



SESSION ONE God's Definition of Marriage

I suppose I ought to tell you—you have a right to know—why you are going to see so much of me. What right do I have to stand up here all these hours and invade the most private aspect of your life, and tell you how to do it?

I have only two credentials and on the basis of these I ask you, “Let me come *in* to your life.” My first credential is simply this: that I have a growing burden, a *deep* burden, for family experience. I think you ought to have it. See, I didn't ready this out of a book. I got it as a kid. I came up in a family where my mother and father couldn't put it together. They *never* got it together, and later they divorced. I know what it did to my mother and my father, and I know what it did to my brothers and sisters, and I know where I'd be tonight if it were not for the constant mercy and grace of God. *I've been through it.*

But when I began teaching at Columbia Bible College, dealing with these students who were not only Christians, but they are *select* Christians—those whom God had called to go into Christian service. And as they would come to me with their problems, and as they would begin to learn to walk with God, they'd have problems, and they'd begin to stumble and fall, and they couldn't find the answer, and they'd come to me. So I'd just ask a few questions and without exception, I found back there a broken family. And when I see a student at Columbia Bible College, when he hits there and he really takes off without any . . . I go back there and I find a family in which God has been working.

Then when I hear the screams of people out in our society and see what's happening around us, I don't see how anybody can face it without a growing burden. For every two marriages during the month of June, *over half* of them will split. Do you know what that does to persons? And there will be, every year now, a *million children* who will go through those divorces. And do you know what it does to a child who sees his parents split? One great writer has said it is just like taking a child and sawing him down the middle. In our society there are 13 million young people under 18 who have either one or both parents away.

I come to you with a heavy heart, with a burden. And if I become intense, and when you think I am laying it on and I'm getting intense towards you, many times I will be trying to speak *through you* to those out there who are hurting. I wonder if you'll let me in, to share that burden with you. I believe God wants to take some of you, and I have had people from the seminar write me and tell me what happens when they go out and touch other lives. And God wants to work through you. I've come with a burden. Will you let me in? It's my only credential—except this: that I have found some answers to these critical problems with families, and for 38 years I've seen them work with my wife and me. And I want to tell you that if God can take somebody like me who was a wreck—a terrible marriage risk—and make something of him, you've got some answers! I've seen it work with me and my wife. I've seen it work with my four boys and *their* families. I've seen him take lives and turn them around. I've seen them out there in Columbia. I've seen them other places, and I get excited. And so my friend, if I appear at times to be dogmatic, it is not because I'm getting old. It is because *I am absolutely sure*. I don't care what the problem is; I've found an answer to it. I don't care whether it is your marriage, or your children or . . . I don't care what! I *know* that God can deal with it.

So if you think I'm getting too intense, I am trying to share a burden. If you think I'm very dogmatic, I *know*, my friend. I can't tell you what I can do, but I know what God can do. And I've found some answers and I'd like to share them with you. Will you let me come in? Those are my only credentials. Not that I have never failed—I *have* failed. But I've got a burden and I've found some answers. And I want to share them with you.

The answers that I have found for these problems that are all around us and are growing worse every year, the answers that I've found are very, very radical. Whenever you touch—in *any* way—the family, you are touching something that is very, very important. And it's radical. I don't know whether you realize it or not, how important your family is. And anything that has to do with your family is radical!

Let me read from a recent article by a Christian psychiatrist on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. This is what he says—listen: “Early family experience determines our adult character structure. It determines the inner picture we have of ourselves, how we see others and feel about them, our concept of right and wrong, our capacity to establish the close, and warm, sustained relationships necessary to have a family of our own.” *How well I know that!* “It determines our attitude toward authority and toward the *Ultimate* Authority in our lives. It determines the way we attempt to make sense out of our existence. No human interaction has greater impact on our lives than our family experience.”

For you to give your time to consider the family is radical. Whatever happens to a family is radical because the family is determinative in so many, many things—if not *all* that takes place in a human experience. It's the root.

What I want to share with you these days is radical because the answers I have found are not American, they're not Oriental, they're not Latin. They're biblical. They're from heaven. And, my friend, *that's radical*. And I will sit with you, to see from this book, the radical nature of what God has for family experience.

What I'd like to do as we begin is to set before you a very, very simple definition and this will be our foundation all the way through. And on this I will build. I would like to define for you: What is a family? What is a biblical family? *What does God want?* And as a basis for this I would like to use a verse in Hebrews. If you'll turn with me to Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 10, and very simply and as quickly as I can, I would like to get from this one way you can define a biblical family. The author here is not speaking immediately about a family. He's speaking about Abraham, that great man of faith. And then he comes to verse 10. “For he . . .” (Abraham) “. . . he looked for . . .” (he anticipated, he looked with great hope toward something, he longed for) “. . . he looked for the *city*.” Now here is where I'll exegete it, and then I'll apply it. He is looking for a city. Now, what's a city? May I suggest for you quickly, a city is a multitude of families? If I can take whatever he says about a city—which is nothing but a bunch of families—I can bring it down and say you will never have a city if you don't have a bunch of families. If you want a city like this, you've got to have a bunch of families like this because your family is your block out of which you build a city, or a society, or a nation. Whatever he says about a city I'm going to apply and make as our biblical definition of a Christian family.

Here we go . . . Abraham looked for—may I substitute—“family.” He looked for the family which hath—here's the first characteristic: He looked for a city that “hath the foundations.” Do you know what that says? A Christian family—a biblical family—is one that has the foundations in terms of what the Lord Jesus told in His figure when he was speaking in the Sermon on the Mount, as He wrapped it up. He says this (You can say it with me in your heart): “A wise man built his house on a *rock*” (Matthew 7:24). May I paraphrase that? *A wise man will build his family on a rock!* It'll have *foundations!* And the Lord Jesus says a wise man. He's a *wise* man. “He's wise who builds his house upon a rock.” Foundations! And do you know what happened? And the *rains* descended and the *floods* beat on it and the *winds* blew on it. Tell me, what happened to the house? It stood!

I could spend all evening and all week telling you about the winds that are beating on marriages and families in America. Could you list 20 of them for me? Perhaps you have grown used to them. And when your children come up and they get ready to get married, do you know what they are going to hit? The rains are descending, and the floods are beating, and the winds are blowing. But I tell you with great joy and deep confidence: there is a family—a biblical family—that has the foundations. And I don't care how the winds blow. I don't care what they are. It'll what? Say it! *It will still stand.*

How many of you would like to have a family? How many would like to have for your children this great confidence that that family—that your children—are beginning? They'll stand all the floods, and all the

rain, and all the wind—and all the way through it, will stand to the very end. Is that worth having? Yes or no? If I understand anything about this book, that is God's family. Families are falling all the time. They're cracking, they're . . . and boy, you can have a family that hath the foundations. And the winds may come and the floods fall, and it'll *stand* all the way! What would you give for a family like that? You can't buy it. But you can have it! Let's move on.

Now we've got the family, "a city that has the foundations." Now, continue to read verse 10. "He looked for a city that hath the foundations." Now, here's what makes it so solid: "...*whose builder and maker is God.*" Let's look at those two words, "whose builder." That word should be translated "whose *architect* is God." Now you see what that says? The *architect*. What does an architect do? What does an architect give you? He gives you a blueprint. Do you blame the architect if the builder does not follow his plans? Yes or no? *Don't blame God* for the marriages that are crumbling, when they totally ignore God's blueprint. An architect draws me a plan! Have you ever tried to build a house without a plan? Have you ever tried to build anything without a plan? Just start building. And the awful pity out yonder—and some of us have grown used to it—young people come up and they fall in love and they get married and they have no more plan for that marriage than the man in the moon. And then they wonder why it goes askew. Somehow they think they'll just drift into it.

We turn our young people loose and say, "There is no plan." You can't build it without a plan. And with great joy I tell you a biblical family—a Christian family—is one that has found and adopted the plan that God has given.

Do you have a Christian family? Do you have a Christian marriage? What is a biblical, Christian marriage? It is one that has adopted as *its* commitment, not the American plan, not my plan; it is *God's* plan. What does *God* want for my marriage? That blueprint has been understood and adopted as *my* plan. Alright, whew! That is out of this world!

Now read on to the last word, "whose builder and *maker.*" That word is what we call a builder, a contractor, the one who gets his hands dirty in the actual process of building something. The more complicated your plan, the more careful you'd better consider the one who is going to build it for you. You get the most elaborate plan and if you don't have a good builder, you're in trouble. And the plan that God has for marriage—if you don't agree with me, I'll be deeply surprised—you will agree with me, that God's plan for marriage and the family is so heavenly, so wonderful; no one can build it but God. And if you think you can, you don't understand the plan.

Now tell me, this will be question #35 on the final exam, tell me, *what is a Christian family?* A Christian family is one which is being built by God according to *God's* blueprint. You cannot build one according to God's blueprint and God won't build according to any other blueprint. But when you get this situation where you have God by His grace building with this man and this woman and these children, *God* building according to *His* plan, a marriage and a family, you've got something that will stand every wind that blows, and every storm that comes. And it will stand until the very end. *God* has a plan and *God* will build it. That's my simple definition of a Christian family, and together with you, through these sessions, what I would like to do with you is to consider from the Word of God, God's blueprint for family living.

Go with me back to Genesis chapter 2 and we will see God's blueprint. He's never changed it. Sin has come. God has dealt with that; but He has never changed His blueprint for marriage. I want to work with you through this passage, this old, old familiar passage, verse 18 through 24 of Genesis, chapter 2. And as we begin to approach it, may I remind you this is God's record of His original creation, when God first began His creation of man. If anything in there has to do with marriage and family, it takes on an importance that is very, very significant. When God first created human beings He did not create a mother and child. He did not create a grandfather and grandson. He created a married couple. I wonder how many of you see some of the implications of that. It is not just that God has *ordained* marriage as we say in a ceremony. God began His creative operations with men—human beings—with a married couple!

Pick it up with me in verse 7 of chapter 2. “And Jehovah God formed man . . .” Here is the first word we must understand, and it occurs about 25 times between verse 10 and verse 25. He says, “He created man,” and all the way through the spotlight is on this one. And the *man* . . . and the *man* . . . and the *man* . . . In the Bible sometimes the word “man” is used generically so it means “human being.” Sometimes it’s used in the sense of a male human being. Which is it here? Is He talking about man—human beings—generically? Or is He talking about a male human being? Very critical. Which is it? It is a male human being. “And Jehovah God formed this male human being of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and this male human being became a living soul.”

Do you know what God did to that man? There was a place there in the garden. He made a garden and He said He put the man there and he has a good place. And He says all the trees of the garden you can eat, and he’s got good food. And here are the rivers flowing through, and he’s got good water, unpolluted. And He says to that man, “Here’s this garden and I want you to take care of it for Me.” And he has a good job, and God comes to him and commands him, “Don’t you do this!” A *good* God! He wouldn’t have been good if He hadn’t told him what to do. Do you know what he’s got? He’s a good man. He’s a *good* man. He’s got a *good* place: he’s got *good* food; he’s got *good* water; he’s got a good job; and he’s got a good God. And there’s nothing between him and God. Listen, what would you give a man who’s got everything? What does he need?

Now, verse 18; let’s look at it carefully. “And Jehovah God said it is not good,”—I’m not through yet—“it is not good.” Now, here’s your next word! “It is not good that the man should be . . .” Give me that next big word; say it! “*Alone*.” Now let me open that word up just a moment for you. The etymology of the word, the basic root of the word, is something like this: If you take a limb off a tree, and you take the limb and you pull it off and hold it up, what do you do? You’d say, “That limb, it’s not good for that limb, to be . . .” what? Now what word would *you* use? “*Alone*”? Put some other limbs with it. Oh, no! “It is not good for that limb to be . . .” what? *Separated*. That’s the root of that word. “It is not good for that man to be separated”: to be “apart,” to be “alone.” He’s not complete. Now, that’s what He’s saying.

Now watch what God does. The rest of verse 18, the record says what God’s going to do. “I will make him. . .” Now give me the next two words—*two* words—not one. The Bible doesn’t say “helpmeet.” The Bible says this: “I will make him a help.” I’m going to meet his need. I’m going to give him *help*! What kind of help will it be? “Meet.” Give me a synonym for it. “Meet.” *Suited* to him. *Answering* to him. *Corresponding* to him. As they say in modern terminology, “I’ll make him a help *compatible* with him.” Somebody who will fit him. And here is where you are going to get the blueprint for marriage. Now watch it! For God says, “I am going to make a help suited for him.” So, verse 19: “. . .out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them.” It’s not just naming the animals; they’re bringing them to Adam, to see if any would fit. So He brought a dog to Adam and He said, “Adam, what kind of a thing is it? Does it fit you? Does it meet your need?” And the last of verse 20 said, “. . .but for Adam, the man was not found a help suited to him.” None of them fitted, *none* of the animals.

And then this great word, verse 21, “And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a . . . ‘hercUmen’” (is the word).

May I give you a new word? Now, I want to get a new *word* because the emphasis of the Bible is a little different than the emphasis of our culture. “And He made a _____.” What did He make? “. . .and brought her unto the man. And the man said. . .” What did he say? “Finally at last, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Like or different—which is he saying? Like or different? *Like*! Oh, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, and she shall be called—here’s the new word—let’s speak Hebrew: “She shall be called Eesh-shah.” Say it. “Eesh-shah, because she was taken out of Eesh.” Now you’ve got it. Eesh—man. Eesh-shah. Do you know what that is? That is the female form of man. Eesh-shah. Like you would say, “lion-male.” What’s the female? Lioness. Do you realize that’s what woman means? Wo-man. And He made a man, and then He made another one *like him* and brought her unto that man, and here you’ve got, in the act of creation, a married couple, male and female. And he said, “Finally at last, one like me. Now I’m complete. And she shall be called Eesh-shah, manness, because she was taken out of man.” Eesh-shah out of Eesh. Manness out of man. Wo-man out of man. That’s creation! You’ve got a married couple!

Now the blueprint, verse 24. Every time I read it I am overwhelmed with the wonder of the Word of God. I'll set the blueprint before you. It will take us all week to study it. It will really take you all your *life* to study it, and God summarizes it in three words. And I'll challenge you; if you'll take these three words as God's blueprint for your marriage, and you work on this, and you pray and ask God to build yours like this, I'll guarantee you it'll get better and better and better toward the goal that God has chosen.

All right let's look at it in verse 24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother." Specification number one in God's blueprint for marriage. Do you know what that says? "*Leave* your mother and father." That is not what is so often done in America, where young people get married to get away from home. I'll guarantee you; if any couple ever marries to get away from home they don't have a chance. There is no way that'll work. This is speaking just the opposite. What God is saying is this: Before the time of marriage the most wonderful relationship you have ever known should have been the relationship which you have had with your mother and your father—so much so that I don't want to leave. Not because I am over-dependent, but because there is such a wonderful, beautiful relationship between me and my mother and my father. God says, "Leave that." Why? Because that's bad? No. Same reason the disciples left their nets and followed Jesus. Why did they leave their fishing nets? Because it was bad? No. Because they found Jesus. Do you know what that says? Leave your mother and father because marriage, according to God's blueprint, is the most important of all human relationships; more important—listen—than your relationship with your parents, with your friends, with your colleagues, with your pastor, with your children—*with anybody else*. God says marriage is number one priority. The most important of all human relationships, and only one relationship can get above it and that's your relationship with Jesus Christ.

You know what would happen to any marriage where both partners say, "From now on, in a new way, we're going to put top priority on our marital relationship"? Do you think marriages in America consider that marital relationship is the most important of all human relationships? It gets leftovers, again and again. God's blueprint says, "Leave everything else because this is number one." If I cannot demonstrate that to you through the Scriptures I'll correct it.

Read the next word: "Therefore shall a man *leave* his father and mother and shall *cleave* unto his wife." Cleave. The root of the word is simply the word "glue." It'll stick, just like Elmer's. You know how long? As the modern marriage forums are saying, ". . . as long as we both shall *love*?" No. You cleave. How long? As long as you both shall live. Marriage is the only—it is the *only* permanent human relationship that God has ever established on this earth. Your pastor is not permanent. Teachers are not permanent. Your employer is not permanent. Listen! Your children are not permanent. Your friends are not permanent. *Only marriage is permanent*. Do you know what the specifications are? Marriage is to be the most important of all human relations; it is to be the only permanent human relationship.

And finally, "...they shall be..." what? Say it all together: "...they shall be one flesh." Marriage is to be the most intimate, the most complete, the most total . . . there is no other relationship like it. There *can be* no other relationship as total, and as intimate, and as complete. A husband and wife are to be so intimately related as persons, without hurting, or damaging, or thwarting, or hindering either one—so intimately related that they function as—say it once more—as what? One! I have never found anything in all Scripture that talks about marriage, that does not elaborate these *great* specifications. I have never found a problem in marriage, I've never heard a scream of young people that are affected by marriage, I've never heard a scream of a woman or a husband in marriage, *but that one or the other* of these specifications has been destroyed. You give me a couple who are committed that marriage is top priority, it is the only permanent, and we are to become one. Two human beings—male and female—can be so intimately related that they function as one. Don't sell it short. Don't dismiss it and get it a little happy, a little romantic ideal. This is the ultimate reality. You let God build that and I'll tell you, you will have something that is heaven on earth.

May I give you a little illustration of this? And I've never found one like it. One day God did this. He made a man, a male human being. And I'll let it be like this. I've never found an illustration that will match this. Do you see what this is? It's an ice pick, true or false (laughter)? What is it? It's a beautiful thing, very beautifully engineered; very, very beautifully constructed. And the manufacturer made it just so I could use

it like this. Do you see what it is? It's a very beautiful thing, but it's not good that that should be . . . what? Audience: "alone." That's not the word. It should not be? Ah, **separated!** You've got to have another one to complete it. And so God said, "I will make one that will fit it, and He made the animals" (laughter as he tries to mate an ice pick and a screwdriver). I don't know why . . . why you laugh! What's wrong with a screwdriver? See, it'll . . . now that's good, and I'm not faulting the screw-driver. I'm not faulting the most wonderful thing, God's animals! And so He brought that animal to Adam, but somehow it didn't fit.

"I need one like me," he said. And so God made another one. Look, Eesh, Eesh-shah. "And He brought her unto the man. And he said, "Now, at last there is one like me, bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, and she shall be called Eesha because she was taken out of Eesh." Man-male, man-female. Leave your mother and father, cleave.

My friend, this is not marriage. You don't try it. These young people in the universities who are living together, they know it's not marriage. They don't want married because they've never seen it modeled. The moment you try it, it's not it. By definition it is *this*. And the Engineer made it this way. Therefore, they shall . . . what? Be stuck! I mean they're stuck. And they shall cleave, and they shall be what? Say it! *One*. And these two, functioning in the hand of the God who made them, function as what? As one! That's marriage. That's God's blueprint. Do you think your neighbors, do you think all the married couples in . . . do you think they know anything about this? God has never lowered His blueprint, never changed His standards. Men have failed and faltered and gone astray in trying to get something that will take its place. You'll never find anything to take its place because God created you for this, and you'll never be satisfied until you touch it. That's God's blueprint.

I wonder how many of you realize that the model in America is not this. Do you realize this would be so rare—this kind of a marital relationship—where husband and wife are so intimately related? As one authority, not even a Christian, describes it like this. And I am *shocked* when I hear secularists talk about this, and they are way ahead of some of us Christians. But he says it is kind of like this: "Their relationship is *so total* that somehow the man feels that his wife is indispensable for everything that he does, and so he seeks to have her involved with him in as many activities in his life as he can. Do you realize they're beginning to touch this *absolute* model of a husband and wife being one?"

May I read you one of the great studies on marriage in our society? Not those who are divorced; those who are stable and who are not even planning divorce. This is what they found:

"Our society considers total and vital relationships to be more appropriate to dating and the early years of marriage than to mature adult behavior. Most couples interviewed doubted that intrinsic relations could be, or should exist after husbands and wives enter their 30s."

Are any of you over 29? After you enter your 30s you're not suppose to talk that way. That's for these young people who've got stars in their eyes, and are moonstruck. *"Those couples whose marriage was intrinsic recognized that they were in the minority and said they had always taken pains to conceal the depth of their marital relationship from their friends in order not to be considered odd, or deceitful."* If out in the world a husband would talk this way about his wife, do you know what his colleagues would think? "He's either crazy or he's pulling the wool over our eyes." Nobody talks, or thinks, or acts about his wife like that. And then the closing line—listen; *"The norm, then, for well-adjusted marriages in our society is apparently utilitarian rather than intrinsic."*

Utilitarian? Rather than intrinsic? "We're related, yea. We're not going to divorce; we'll stay together." But it is based on a secondary relationship, as the sociologist talks. "Secondary relationship," like you go into a restaurant. You greet the waitress and you're polite, I trust. And you're thoughtful, yes. But you know what you primarily want from her? What? An intimate, total relationship? No, you want a T-bone steak, medium rare. And if she brings you a T-bone steak, medium rare, "Thanks," I'll leave her a big tip. Good day." That's utilitarian! "I want her services. I don't want *her*."

Marriages in America are based on services, and the wife can give certain services: “You take care of the house; you take care of the children; you give me a little sex occasionally; you pay the bills.” That’s your service. “I will make the money. I will take the garbage out. I’ll pay, I’ll do this.” But you see, as far as an intimate relationship, it is not the norm.

This kind of marriage is revolutionary. But I’ll tell you it is out of this world! People are starving for it. And oh, *children!* And when we get to it, I hope I can break your heart as mine has been broken again and again with what the absence of it will do for a child. And then you beat him and spank him because he’s reacting that way, and what he’s longing for is to see somebody who’s *so* related. And he needs somebody that he can relate to like that, or he’s never going to be a normal human being. We’ve *got* to have a revolution, and God’s truth is revolutionary.

Our purpose in these sessions to follow is to show you God’s detailed specifications so you can have a marriage like that, and eventually children. Will you take this as *your* plan, as God’s blueprint for you? Will you accept it and say, “This is what I want. Now Lord, show me what’s involved.”