

MARRIAGE: FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

STUDY TWO

Getting Back on Target

Genesis 2:21–25; 3:8–13

As long as there has been marriage, there have been four principles that hold spouses together. Every time I work with people who struggle in their marriage, one or more of these principles has been ignored or disobeyed. When I find happy marriages, I find all four at work.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

I*T wasn't me!* What child hasn't uttered these words? Even after multiple warnings, Mom approaches the scene only to find her favorite vase smashed to pieces. When confronted, the child tries to deflect the attention away from himself or herself. However, the look of guilt on that young face betrays any attempt to cover up the wrong.

Some adults play the blame-game just as much as little children. They just play at a higher level. Through years of practice, they've fine-tuned the skill of shifting responsibility of their wrongs to others.

Whenever we lie and blame others for our actions, we simply follow the example of the first married couple: Adam and Eve. When God approached them for breaking the only command He had given them, they all but uttered that exact refrain: *It wasn't me!*

Our habit of hiding sin and pointing fingers undermines God's foundational principles of marriage. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll examine the four cornerstones of God's design, and we'll trace our marital troubles to their sinful source. Let's get our relationships back on target with God's plan, while avoiding pitfalls along the way!



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Getting Back on Target

Genesis 2:21–25; 3:8–13



PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open your Bible today, remember that you are about to handle the Word of God. Embedded within these pages are timeless truths that lead us into abundant life. Say this prayer as you begin your study:

Thank You, Father, for revealing Your truth to me through Your Word. I know that receiving the truth isn't always easy, but please grant me the wisdom to understand Scripture and the humility to accept its teaching. I pray in Jesus' true name. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As God put the finishing touches on the beautiful artwork of His creation, He sat back in rest and declared His masterpiece to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). God’s creation had everything it needed to thrive. The garden of Eden was a pristine setting, an idyllic environment. No sin, no guilt, no shame, no fear, no death.

Despite this glorious depiction of creation, something remained “not good” (2:18). The man, the pinnacle of God’s creation, was alone. He needed a companion, a counterpart. So God created the woman. For a time, creation was flawless.

But it would not be long before the humans disobeyed their Creator. In an instant, things went from “very good” to very bad. With this context in mind, turn now to Genesis 2:21–25 and 3:8–13.



Observation: Good Couple, Bad Decisions

According to the Bible study method outlined in *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll always begins by *observing* a passage of Scripture. He writes, “Pay attention to the sounds in the Scriptures. . . . Listen to the words, and feel the emotions.”¹ Read [Genesis 2:21–25; 3:8–13](#). As you read, pay careful attention to the words each person in the account says.



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Marriage On Target—Genesis 2:21–25

In your own words, summarize what the man exclaimed in [Genesis 2:23](#) after God brought the woman to him?

[Genesis 2:24](#) uses the account of God’s creation of the woman to explain a practice that has occurred in marriage throughout time. What practice does 2:24 explain?

According to [2:25](#), how did the man and the woman feel about their own nakedness?



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Marriage Missing the Mark—Genesis 3:8–13

According to [Genesis 3:8](#), what did the man and the woman do when they heard God walking in the garden?

According to the man's answer to God in [3:10](#), why did he hide?

What did the man say in [3:12](#) when God asked him about eating the fruit? What did the woman say in [3:13](#)?

They ran and hid from their Creator. How dumb is that? You can't hide from omniscience. They're hiding behind the trees God made. Sin has entered, and fear replaces joy. Now there's distance and alienation and discomfort and uneasiness and a whole sense of shame.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: Making and Breaking a Healthy Marriage

In Pastor Chuck’s interpretation of these passages, he draws out four foundational principles of a biblical marriage.

1. *Severance*—husbands and wives separate from their parents physically and emotionally to form a new family unit.
2. *Permanence*—God joins the couple together in a secure, unbreakable bond. “Till death do us part.”
3. *Unity*—through mutual acceptance, husbands and wives operate as one by affirming each other’s strengths and gifts.
4. *Intimacy*—complete trust and transparency characterize the couple’s sexual union and unconditional love for one another.

Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of these four terms. Then, reread [Genesis 2:21–25](#), and explain how you see each of these four principles presented in this passage. For some information on the technical details of these verses, see [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org. What other principles does this example provide for those who seek to have a godly marriage today?

When we sin, we experience more than just *guilt*. Yes, we stand guilty before God when we transgress His law. However, we also experience *shame* and *fear* because of sin. Shame comes when we dishonor our good and gracious heavenly Father through wrong actions. And as the beloved disciple said, “If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment” (1 John 4:18).



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Now, look back to Genesis 2:25. Notice how it *doesn't* say, “They were both naked, but they felt no *guilt*.” Rather, they felt no *shame*. How did the couple’s sinful actions lead them to experience shame? What about fear? How did they respond to these feelings in *3:8–13*?

Before, there was this harmony and unity and intimacy and cleaving. Now, there’s the withdrawing from one another instead of enjoying each other’s company. There’s no reason for shame. But their minds are darkened. Their wills are changed. Their emotions are different. And they pull back. They withdraw from each other. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In what ways did the man and the woman show dishonesty when God confronted them in *3:8–13*? Remember, dishonesty can be more than flat-out lying. It also can involve withholding the whole truth.

The man and the woman’s dishonesty not only damaged their relationship with God, but it also undermined the principles on which their marriage was built and fractured their trust in one another. How do we get back to God’s original ideal? Jesus can guide the way.

We are experienced as liars and blamers. We learned how to do it from our parents. They learned it from theirs. We all have learned it from Adam. We’d rather lie and blame and tell a half-truth than the whole truth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Jesus' Affirmation of the Principles of Marriage

When asked about His views on divorce, Jesus unrolled the biblical scroll to this same section of Genesis we've been studying to give His answer. What principles of marriage did Jesus affirm in *Matthew 19:4–5*?

Then Jesus applied God's original design for marriage with a principle that gets to the heart of God's intention for marriage. What did Jesus say in *19:6*?

When sin threatens to weaken the joints that God formed, we must call upon the original builder to patch the cracks and repair the damage. Who is more qualified to restore a couple's marital union than the One who created it? Invite the Lord right now to mend the fractures in your relationship with your spouse. He can forgive sins, restore hope, and reunite a broken marriage.



Application: Owning Our Actions

Marriages by God's design are like beautiful homes built on a solid foundation of love, unity, loyalty, and intimacy. Sturdy beams of trust make the walls secure, and soaring rafters of devotion keep those who live inside safe from harm.



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Think back over the recent months to a time when things felt especially *difficult*. Maybe a loved one hurt you. Maybe you acted wrongly toward someone close. In this instance, did you feel tempted to lie or cast blame? How did the natural inclination to cover up and point fingers undermine your relationship?

As we learned from Adam and Eve, these behaviors simply are attempts to hide our own sin. But these attempts only hurt others and distance us from God. So Pastor Chuck desires:

1. *All of us would tell the truth—hard as it is.*
2. *None of us would ever again blame somebody else—ever.*

Nothing builds back trust faster than telling the truth and taking responsibility. How would the difficult situation you mentioned above been different if you had been honest and taken ownership of your actions?



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How can you reverse the lying and blaming trend and rebuild trust by applying the principles of severance, permanence, unity, and intimacy within your marriage today? Even small gestures of love help restore trust. What's one way you can show your trustworthiness to your spouse?

We can't do the work of repairing sin's damage by ourselves. We need God's healing touch. Pray right now for the Lord to restore any fractures in your marriage and reunite you with your spouse. Share your prayer with your spouse and communicate your desire to fully embrace God's design for your marriage.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are the Lover of my soul who cares about me when I stray from Your good path. My sin not only grieves You, but it also hurts those I love the most. I confess to You my habit of blaming others. Forgive my sin. Heal the fractures I have caused in my closest relationships and, specifically, with my spouse. I need Your help to rejoin what sin has torn apart! Thank You for Your powerful work of grace in my life and marriage. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 96.

