love us, comfort us – we are totally dependent upon them.

The principle of leaving is this.... NOTHING, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ON EARTH, IS TO TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SPOUSE.

And when it does, you are in clear violation of the first fundamental priority of marriage. Some of you need to leave some things behind today. What things? Anything that's coming between you and your spouse! Any job, any hobby, any person or ANYTHING at all that is coming between you and your spouse – LEAVE IT!

I've counseled people who were on the brink of an affair with someone at work and I told them "Quit your job! Leave that workplace!" They say, "I can't afford to leave my job," so I ask, "Can you afford a divorce?" I'm serious about this!

I remember telling one man to do that years ago and he couldn't see how to make it happen. So I told him, let's pray that God will intervene and give you wisdom about what to do. He agreed and within a short time the woman he was attracted to quit her job. But if she hadn't I would've counseled him to leave his.

Hear me - when you get serious about your marriage you are right in the middle of God's plan for your life and He will come through for you!

Outside of your relationship with Jesus Christ, nothing should be more important to you than your family. If anything is... LEAVE IT NOW!

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

2- For Marriage to Work, You Must Cleave

If your marriage is going to be what it ought to be- there also has to be a cleaving!

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

Now, I want to make it absolutely clear that this has nothing to do with a meat cleaver. The word, "cleave" has nothing to do with slicing and dicing.

It's an old word that means "to cling or glue to something. To keep close to something and remain bonded to it." The Hebrew word for cleave means to catch by pursuit and to cling to. To adhere to. To not let go of. To be joined together.

The root word is also used in the Bible in speaking of a soldier's protective armor. Armor is made up of different pieces of metal which are joined together. When those different pieces are joined together they become one piece of armor. When they are joined together - the soldier is totally protected.

And that's the point. God, at the very inception of marriage, said: THIS THING IS FOR LIFE! The marital bond is a permanent, lasting, never-to-be-severed bond!

And when a husband and wife cleave - when they are joined together - they become one! And in that oneness they are totally protected! That's why Satan does everything he can to drive you apart. When you become separate - you are an easy target!

When you got married - whether it was in a beautiful house of worship or a justice of the peace - you were actually standing before the Lord.

And when you said, "I take you to be my spouse, 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 God.

That's why Ecclesiastes 4:9 and 12 say **two are better than one** and **a cord of three strands is not easily broken.**

The three strands are a marriage covenant with God as well as each other. God always operates by a covenant. Unfortunately – in our contract-oriented society, few people really understand covenant. We like contracts because they have loopholes and bail-out options.

But marriage in an unconditional covenant with an imperfect person! It is fine to live by contract, but we must love by covenant. People might negotiate out of contracts, but not out of a covenant - there is no escape clause.

The modern approach to marriage is to focus on personal rights and needs:

- "I deserve to be happy."
- "I'm entitled to have my needs met."
- "If this relationship stops giving me what I want, or if it gets tough or real boring, I can walk away."
- "After all, marriage is a contract, and contracts are made to be broken."

Do you know that it's easier in the U.S. to walk away from a marriage than from a contract to buy a used car? Marriage has been called the "least binding of all contracts."

Perhaps the wedding vows should be changed to:

- "I promise to love, honor, and quit whenever I want to."
- "I promise to love you as long as you make me happy."
- "I'm committed as long as you meet my needs."
- "I'm committed to you until something better comes along."

Listen carefully - God never intended for marriage to be a convenience-based contract that we could easily get out of but a character-based covenant that we would be committed to for life.

And by the way:

God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness!

God is more concerned with your character than your comfort!

God is more concerned with your righteousness than your reasoning!

God is more concerned about your example than your excuses!

Every family will experience tough times and it takes commitment to stick it out and work through them.

Commitment to: God / His word / principles

Your Marriage

Your Spouse – their best/ success

Commitment is not 50/50, its 100/100

In reality, sometimes it's 80/20, 60/40/ 100/0
You must be willing to give all, not give yourself an out.

In the 51 years Deb and I have been married we've had many tough times – but the words “I want a divorce” have never been uttered by either of us. The thought never crosses our minds. What crosses our minds is we need to seek God and make this work. For marriage to work – you must leave and cleave.

3- For Marriage to Work, You must Weave:

Now – I'm not talking about sewing a rug or getting hair extensions! The Bible says that we leave, cleave and “become one flesh.” And becoming one is a process– not an instantaneous event.

In other words, a couple must weave themselves into each other's life. “One flesh” doesn't happen just because the preacher says, “I now pronounce you husband and wife;” it doesn't happen when you sign the legal documents; it doesn't happen in a motel ten miles down the road.

It is a lifelong process of two people giving themselves to one another until their lives are woven together into one. That takes time. That takes work. That takes faith. That takes prayer.

You need to find things you love to do together. Pastor Deb and I love church but we have a life outside of church. We love to travel. We love to watch movies. We love working on our house and yard. Sometimes we do something that I love to do and other times we do something she loves to do. But most things we do because we love doing them together.

If you don't love being with your spouse something's wrong! I remember counseling a couple years ago. We didn't seem to be making much progress. Then one week they came in and I asked them how they were doing. They said, “We had one of the best weeks ever.” I was getting a big head thinking how much good I was doing when I discovered the reason their week was so good was because the husband had been out of town all week.

It's like Rodney Dangerfield once said, “We sleep in separate rooms, we have dinner apart, we take separate vacations– we're doing everything we can to keep our marriage together.”

That's not weaving! That's not becoming one. Are you on your way to oneness? Let me close with two powerful suggestions.....

1. You must accept the fact that your marriage will never be perfect.

The only ideal marriage in history was Adam and Eve's and even they blew it. Even the best of marriages experience times of doubt, disillusionment,

and conflict. But that reality doesn't mean that the marriage cannot work.

2. You must realize that success in marriage is not so much as finding the right spouse, as it is in being the right spouse.

You may think that you married a dud, but the truth is, even if you think you did marry the wrong person, you can treat them like the right person and make that marriage work!

The God who created marriage and family says that for them to work we must LEAVE lesser priorities behind. We must CLEAVE to each other. And we must WEAVE our lives together as we become one.

My favorite story of commitment is the true story of Hernando Cortez. He was a 16th century explorer who had a vision to lead an expedition from Spain to capture the vast riches of Mexico.

He traveled to Mexico with 11 ships and 700 men. However, Cortez did not reveal his entire strategy. He knew this the expedition would take years. He needed to be sure his men were committed for the long haul.

After months of travel, they arrived in Vera Cruz, Mexico in the Spring of 1519. As soon as the men had the ships totally unloaded, Cortez instituted the rest of his plan. He gave the order, BURN THE SHIPS!

What? That's our only way out of here.

Exactly! Burn the ships and there's no way out, no going back.

This mission called for total commitment and devotion to the task.

And I'm telling you today – building a strong marriage takes the same kind of radical, no excuse, no-turning-back commitment.

Some of you need to burn some ships today!

If you have a plan of escape from your marriage – burn that ship!

If you're flirting around with someone other than your spouse – burn that ship.

If you're keeping in touch with old flames just in case the fire goes out in your marriage – burn that ship!

If you're holding back from total commitment to your spouse in any way at all – BURN THAT SHIP!

If you leave yourself an out, you'll probably take it. And that lack of commitment may be the very reason the relationship doesn't work.

So burn the ship!

Choose to leave, cleave and weave and see what God can do in your marriage when you are doing it His way!