

# Marriage: A Gift From Eden



## SABBATH—FEBRUARY 23

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 2:18–25; Mark 10:7–9; Ephesians 5:22–25; Matthew 5:27–30.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him’ ” (Genesis 2:18, NIV).

**THINK OF THE BLESSINGS OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE AND A LOVING HOME.** People who have such an experience are so lucky!

Sadly, for too many people, marriage is an experience of mostly pain and anger rather than joy and peace. This is not how it was planned or how it should be. The sad condition (state) of so many marriages is a powerful example of the negative results that sin has brought to humans.

“God celebrated the first marriage. So, marriage is begun by the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honorable’ (Hebrews 13:4, NKJV). It was one of the first gifts of God to man. And it is one of the two things that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him out of the gates of Eden. When God’s principles [rules] are followed and obeyed, marriage is a blessing. Marriage guards the purity and happiness of the race. It meets man’s social needs. It raises humankind’s physical, mental, and moral<sup>1</sup> nature.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Leaders in Bible Times] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*, page 46.

What a wonderful ideal (standard). This week’s lesson studies some of the principles behind it.

1. moral—having the ability to choose between right and wrong.

**SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 24****LO TOV (NOT GOOD)  
(Genesis 2:18)**

Out of nothing, God created our world through the power of His word. All through the Creation story, everything was “good” until the work was completed. At this point everything the Lord had created was announced “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

**In the middle of all this, however, one thing was *lo tov*, “not good.” Read Genesis 2:18. What was “not good”? Why? What does this verse suggest?**

God had announced all parts of the Creation “good” up to the time that He created Adam. At that point, Adam was the only human. He was made in the image of God. But he was alone. And because he was alone, he could not show the full image of God because God has a relationship with other parts of the Godhead. The Godhead is made up of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So, Adam needed someone like him with whom he could form a relationship of mutual (shared) love and cooperation. This would be an example of the loving relationship within the Godhead.

**Read Genesis 2:19–21. After what act does God create a woman from Adam’s flesh to be his wife? How might this act be connected with God’s creation of a wife for Adam?**



Adam could not show the full image of God without Eve.

Perhaps the key here is found in the last part of verse 20. As he named the animals, Adam must have noticed that they were in pairs of two, male and female. Adam himself was a singular creation. We can be sure that the Lord planned all along for Adam to have a wife. Perhaps the Lord planned for Adam to want company and feel that something was missing in his own life. This would have made Adam appreciate more the gift that the Lord was going to give him in a wife.

**Think about the difference between the “good” of the rest of the Creation, and the “not good” in Adam’s solitude. What does this show about the value of relationships? What can you do to help strengthen the valuable relationships you are now in?**

**MONDAY—FEBRUARY 25****A COMPANION (WIFE) FOR ADAM  
(Genesis 2:21, 22)**

In Genesis 2:20, Adam names the animals. This helps to show the great difference between humans and other living things on the earth. There was no animal that was nearly the same as Adam. Not even among the apes was there any like Adam. This is because Adam was not the same as an ape. This is an important point for us to remember. This is because there are so many people in our society who support the idea that humans are nothing more than advanced apes. We are not apes. And an ape was no more suitable as a companion for Adam than it would be for one of us.

**Read Genesis 2:21, 22. What important fact is found in the way that God created a companion for Adam?**

God had formed (made) Adam's body from the dust of the ground. God also created Eve. He formed her body from one of Adam's ribs. God did not need Adam's rib to create Eve. He could have created her as He had created Adam or even spoken her into life.

But God had a reason for forming Eve out of one of Adam's ribs. If the two had been created completely separately, it could show that by nature (who they were) they were fully independent persons. But the sharing of flesh in both persons shows that the two were to be united (joined as one)

and were planned to be "one flesh."

After being created, Eve was brought to Adam to be his "helper" (verse 18, NIV). She was made from Adam (verse 22) and then given to him (verse 22). The way that God made Eve showed clearly that God could give Adam the very wife he needed. This point became important later when Adam faced the temptation of whether to join Eve in the eating of the fruit or to trust God to take care of the situation. Adam had good reason to believe that God could take care of him. And this made his sin all the more terrible.

**Read Genesis 2:23. What was Adam's answer to Eve?**

Adam was so excited when he saw Eve that he sang out in poetry. This is the first poem in the Bible. This shows Adam's respect for his wife and the closeness of their relationship. She was to be his equal. So, another part of Creation was damaged by the Fall.



**The sharing of flesh in both persons showed that Adam and Eve were to be "one flesh."**

**TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 26****IDEAL MARRIAGE (Mark 10:7–9)**

Author William Faulkner once called marriage a “failure.” He wrote that “the only way to get any peace out of it is . . . [to] keep the first one [wife] and stay as far away from her as much as you can. Meanwhile, you hope that someday you will outlive her.” This is a sad opinion of the condition (state) of many marriages.

**Read Mark 10:7–9. What verse does Jesus quote in these verses? What conditions of a good marriage can be found in the words of Jesus here?**

The Bible teaches that leaving one’s parents in order to create a home with one’s mate is needed for marriage. People know this good advice well. Problems with in-laws are one of the leading causes of disagreements between husband and wife. One of the first steps to take when making a happy home is to respect the right of the marriage partners to have an independent home, or one that is separate from their parents. Whenever this is not possible, the privacy and love life of marriage should still be respected.

Unity (oneness) is another example of a good marriage. Unity does not mean that the two partners should stop using their separate brains. Instead, they should be united in their purpose to do the best for each other and for their union (marriage).

Jesus also taught that marriage should last a lifetime. Marriage is not something for people to enter into or end whenever they wish. It is a lifetime responsibility. Those who are not prepared to dedicate themselves to (honor) their marriage for life should postpone such a step until they are ready.

**Read Ephesians 5:22–25. In what way do these verses show the principles (rules) of a good marriage?**

The husband is responsible for giving himself to his wife in loving service in the same way that Christ gave Himself for the church. In turn, the wife is to respect her husband and to cooperate in their work toward their agreed goals. This is the answer to the problems that sin has brought into the marriage relationship. Self-sacrificing love will be met by loving respect and happiness. Our homes can be a foretaste (example) of heaven.

**WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 27****PROTECTING WHAT IS IMPORTANT (Matthew 5:27–30)**

One of the greatest examples of God’s love for people can be found in the gift of sex between husband and wife. It is truly a wonderful gift from God. This is the same with all the gifts that we have been given. But the gift of sex does not come without principles. It is not something we can just do as we

please. God has set some rules. He is very clear: sex is to be between a husband and wife, a male and a female, and only within marriage. Anything outside of marriage is sin.

**Read Matthew 5:27–30. Look at how seriously Jesus takes adultery.<sup>2</sup> Why is this very important?**

We like to talk about all the grace<sup>3</sup> and forgiveness that Jesus gives to sinners. But we cannot forget how righteously (purely) He lived and preached. It is hard to imagine how Jesus' warning could have been stronger than the warning against sexual impurity talked about in these few verses. Taking out your eye? Cutting off your hand? If doing these things make you pure, then they are worth it. If not, you are in danger of losing your eternal life.

“If all who claim to obey the law of God were free from sin, my soul would be set free. But they are not. Even some who claim to keep all the commandments of God are guilty of the sin of adultery. What can I say to awaken their blinded conscience? Following moral (righteous; holy) principles strictly becomes the only safeguard (protection) of the soul.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, pages 621, 622.

**Jesus' warning is very strong here. But we must not forget the story about the woman caught in**

**the act of adultery (John 8:1–11). How do we keep the right balance between following Jesus' high standards (see the above verses) and showing grace and mercy to those who fail?**



The sharing of flesh in both persons showed that Adam and Eve were to be “one flesh.”

#### THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 28

#### MARRIAGE AS AN EXAMPLE FOR THE CHURCH (Exodus 34:15, 16)

Students of the Bible know very well that, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, marriage is used as an example of the relationship between God and His people. That is why many times the Bible uses the image of an unfaithful woman to show backsliding (falling back into sin) in Israel in Bible times. For example, in Exodus, the Lord said to His people that they should not enter into any kind of close relationship with the pagans<sup>4</sup> around them. This is because the pagans were sinful people who could lead Israel away from God.

2. adultery—the act of having sex with a person who is not one's husband or wife.

3. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He gives us to take away our sins.

4. pagans—people who do not believe in God. In Bible times, pagans believed in many gods and often worshiped the sun.



Read Exodus 34:15, 16. What word-picture does the Lord use in this special warning? How does this word-picture help us to understand what it means for God's people to be "married" to Him? Read also Jeremiah 3:14.

The example of the church as the bride of Christ points toward unity among believers and unity with Christ. This can be compared with the Bible's ideal (perfect model) for marriage: one man and one woman in a loving, self-sacrificing relationship.

**Read Ephesians 5:28–32 and Revelation 19:5–9. What are these verses teaching?**

In these verses, the relationship within the ideal marriage is compared with the relationship that God has with His people. God invites His people to join with Him in a very close relationship. This is a wonderful picture of God's interest in His people and His desire to bring us into His fellowship.



**The example of the church as the bride of Christ points toward unity among believers and with Christ.**

What choices can you make that will bring you closer to the Lord and closer to the Bible's ideal of marriage? Why is it up to you alone to make the right choices?

### FRIDAY—MARCH 1

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** In many ways, a proper understanding of sexual purity is clearly tied to a proper understanding of our beginnings. For example: the theory of evolution<sup>5</sup> does not give a good example of the connection between sex and purity. Animals have many different kinds of "mating systems." Some animals have many mates. Many are very sexual. A few animals are faithful to their mates. But scientific studies have shown that many animals that appear to be faithful are not really so. In many animals, a female may give birth to a litter of babies that do not have the same father. Without God's principles, we would have no basis for judging sexual actions as morally good or bad. The modern push to approve homosexual (same sex) partnerships shows this point. It is only in the light of Creation that we understand marriage as it should be.

"In both the Old and the New Testament, marriage is used as an example of the holy relationship between Christ and His people. The happy wedding celebration at Cana (John 2) pointed to the joyful day when Jesus shall bring home His bride to the Father's house. And then

5. evolution—a theory (unproven idea) that the differences between modern plants and animals exist because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time.

saved people shall sit down with the Savior to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 151.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Evolution refuses to accept anything like the Bible Creation. What rules for sexual behavior, if any, does evolution teach? How different are these rules from the Bible’s teachings?
- ❷ What are some Bible examples of good marriages and happy homes? Name some Bible examples of unhappy marriages and homes. What can we learn from both?
- ❸ Review the description of the pure wife in Proverbs 31:10–31. The husband of such a wife should have what kind of character (who someone is)?
- ❹ In what ways can your local church be a place that can help to support and strengthen the ideals of marriage? What useful things can your church do to reach that goal?