

**Video: Things You don't say to your wife!** That was Tim Hawkins with some useful tips on things you don't say to your wife. And some of us guys need that advice because marriage can be challenging. It puts together for life two people who have different backgrounds, personalities, attitudes, habits, cultures and ideas.

It may seem like a recipe for disaster! And yet, Genesis tells us that this was a gift from God to human beings to bless and enrich us. Men and women were created to be together! Genesis 2:18-25: **"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"**

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

<sup>23</sup> 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."

<sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup> The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

### 1. The Need for Relationship

Throughout the creation account, God's verdict on his work was that it was good. 7 times, it says: **"And God saw that it was good."** Genesis 1:25. God was pleased with his creation because it reflected and revealed his character and glory.

But at the start of our passage, God said that something in his creation was not good. **"It is not good for the man to be alone."** Genesis 2:18

#### a) Even in Paradise

God had created a perfect world of awe-inspiring wonder and majesty. And last week, we saw that **"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden."** Genesis 2:15 This garden was a paradise of bountiful provision, of amazing beauty, of daily communion with God and of meaningful and satisfying work. And yet, still there was something that wasn't right. Something wasn't good.

On his own man, could not fulfil his purpose and God's command to **"Be fruitful and increase in number."** Genesis 1:28. But more than that. On his own, man was lonely. There were emotional, intellectual, relational needs that could not be met, even in paradise.

#### b) Even with all the animals

And none of the other animals that God had made could meet this need. This was emphasised by God when **"He brought them to the man to see what he would name them."** Genesis 2:19

A few weeks back, when we were looking at the creation week, we noticed how frequently God named his creation, expressing his authority and rule over it. And so Adam here was doing something similar with the animal because as God's representative on earth, he had been called to rule over them.

Some people object to this, saying that this would be impossible – especially if this all took place in day 6 of the creation week. But it is clear that Adam didn't name every single animal species on the planet. He only **"gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field."** Genesis 2:20, which would exclude all insects, marine organisms, amphibians and many more.

And as we've already talked about, we don't know how many kinds of these animals there were on Earth at that time – as there has been a great deal of variation within the kinds since then! But it is interesting to see Adam do what scientists continue to do in naming and classifying the species in this world.

But the point of this was not that Adam would merely name these animals. Rather, it was so that he could see that **"No suitable helper was found."** Genesis 2:20.

These animals were all wonderful and awe-inspiring. And those of us who have pets, whether they are dogs, cats, gerbils, rabbits, chinchillas or even fish, know that joy and affection that they can bring into our lives.

And yet, they were all less than Adam. None of them could be his physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual companion. No animal can replace our need for human relationships.

### c) We were designed for human relationships!

That's because we were designed for human relationships. "God is love." 1 John 4:8 This is who he always has been, even before he created this world. But God has never been lonely, because he has forever been a trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in perfectly loving communion. Jesus said to his Father that "You loved me before the creation of the world." John 17:24

And as his image-bearers, we have been created to reflect the perfect love of God in our love and companionship with other people. So it is not good to be alone. We were not made to live in isolation. We were not made to thrive in seclusion. We need other people!

## 2. The Gift of Woman

And so God stepped in to solve the problem of man's loneliness: "I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2:18

### a) Man's Helper

I know that some women are offended at the idea that woman was made to be a helper for the man. In their minds this implies that the woman was inferior to the man, that she was there to serve him as some kind of subordinate.

But nothing could be further from the truth. The vast majority of the time that this word translated helper occurs in the Old Testament, it actually refers to the Lord. For example, "I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1–2

So there is no disrespect shown to Eve to say that she was a helper for Adam. In fact, it is an honour given to her, that she was made with the potential to give such effective support and strength to her husband.

### b) Man's Complement

And this is emphasised by the fact that the woman was "suitable for him." Genesis 2:18. No other creature on the planet was suitable for man. They couldn't match his level. But the woman could. She was a perfect match for him.

I read that this phrase literally means, like opposite him. It suggests the idea of complementarity.

Men and women are not exactly the same as each other. We are clearly different in many ways. But this difference is part of God's design for humanity, so that we may complement each other, balance each other, to complete each other. It means that together we can more fully live out God's purpose for our lives than we can alone.

So woman was made to complement man and complete him. As someone famously said, "A man is not complete until he is married -- then he is finished."

### c) Man's Companion

And I think this idea of partnership is even emphasised in the way that God created the first woman. In the first act of surgery, with a supernatural anaesthetic, God took a rib from Adam, "Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man." Genesis 2:22

This of course doesn't mean that all men should have one fewer rib than women! Only Adam lost a rib for God to make his wife! His DNA passed on to his sons and his daughters would of course code for a full set of ribs! But it does mean that the man and the woman were biologically connected.

And the Bible doesn't say why God used a rib. But I love what Matthew Henry from the 18<sup>th</sup> century wrote about this. He said that woman was "Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

The woman came from Adam's side – so that she could be alongside him. So they could share together in partnership and companionship as equals.

#### d) Man's Equal

And that is what Adam expressed when he met his wife for the first time. When he saw his bride, like many men after him, he became a poet and declared:

**"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man."** Genesis 2:23

You might not think it is the most romantic poetry ever composed, but it shows that Adam instantly recognised just how special this woman was.

He started with an expression of delight which could be translated "at last" or as some people suggest, "Wow, look at that!"

Then Adam declared that the woman is his flesh and bone. Today, we talk about our family as our own flesh and blood, but in the Bible people spoke about their family as their own flesh and bone.

And so Adam is saying that the woman is his family. He could not say that about the animals. They were not his equal. They were not made in the image of God. But this woman is. She is equally unique in this world, equally the pinnacle of creation, equally made in the image and likeness of God to resemble God, to relate to God, to reproduce his image, to represent his rule and to reflect his glory!

And so Adam was agreeing with Genesis 1:27: **"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."**

And then Adam named his bride 'woman', which in the Hebrew is *Ishshah*, which is related to the word *ish* meaning man.

And so this is the foundation of marriage in the Bible – it is that although men and women are different from each other, they are equal in name and in nature, so that they might provide help and companionship to each other, as they complement each other as God's image bearers.

### 3. The Gift of Marriage

And the emphasis is that marriage is God's gift to humanity. In fact, God is pictured here as the Father of the Bride as **"He brought her to the man."** Genesis 2:22. This is the first giving away of a bride, and it is God who walks Eve down the aisle.

And if marriage is God's gift, then he has the right to define it.

#### a) Leave

Marriage first of all means leaving: **"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother."** Genesis 2:24 Marriage involves a radical change of priorities. No longer is their primary connection and concern to be their parents, their birth family, or anyone else. Instead, the husband and wife are called to forsake all others and make each other their first priority, after God.

It may seem like an obvious point, but if this leaving doesn't happen, a marriage will always struggle.

#### b) Be Joined

Secondly, the man will **"Be united to his wife."** Genesis 2:24 Marriage is not a casual acquaintance. It is not a loose relationship. Instead God has designed that the man will cling to, hold fast to, be stuck like glue to his wife.

To some people this sounds like a restriction, a limitation, a prison sentence. But it is in the passion and permanence of this faithful relationship that true love and intimacy can develop and deepen.

#### c) Become One

And thirdly, **"And they will become one flesh."** Genesis 2:24 Marriage was designed by God to be the most intimate of human relationships; where two people become one – physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually; where they share everything, their joys and their sorrows, their successes and their struggles; where they do life together!

So this is clearly an exclusive relationship. It is monogamous and heterosexual – between one man and one woman.

And it is life-long. This is not a temporary agreement that can be abandoned whenever we want. Instead it is a lifelong covenant between two people that is supposed to remain until either of them dies. **"A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord."** 1

And this is what Jesus emphasised as he reaffirmed God's design for marriage in Matthew 19:5-6: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

So whatever our world thinks of marriage or tries to redefine it, this is God's plan. It is for one man and one woman to leave their old family connections and to commit to giving themselves to each other in a life-long, intimate, faithful and loving relationship.

And Adam and Eve initially experienced the intimacy and openness of a perfect marriage. "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Genesis 2:25 This all changed when they sinned against God and hid themselves not only from God, but from each other. But we'll leave that for the next chapter.

#### d) Honour It

But this means that as God's people we need to respect God's design for marriage: "Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." Hebrews 13:4

This also means that if we are married, then we need seek to honour it by loving and respecting our spouse: "Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Ephesians 5:33

And this is not only important for those who are married. It is also important for everyone. Psalm 68:6 says that "God sets the lonely in families." His design is that children will be brought up in a stable, loving and nurturing environment which has as its foundation, a faithful and committed marriage.

Many of us know the blessing of this. Some of us know the hurt when this falls apart. So we need to support and nurture marriage because we need loving marriages to provide loving families.

#### 4. The Gift of Christ

But finally, we need to remember that God has a deeper solution to the problem that "It is not good for man to be alone." Genesis 1:18

##### a) Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ

One part of this is that God offers to us the privilege of being among "Those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:10 And in his family, God invites us to enjoy a deep level of love and friendship.

##### b) The Bride of Christ

But there is an even greater gift than this. Marriage, as wonderful as it is, is only a temporary and earth-based picture of something eternal and heavenly. Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Ephesians 5:25-27

This is the ultimate solution to our loneliness. We are the Bride of Christ. Jesus gave his life for us, so that we could leave behind our old life of slavery to sin, condemnation and death; so we could be joined to him in a faithful covenant relationship; so we could become one with him in intimacy and love. And one day, he is coming back to claim his bride and take us to the home that he has prepared for us.

#### Conclusion

So marriage is a wonderful gift from God to mankind. And we should value it, respect it, honour it, and thank God for it. Husbands, there are some things you should not say to your wives – and vice versa!

But whether we're married, not yet married, never will be married or have gone through the anguish of bereavement or divorce – we can rejoice that Jesus has brought us into something better than marriage.

Through faith in Christ, we have become united with perfect Bridegroom, whose love is unconditional and unlimited, whose commitment is unchanging, and whose relationship with us will never end!