

OpenTheo

Genesis 2:21 - 2:25



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg highlights the importance of Genesis 2:21-2:25 in understanding the sanctity and purpose of marriage. He emphasizes the equal and submissive roles of husband and wife and urges Christians to prioritize obeying God over societal norms. Moreover, Gregg cautions against practices like divorce, same-sex marriage, and extramarital affairs, which he argues are not in line with God's design for marriage. Overall, the discussion emphasizes the need for the church to restore God's intended relationship between men and women according to biblical teachings.

Transcript

We now come to that last part of Genesis chapter 2 where the woman is created. In the material we've covered up to this point, we've led right up to that point. God has said, it's not good for man to be alone.

I'm going to make a helper comparable to him. And so we read of that actually happening in verse 21 and to the end of the chapter. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept.

And he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man he made into a woman, and he brought it to the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. This actually is a play on words not only in English but also in Hebrew. Obviously the word woman contains in it the word man.

That's also true in Hebrew. The word man is ish and the word woman is ishi. So it's I-S-H for man and I-S-H-I for woman.

So just as in English the word woman includes the word man. And then it says in verse 24, Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.

Now this section, just these few verses at the end of chapter 2 of Genesis become the basis and the foundation for a great deal of New Testament teaching. Jesus refers to these verses in teaching his ethics related to divorce. He quotes verse 24.

Paul quotes verse 24 in talking about the sanctity and the high purpose that God has for marriage. Also this order of creation where Adam was created first and woman was created second, Paul uses as a discussion about roles of husbands and wives in both Ephesians and in his writing to Timothy. And also in 1 Corinthians.

So these few verses, though they occupy a very small space, actually are more pregnant with significance, theological significance and apparently practical significance. Judging from the way they are used in the New Testament, then most verses that occupy so small a space is this. It shouldn't surprise us, they contain the creation of woman.

And anyone who does not recognize that the creation of woman was extremely significant, not only for man, but for history and for theology, would be missing something very important. Now as I said in our last lecture, societies that did not have the Bible could easily tell certain things about men and women that the Bible also confirms. I mean, we don't need the Bible to tell us that men and women are like each other, they're comparable to each other.

We also don't need the Bible to tell us that, as Peter puts it, woman is the weaker vessel. Now it's not clear whether Peter, when he says that, means physically weaker or weaker in some other sense. My own understanding of that word in Peter, it's actually 1 Peter 3, I believe it's verse 6, where he says the man should give honor to his wife as to the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life.

Now, Peter says that women and men are heirs together, they are joint inheritors of the life that God has given to his people. In that sense, men and women are equal, of course, equal inheritors, joint inheritors. But Peter does say the woman is the weaker vessel, and while different people have different opinions about what weaker means in that particular context, I think weaker means more delicate.

And delicate is not, to say someone is weaker, it's very politically incorrect to say women are weaker than men, even though women in the military demonstrate that this is true. We don't find women playing in the NFL because no one would expect them to. But, women in general are weaker than men in general.

You will find some men who are weaker than some women. There are women who are unusually strong and men who are unusually weak, but as separate genders, women are usually weaker physically than men, and that's many times what people just assume Peter means, and it would not be a mis-observation on Peter's part to mean that. But when we say that somebody is weak, or weaker than something else, sometimes that's taken as if it's a value judgment, as if we're saying they're not as good, not as valuable

as someone else is, who's not as weak as they are.

Because we take weak to be a negative assessment. Now that's perhaps natural enough for the carnal mind to do, but you know, we're to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and the Bible indicates that being weak is in some ways an asset. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 said that he had been given a thorn in the flesh to basically weaken him so that he might not be exalted above measure.

Now he did enjoy being weakened by this condition, and so he prayed three times that God would remove that condition and make him not that way, whatever it was. But God spoke to him and said, he says, my strength is made perfect in your weakness. And Paul said, oh, okay, well then I'll rejoice in my weakness, because when I'm weak, I'm then strong.

Corrie ten Boom used to love to give an illustration, I think almost every time she spoke. She had a glove she carried with her, and she would hold up the glove, empty, and say, what is this glove capable of doing? Can this glove pick up this Bible off the podium? Well, of course, the glove cannot pick up the Bible off the podium. She could even demonstrate that.

The glove was totally incapable of doing anything. But then, of course, she put the glove on her hand and said, now what can the glove do? Can the glove then pick up the Bible? And of course it could. But the glove could only pick up the Bible because it was flexible and weak, and there was a strong hand inside of it.

Actually, I have owned gloves that were not very practical because they were so heavy. Nowadays, ski gloves are made out of nylon or something like that. When I was young, ski gloves were essentially made out of leather, heavy leather, and there was thick padding.

And I never skied, but I once bought some gloves for cold weather, and I bought them in a ski shop, I bought some ski gloves. I never could wear them because I couldn't bend the fingers. The gloves had too much of their own strength.

They wouldn't yield to my fingers. But a glove that is itself weak allows the hand that is in it to do whatever the hand wishes to do. And therefore, there's a sense in which Paul says, when I'm weak, that's when I'm strong, because God's strength in me is made perfect when I am weak.

Because when I'm weak, my resistance is weak. You know, it's easier to be yielded when you have no power to resist. And so, this is actually counted as a value in the New Testament.

It's the opposite of the way the world thinks, but to be weak in one sense at least is valuable, just as there are other ironies and paradoxes in the spiritual life. That, you

know, to be chief, you must become the servant of all, and there's many other paradoxes. You know, the first should be last, and he that seeks to save his life will lose it, and he that loses his life will save it, and so forth.

The Bible is full, the New Testament is full of teaching that indicates that things are just the opposite, in many respects, from what the world thinks about them. And for Peter to say the woman is the weaker vessel, I don't think he's making a negative value judgment at all. If you have, we have in this country, some of you are not from this country, we have a brand of plates, a flatware called Corel.

When Corel plates were made, they had sort of a look of China, a little bit. But on the commercials, they like to show that you could drop it on the floor, and it wouldn't break. Now, sometimes they do, but normally they don't break.

They're strong plates. They're strong, and they're cheap. Fine china will break if you drop it on the floor.

It's more fragile, but it's finer, it's better, it's more valuable, in fact. You bring out the fine china for your honored guest, the Corel ware is for, well, eventually the dog eats from the bowl. You know? And Paul said, in Timothy, he said, in a large house there are vessels of various types.

There's some made of urban ware, and some are made of silver and gold and silver. Likewise, in many modern homes, there are cheap plates, and then there's fine china in a special cabinet. The china, by the way, is fragile, but it's really much more valuable.

Being fragile doesn't make it less valuable. And it's possible that when Peter said that women are the weaker, then he means that they're more delicate than men, they're more fragile than men. But therefore, as Peter puts it, worthy of honor.

He said that a man should honor his wife as the weaker vessel. Not honor her in spite of the fact that she's a weaker vessel, like, you know, it's not good to be weaker, but you honor her anyway. But rather you honor her because she's the weaker vessel.

You treat her with greater deference. You treat her with greater kindness and so forth. Now, modern women don't want to be treated that way.

Modern women are told, don't depend on a man. Most modern women are raised, many mothers who are themselves divorced, and found they couldn't depend on a man, have taught their daughters, don't ever depend on a man. You're ought to be strong and independent and don't let men take care of you because, you know, you can't count on them.

Sadly, that's often the case. Men have proven to be very untrustworthy in our modern society, and women have had little choice but to not be dependent on men. But that's all

part of the fall.

It's part of even the world of the Church. But God in Christ is seeking to redeem relationships and hoping to make them better than they were. And thus we have in the Scripture teachings about relationships between men and women.

And men are supposed to take care of their wives and their families. Now, are there things that women should not be allowed to do that men can do? I don't know that the Bible would necessarily lay out some group of activities that only men should do. There are perhaps only one thing I know of that Paul himself said he didn't let women do, and he apparently didn't let women be bishops in the Church, according to his writing in 1 Timothy 2. But most of the things men can do, women can do.

And our society is a pragmatic society, not a principled society. Do you know the difference? Pragmatic means if it works, don't criticize it. If it gets the results you want, it's by nature good.

By definition, it's good if it gets what you want done. So if you can use the heel of a shoe to pound a nail, that's fine. Don't criticize that.

It gets the job done. You can even use a rock to pound a nail. But actually, shoes are not made for pounding nails.

They sometimes can do it, but you're better off using a hammer for that. And there are the proper use of things, and there are then of course things that can be serving in the emergency. And the Christian I think ought to be asking, when God made man, and he says it's not good for man to be alone, so he made a comparable person for him.

And he made that person mostly like the man, but in a few ways different. We have to assume that the few ways that are different were intentional. That there's some reflection of God's intention in not making a direct clone of man, but making a corresponding member so that the two together make one machine, as it were.

Make one flesh. And so, throughout history, most societies, whether they were Christian or Pagan, have understood that women, that the special things that God made about women are largely the things that are suitable for bearing children, nurturing children, and that women had primarily a role in that area. And men were not given the same equipment for that, and men were assumed to have largely a different calling.

Now, we live in a very substandard world, and as such we don't have everything ideal. Sometimes a woman is abandoned by a man, and therefore she has to be the man and the woman in the house. But that doesn't mean that we lower the bar and say, that's what we're going to call normal now.

You see, we have to ask ourselves, are we just supposed to make do in a fallen world

with things as bad as they are, or is there supposed to be some way that the gospel redeems relationships and redeems society? In my opinion, the latter is the case, that if we can, we should strive to restore what God intended. Now, we are realistic. We're in a world that doesn't accept that, and even a church that in many cases may not accept the original pattern, because it's too hard.

It's too hard, it's too much of an uphill climb to go from where we are. For example, we have a huge percentage of divorces taking place, not only in the world, but in the church. Now Jesus used this passage we're looking at to forbid divorce.

Not in every case, because Jesus did allow that there are some few grounds for divorce. He only named one in the passage where he quoted this passage. But he did quote this passage in Matthew chapter 19, verses 1 through 9. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Jesus said, well, that should tell you what God had in mind. He had in mind for two people to be one flesh, and if God put them together, then it is sacrilege for man to take what God has joined together and tear it apart. That's what Jesus said.

And he used Genesis 2 to make his point. So, we live in a society where divorce is really easy. Every state in the United States, and probably every country in western civilization, now allows divorce whenever someone wishes for one.

It doesn't even require agreement on the two parts. You know, biblically, it's not even enough for both parties to agree they want a divorce. Because it's not just about them.

To the Christian, everything is for the glory of God. Even marriage. Even child raising.

Even careers. Paul said, whatever you do in order to do all to the glory of God. And so, people say, well, but if we're both unhappy and we want to get divorced, and we agree to it, shouldn't we be able to do it? Well, if you hadn't gotten married, you could split.

Sure. When you got married, you made vows. To man and God.

You promised each other. You promised the whole audience that were there hearing you make those vows. And you swore in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that you were going to keep those vows.

Now, can you just both decide to perjure yourselves? Does perjury become less perjury if you both agree to it? Then you're just co-conspirators in perjury. It's still a crime. You swore.

That's what you do when you get married. You make a vow. If you don't make a vow, you didn't get married.

Marriage is a vow to be joined together by God for life. Now, some things can cause one

person to be freed from their vows. If the other party so violates the vow in such a way as it basically annuls.

By going out, Jesus mentioned fornication. Paul mentioned an unbeliever in the marriage departing and refusing to be part of the marriage anymore. There appears to be, in those cases, freedom from keeping the vow on the part of the other party.

The party who didn't break it. You know, the other party broke it, so it's broken. So this innocent party then would appear to be free to go on their way.

But no marriage can possibly break up without there being heinous sin. Because if a marriage breaks up legitimately, it's only because there has been heinous sin on the part of one person. If it breaks up illegitimately, that itself is a heinous sin.

There is never a time when a marriage breaks up without it being an atrocity. And Jesus said, when God puts people together, it is wrong for humans to break that apart. Now, we live in a society where people just don't think that way.

They think, well, why should someone be unhappy? Why should someone be with somebody that they're not happy with all their life? Well, why should Adam and Eve have to live in the garden and not eat of the tree of the knowledge of Geneva? Because God said not to. Their test was to be tempted to eat it, but to say no to the temptation. Some of us have the test of, my temptation is to default and back out of my marriage vows, because this is not a fun marriage.

But God said not to do it. So am I going to pass the test or fail the test? For many people, the principal test they have in life is to keep their marriage vows until they die. But you're still required to pass tests, all tests.

It's a temptation, in some cases, to leave a marriage. But temptations are supposed to be resisted by Christians. But how difficult it would be today to try to transform the modern Western church and say, no more divorces will be allowed here.

We're going to call all remarriage, in cases where the previous marriage did not break up legitimately, we're going to call all remarriage adultery. That's what Jesus called it. And it seems to me that Christians ought to call things what Jesus called them.

But imagine the ramifications if you did that in the modern church. You've got half the church who have been divorced and remarried. Some of them had no legitimate basis for their first marriage breaking up, and therefore they are living in what Jesus would call adultery.

Is there a preacher who wants to go call half his congregation adulterers? Not many. It's so much easier to just say, well, why don't we just fudge a little on this? Why don't we just kind of live and let live? Why should we interfere? Why should we intrude into

people's private decisions? After all, we're under grace, right? Well, we are under grace, that's true, but isn't the church supposed to teach the nations to observe all things that Jesus commanded? Isn't that the commission we've been given? If we're not going to teach them, then what are we here doing? Maintaining a little religious club? If we're not going to fulfill the great commission, we don't have any reason to exist at all, because the commission is the reason we're here. To make disciples of all nations and teach them to do everything Jesus said.

But if a pastor says, I can't do that, I'd lose half my congregation. Well, what would Jesus do? Jesus lost more than half of his congregation sometimes by saying things that he knew they wouldn't like. Because, you know what? He wanted his congregation to be made up of people who were really his followers, not people who were there just to get what they could get out of him.

You see, Jesus had a different philosophy than sometimes modern ministries do. Now, it seems to me that we look at the situation of divorce, and that's one example of how our society and our churches have deviated from the pattern God set in Genesis 2. And we say, we can't turn the clock back. Divorce is too commonplace.

We can't turn the clock back. C.S. Lewis heard someone say that once. He says, I hope I don't seem too silly when I say this, but actually you can turn the clock back, and if the clock is reading the wrong time, it's a very wise thing to do.

Who says you can't turn the clock back? You can't turn society back, perhaps with a wave of a magic wand, but you can begin to obey Jesus yourself. You can begin to influence other Christians to obey Jesus. The church itself can become what it originally was, a radically alternative counterculture, which was very different from the rest of society out in Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem church was very countercultural. Because why? The early church followed what Jesus said. The rest of the culture didn't.

Now, what happens when you do that? Well, you might get persecuted. Or, you might make an impact. One thing is, the church in America doesn't get persecuted, and it doesn't make an impact either.

If you become radically Christ-like as a community of believers, one thing or another will happen, and maybe both will happen. Persecution, because you're not enough like the prevailing culture to keep them happy. In fact, you threaten them.

And, impact, in the sense that there are people in the culture who say, you know, the way you guys are doing it really makes sense. You people seem like better people. You keep your marriage vows, even when it's hard to keep your marriage vows.

That counterculture becomes a witnessing community to the world. When the church

ceases to be obedient to Christ, it ceases to have anything to say. It speaks only with its mouth, and not with its life.

The early church had an impact, because when the apostles went out and preached the gospel, everyone knew, these guys are speaking for that group of people over there who have been so impressive to us. The rich people sell their goods and give them to the poor. These people are amazing, and these men speaking the gospel, they are speaking the message of this community over here.

The apostles preached the gospel from the platform of an alternative society that was very alternative, but very superior, morally, to the society around them. Not everyone liked that. The apostles got themselves thrown in jail and beaten a few times in that situation.

But God added to the church daily, because they had impact and received persecution. In fact, they received persecution because they had impact. But the point is, the modern church does not place a high premium on obeying what Jesus says in everyday life, or teaching people to do so.

Therefore, the modern church receives no persecution and has no impact. Now, you think I'm exaggerating. In Southern California, where I came from, at one time, I wouldn't be surprised if 20% of the population were churchgoers, maybe more.

Maybe 50%. But the culture down there is just as unimpacted by Christianity as anywhere I've been. It's worldly, materialistic, sensuous culture.

Churches, the early church, was an alternative society, a countercultural movement, that as a counterculture bore testimony to the truth of Christ and his Lordship. And so my thought is that even if it's a huge uphill climb to begin to try to preach and restore what Jesus actually said to do, we really don't have a choice, do we? I mean, are we just going to try to keep the institution going like a machine, and hope to make a good salary for the ministers that way, and keep people coming and paying the building mortgage and so forth? Is that what the church is here to do? Or are we here to make the impact that the early church was making, that Jesus made, by teaching people to observe what he said? I've always thought that I don't have any reason to exist if I'm not going to teach people to do what Jesus said. Because that's the commission.

And if I don't do that commission, I can't make up a different commission for myself. I can't make up a different job description. I'm not making up the commands.

It's Christ who's the Lord. So when we get to Genesis 2, we see in Genesis 2, the way God intended things to be, and especially with men and women. And by the way, when Jesus in Matthew 19 was asked about divorce, they asked him, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause? And he said, have you not read, and he quotes Genesis 2.

And they said, well, but later Moses gave a permission to give a writing of divorce, and Jesus said, yes, because of moral failure, because of hardness of heart, Moses did permit you to divorce your wife.

And they said, but from the beginning it was not so. Now, in saying that, Jesus is saying, you want to know what God really wants, look at how he made it before it fell, before it broke. Don't try to figure out what a machine does if you've only seen a broken one.

Try to find one that works. Before it breaks, then you'll find out what the machine is supposed to do. Jesus said, it wasn't this way at the beginning.

And fortunately, since we have Scripture, we can know what it was like before it broke. No one else could know. Without the Scripture, we'd never know.

We'd just think that the dysfunctional society we have is all that there's ever been. But the Bible tells us, no, before sin came, it was different. Now, we can't live exactly the way people lived before sin came, because we ourselves sin, and we're surrounded by Christians who also sin.

We can't help that. But there's certainly no reason to not attempt to approximate God's will as much as possible. There's no sense in saying, I can't get over the bar, so I'll just take the bar down.

No. We say, I can't get over the bar, but I'm going to try to get better at it. And I trust that God has grace for me.

Every time I knock the bar down, I'm trying to get over it. God is gracious, but He's not lenient. You don't read of a lenient God in the Bible.

What is lenient? Lenient means He really doesn't care if you perform well or not. Well, He does care, but He's gracious. He knows our frame.

He remembers where we're at. He knows we fall short, and He's willing to forgive. But that doesn't mean He's saying, let's just remove the bar altogether.

No. He'd like you to still aim at the same bar. That's why all the instructions in the Scripture given to Christians are like perfection.

God knows we're not perfect, but He doesn't want us to aim any lower than that. Because you know why? If He just put the bar down where we live, we'd never grow any further. We'd just get over the bar easily, and we'd just kind of cruise through life.

He wants us to change from glory to glory into that image of Christ. And that requires that we keep aiming at the bar which is Christ. And don't move it down.

So, what other lessons are drawn from this passage in the New Testament? Well, Paul

drew some lessons from this passage. The most controversial of which have to do with Paul's assigning a different set of behaviors or role, I should say, probably to women. In Ephesians 5, verse 31, we see Paul quoting Genesis 2, verse 24.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. And Paul says in verse 32, this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Now, how does Paul develop this? If Adam and Eve are a picture of Christ and the Church, or a husband and wife are a picture of Christ and the Church, well then, in verse 22, of course he says, wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, and is the Savior of the body.

Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands and everything. But husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church. See, Paul's consistent.

He's got this picture. Marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church. Well, how does the Church relate to Christ? How does Christ relate to the Church? Well, Christ relates to the Church by loving the Church and giving himself for her.

That's what the husband is supposed to do. He's supposed to love his wife sacrificially, giving his own life, if necessary, for her salvation, for her well-being, for her benefit. The wife, like the Church, submits to her husband, like the Church submits to Christ.

Now, you know, if Paul didn't think that marriage was a picture of Christ and the Church, and if he didn't appeal to Genesis 2 as his basis for it, if Paul was just giving instructions to the husband's wife to do this, do this, as it were, in a theological vacuum, then we might say, well, these are culturally conditioned instructions. Because, after all, maybe Paul was reflecting the culture of the day when he said that this should happen. Actually, he wasn't.

The Ephesians were a Roman colony, and if you read the Romans of that time, Cicero, Livy, and Bofors, they say that the women ruled the families in Rome. Men ruled the nation. Women ruled the family.

And so, Paul's instructions here were actually quite in contrast to the Roman society that his readers lived in. The opposite, in fact. But, even if they were the same, we might say, without reference to Genesis 2, it's possible he'd be giving culturally conditioned teachings.

Sort of like when he says, greet one another with a holy kiss. Very few of us think that that is a command that needs to be followed to the letter, because it was a cultural way of greeting. We have different ways of greeting now than a holy kiss.

When Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11, talks about women wearing head coverings, we kind of

recognize that's a cultural practice of Corinth, and even Paul himself indicates that that's not a universal practice when he says, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11-16, there are culturally conditioned instructions in the scripture. The question is, do we recognize when they exist and when they don't? Here, Paul could have given culturally conditioned instructions, but he instead says, no, the reason you do this is because it is written in Genesis that the two become one flesh, and that, Paul says, was right from the very beginning given as a picture of Christ in the church.

Now see, God created marriage, not man. If man created marriage, the man could regulate it, define it, do what he wants with it. He could make it same-sex couples, that's cool, why not? If everyone wants it, if the majority want it, let's just vote.

Okay, now marriage includes same-sex couples. It could even include people who are, you know, jumping from bed to bed and marriage to marriage. People just leave one wife and take another wife without any grounds.

No, the Bible doesn't say that's marriage. Jesus said that's adultery. If you don't have grounds for the divorce and you marry again, you're in adultery.

Adultery and marriage are different things. The nation, the courts of the land call that marriage, but Jesus calls it adultery. The courts of the land, they call same-sex marriage marriage.

The Bible calls that perversion and fornication. And so the question is, are we supposed to go with what God says about marriage? Well, we don't really have a choice, it's His. Marriage is His invention.

It was His idea. He set it up. And Paul in Ephesians 5 tells us what we would not otherwise know.

He set it up to be a picture of Christ in the church. That was not revealed about marriage in the Old Testament, and therefore you have many substandard practices in the Old Testament marriage, including polygamy and easy divorce and things like that, which the Old Testament permitted, because God had not yet revealed at that time Christ and the mystery of what God made marriage to be. But He has revealed it to us.

And so if you're a married man, and you say, well, what's my role in marriage as a man? Well, what's Christ's role toward the church? He gave Himself. He died for the church. He nurtures the church.

He cherishes the church. Paul says, well, that's what you do. You're what? If you're a married woman, you say, what is my role as a wife? Well, Paul says, it's not really too hard to figure out.

What's the church's role toward Christ? He's the head. Paul says the husband's the head of the woman as Christ's the head of the church. So he means the husband's the head of the wife.

He doesn't mean men and women. Paul never would have taught that every man is a head over every woman. He's talking about married people.

And the word man and woman that he uses here are also the same words in the Greek. If it says, you know, the man is the head of the woman, that's a mistranslation. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.

Now, does this mean then that men are the boss of the family? Well, the word boss conveys sort of almost like setting up things, preparing for a power struggle here. There shouldn't be any power struggle. Neither the man nor the woman in the marriage should be seeking to dominate anyone else.

Christ does not dominate us. But we want to be dominated by him, but he lets us choose. He lets us even do the wrong things at times.

He doesn't always stop us. He doesn't approve when we do the wrong thing. But he does not enforce his wishes against us immediately.

And therefore, if a man is free like Christ, then if his wife does not submit to him, he doesn't enforce that. You see, the Bible nowhere tells husbands to enforce the wife's submission. The instruction to the husband is that he love his wife.

He's not given other instructions. The instruction to the woman is to submit to her husband. There is no instruction to the husband to see to it that his wife submits.

And there's no instruction that says the woman should make sure her husband loves her. Instructions in the Bible are given to the people who are supposed to keep the instructions. Christians are not given dominion over other Christians.

We all are to be submissive to each other. We all are to be servant-minded toward each other. I love what Elizabeth Elliott said about this once.

Because in Christianity today, many years ago, back in the 80s, there was an issue devoted to the question of women in church leadership. And there were four women in leadership in Christian organizations that were interviewed. And lo and behold, surprisingly, they all believed that women should be in church leadership.

And that was all the interviews. That's a real, a balanced treatment, right? You get four women who head up Christian organizations and ask them, What do you think the Bible says about women in leadership? Oh, we think it's good. Oh, okay, it's a unanimous thing.

All four said the same thing. Well, the next issue of Christianity Today had letters to the editor in which some woman somewhere back east wrote, complaining about the treatment of the subject in the previous issue. And she said, Why did you only interview women who take one position? Why didn't you interview someone like Elizabeth Elliott? Was it because you knew that she would not agree with that position? And in that letter to the editor, right under that letter, there was a letter from Elizabeth Elliott to the editor.

And Elizabeth Elliott has always been, I think, my most respected woman. You know, she is incredible. You know, her husband was martyred and then she took the three-year-old child and they went in to evangelize the natives that killed her husband, won the tribe over to Christ.

She's been a professor in seminary for many, many years since then. Marvelous woman. And she wrote a letter to the editor and she said, She said, Would not the unutterably boring women's issues dissolve into nothing if all of us, men and women, would let this mind be at rest that was in Christ, who did not see equality a thing to be grasped, but made himself a servant and humbled himself to the point of death.

Now, Elizabeth Elliott does not believe in egalitarian roles of men and women. She's one of those hierarchical, you know, more traditional type women. But she said the women's issue is boring to her.

And I would think it would be boring to almost any Christian who has the mind of Christ. Equality is not an issue. Equality is not a thing to be grasped.

Christ didn't even consider his equality with God as a thing to be grasped. If that's not something to be grasped, then no equality would be something to be grasped. Christians, by definition, have come to Christ on these terms.

They've denied themselves. They've taken up their cross. And they are following Jesus.

And seeking to have the mind of Christ. As such, I can't imagine that a person who's thinking like a Christian, now, not all Christians think like Christians, I'll just grant that, but I can't think of anyone who's thinking like a Christian would even care about the equality issue. I can't imagine a man being jealous over his authority in the home, or a woman being jealous over her freedom to do what she wants in the home.

When you become a Christian, you give up your concerns about doing what you want. And it's no longer I, but Christ. The question is, is there any word from the Lord about how I'm supposed to behave? That's the only concern to a Christian.

If you have other concerns still relevant, those are your carnal, unbroken, fallen nature. And we all have it, by the way. We all have it.

And therefore, men do get jealous over their authority. Women get jealous over their

dignity as equals to men. And so forth.

And we know human nature, we all have it. But the issue is not, you know, what do we by nature think and feel and want to do. The question is, has God given us any instructions here? And it seems to me that he has, and Paul gives the instructions based upon Genesis chapter 2. The chapter we're dealing with here.

And so we see that Paul thinks, and Jesus thinks, that Genesis 2, our present passage that we're looking at, is the foundation from which all the whole understanding of marriage and divorce sprang. Actually, not even divorce, because divorce is not mentioned in the passage. When Jesus was asked about divorce, he said, well, let's talk about what marriage is.

You don't need to talk about divorce separately. Once you know what marriage is, you know what to think about divorce. Divorce doesn't even have to be separately treated, because when you know that God joined them together, and man should not put them apart, you need no further instruction about divorce.

And so marriage is the first institution God ever created. It has priority over all others. Even, I think, priority over the church itself.

I believe that the sovereignty of the family takes priority over the sovereignty of the local church. Now, I do believe that every individual in the family is subject to the discipline of the local church. But the family is a unit that can move about from one location to another, being different churches but still be the same family.

It's the basic unit of human society. And its definition is not left in question in the Bible. And when society begins to redefine it, then, of course, society begins to undermine its own foundation.

I'll just say this. This is my own private thoughts. Well considered, but private personal thoughts.

I personally believe that Christians are going to have to come to a place that Christians used to be in, where they did not look to the state to tell them whether they're married or not. The idea that the state licenses marriages is not in the Bible. It's God that created marriage.

And the church that enforces it. I personally believe that the state in our society has proven itself in recent times absolutely incompetent to license marriages, to even define what marriage is. They don't have a clue what a marriage is.

They think two men together can be a marriage. They think two women together can be a marriage. They think someone who's had a string of partners without any grounds for divorce, their present relationship can be a marriage.

All of this is anti-scriptural. It's contrary to what God says marriage is. When the pagan society has lost track of what it's even talking about, and doesn't even know what marriage is, it's amazing that Christians still feel that if the state licenses my marriage, then I'm married.

If the state grants a divorce, then I'm divorced. Really, who gave the state that competence? Not God. The Bible doesn't say God has given the state the competence.

God makes the decisions. And the church, I believe, enforces them. I believe the time is going to have to come when the church licenses its own marriages, grants its own divorces when there might be grounds for it, and basically exercises church discipline over those that violate the church's standards in it.

Because there's too much confusion now. Too many people in church have wedding licenses that don't deserve them. And the time is going to come when people in church are going to be same-sex couples holding marriage licenses.

And the church is going to say, wait a minute, we've got to rethink this thing. The state doesn't have competence to license marriages or grant divorces. That's God's domain.

And the state is not God. But the church stands for God and must speak for God, and must, I believe, enforce among its own ranks. What God says about things.

That's what I personally think. That's my personal opinion. So, I mean, I don't think it's wrong for Christians to go ahead and get a marriage license if the church also grants them marriage, but they should understand it's not the state's marriage license that makes them married.

It's vows taken before the congregation and agreed upon by the body of Christ that determines if you're married. A state license might give you certain legal recourse, you know, about property and things like that. I could see that there could be some desirable reason to get a marriage license from the state for those reasons.

But if you do, you should not think that because I have a marriage license from the state, therefore I'm married. You have to ask yourself, then if the state also tears that license up and gives you a divorce, does that make you divorced? Not in many cases it doesn't. So, the book of Genesis is the book of beginnings.

It's the beginning of marriage we read about. And Paul and Jesus seem to indicate that the beginning of it continues to be the defining philosophy of it. What God had in mind.

And so that's about all we have time for this part of Genesis 2. We didn't talk about the naked part, but we will talk about that when we get to chapter 3. When they are naked and know it. At the end of chapter 3 they are naked and they don't know it. But they know it later, and so we'll talk about those two verses in juxtaposition when we come to

the second of them.

Let's take a break.