

Introduction:

1. What are husband and wife supposed to be? "They are to be husband and wife!" That's true, but God says something about the nature of the husband-wife relationship that expresses an intimacy that is to be known only in this union.
2. Husband and wife are to be "one flesh," Genesis 2:24.
 - a. This is a phrase we have often heard, but what does it mean? We may only have a vague idea of what God intended by this unique phrase. One man said, "I know what it means, but I don't know if I could put it into words."
 - b. I suspect a lot of us may be like that man. It may be that if we can't put it into words, it is because we have not really understood the meaning of one flesh.
3. So, let's look at how the phrase is used in the Bible. Then we will know what God intends by this phrase. And when we know what God intends, then our lives can be made richer for it.

The Lesson:

I. The first use of the term is found in Genesis 2:24.

- A. The phrase carries more than one idea in this text.
 1. There is first the idea of the woman being a companion for the man, Genesis 2:18. Practical experience, as well as the Bible, teaches us that it is not good for man to be alone.
 - a. What a lonely world it would have been for Adam, had he not had another human being to interact with. Man is a social creature. He needs social (other person) activity.
 - b. They are to be one flesh in a social sense, in that the need for companionship is met.
 2. God's answer to the loneliness problem expands into another idea. The woman is a "helper comparable to him," Genesis 2:20. A "suitable helper" says the NIV. Young's Literal Translation says, "...helper—as his counterpart."
 - a. The woman is more than a companion, she is a partner and helper to him. She is not a helper like an ox might be in pulling the plow.
 - b. An ox can help a man, but can never be his counterpart. She is a matching part of him to make him complete.
 - c. She is a helper, not merely suited to a task, but suited to him! She is like him. She is like what the right hand is to the left. They are to be "one flesh."
- B. Possibly the most interesting thought found in this chapter is in Genesis 2:23. See how it relates to Genesis 2:24.
 1. Note that Genesis 2:24 begins with "Therefore," as it points back to verse 23. The fact that the woman came from the man (i.e., from his flesh) establishes that as husband and wife they are to be regarded as one flesh.
 2. Eve is part of Adam. She could say to Adam, "I am part of you, for I was taken out of you." They are regarded as one flesh in the sense that the woman is part of the man.

II. The next place where "one flesh" is found is in Matthew 19:5-6.

- A. The first of these verses is pointing back to Matthew 19:4.
 1. God made them "male and female." They are counterparts.
 - a. God did not make male and male, nor female and female.
 - b. God intended for one flesh to be a relationship between male and female, husband and wife, not husband and husband.
 2. They are to be regarded as one flesh in the basic sense that they are husband and wife, male and female, being the two parts that make one union.
- B. Another point is emphasized in Matthew 19:6. The marriage relationship is intended by God to be a permanent relationship.
 1. "Therefore (since they are one flesh--joined by God), let not man put asunder." God's plan is one man and one wife for life. Marriage is intended by God to be a life-long covenant. This was God's intent from the beginning. Note particularly verse 4, "beginning."
 2. In Malachi 2:15 the word "one" is used, and though it does not say "flesh," it still carries the same idea. The Jews were failing to honor the marriage covenant. They treated their wives treacherously by putting them away. They disregarded the life-long covenant.

- C. They are regarded as "one flesh" in the sense that they are in a permanent ("till death do us part") relationship. Husband and wife should be regarded as inseparable! It should be noted that there is no passage that just capriciously allows for divorce.

III. Paul uses "one flesh" in 1 Corinthians 6:16 to speak of sexual union.

- A. Though, it is true that in this context, the union is with a harlot, it is nevertheless "one flesh."
1. One of the things in view in "one flesh" is sexual union. God intends that union to be only between husband and wife.
 2. One of the things that makes fornication wrong, is that it puts one in sexual union (one flesh) with someone not lawfully his—someone other than one's spouse.
 3. In this case, however, violation of the marriage covenant is not necessarily under consideration. Rather, it speaks of how inappropriate it is for one who belongs to Christ to be engaged in something so contrary to the will of Christ, 1 Corinthians 6:15.
 - a. We are to be one with the Lord with respect to His intent and purpose for our lives.
 - b. To be one with a harlot (any person with whom we might commit sexual immorality) puts us at cross-purposes with the Lord's intent for us.
 - c. In this case, rather than being in agreement with the will of the Lord, "one flesh with a harlot" implies that we have become one in agreement with that person.
- B. Husband and wife are the only ones having a right to sexual union—no one else under any condition or circumstance! See Hebrews 13:4. Husband and wife are "one flesh" in the sense that they have sexual union.
- C. But "one flesh" is not limited to sexual union. Included is the idea that these two have common purposes, goals and intentions in life. That is why it is so grossly inappropriate to share in an agreement with a harlot. Marriage is a "together arrangement" limited to husband and wife.
1. In a practical sense, then, "one flesh" with a husband and wife should mean that they strive to be in agreement with respect to finances, raising children, planning for the future, and their relationships with other family, etc.
 2. In a very real sense, "one flesh" goes beyond the sexual union and speaks of their overall relationship that covers every part of their lives. Husbands and wives should not live separate lives.

IV. Paul uses "one flesh" in Ephesians 5:31 to speak of loving care.

- A. Notice the context in which this final use of the term is found:
1. Ephesians 5:28. Men are to love their wives as their own bodies.
 2. Ephesians 5:29. A man cares for his own body. He nourishes and cherishes it.
 3. Since a man is to care for his own flesh, and since he is to regard himself as one flesh with his wife, then he is to care for her as his own flesh.
- B. In this context, the apostle parallels the husband-wife relationship with Christ and the church, Ephesians 5:30, 32.
1. Christ loves the church and exercises nurturing care for the church. "For we are members of His...flesh..."
 2. Contextually, then, a man must model his love for his wife after that of Christ for His church, Ephesians 5:25. This is part of the one flesh arrangement.
 3. Contextually, a woman must recognize her husband's headship, just as the church recognizes the headship of Christ, Ephesians 5:22-24.
 4. While this chapter gives instruction to both husbands and wives, "the loving care" part of it is directed at husbands. Maybe that is so because men sometimes tend to neglect the most basic elements of love and care in the relationship. Just as men may be weak in providing loving care, a woman may be weak in recognizing a husband's headship.

Conclusion:

1. You can make your marriage to truly be "one flesh" by submitting to God's will.
2. In your marriage relationship, are you honoring the concept of "one flesh?" In your Christianity, are you honoring your oneness with Christ?